

“The Great Love of the LORD” (Psalm 107)(9.11.22)

The world will never starve for want of wonders; but only for want of wonder. - G. K. Chesterton
{repeat}

Psalm 107 (NIV84)

¹ Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

² Let the redeemed of the Lord say this—
those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,

³ those he gathered from the lands,
from east and west, from north and south.

⁴ Some wandered in desert wastelands,
finding no way to a city where they could settle.

⁵ They were hungry and thirsty,
and their lives ebbed away.

⁶ Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.

⁷ He led them by a straight way

to a city where they could settle.

⁸ Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men,

⁹ for he satisfies the thirsty

and fills the hungry with good things.

¹⁰ Some sat in darkness and the deepest gloom,
prisoners suffering in iron chains,

¹¹ for they had rebelled against the words of God
and despised the counsel of the Most High.

¹² So he subjected them to bitter labor;
they stumbled, and there was no one to help.

¹³ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress.

¹⁴ He brought them out of darkness and the
deepest gloom and broke away their chains.

¹⁵ Let them give thanks to the Lord for his
unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men,

¹⁶ for he breaks down gates of bronze
and cuts through bars of iron.

17 Some became fools through their rebellious ways

and suffered affliction because of their iniquities.

18 They loathed all food

and drew near the gates of death.

19 Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,

and he saved them from their distress.

20 He sent forth his word and healed them;

he rescued them from the grave.

21 Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men.

22 Let them sacrifice thank offerings

and tell of his works with songs of joy.

23 Others went out on the sea in ships;

they were merchants on the mighty waters.

24 They saw the works of the Lord,

his wonderful deeds in the deep.

25 For he spoke and stirred up a tempest

that lifted high the waves.

26 They mounted up to the heavens and went
down to the depths;

in their peril their courage melted away.

27 They reeled and staggered like drunken men;
they were at their wits' end.

28 Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble,
and he brought them out of their distress.

29 He stilled the storm to a whisper;
the waves of the sea were hushed.

30 They were glad when it grew calm,
and he guided them to their desired haven.

31 Let them give thanks to the Lord for his
unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men.

32 Let them exalt him in the assembly of the
people

and praise him in the council of the elders.

33 He turned rivers into a desert,
flowing springs into thirsty ground,

34 and fruitful land into a salt waste,

because of the wickedness of those who lived there.

³⁵ He turned the desert into pools of water
and the parched ground into flowing springs;

³⁶ there he brought the hungry to live,
and they founded a city where they could settle.

³⁷ They sowed fields and planted vineyards
that yielded a fruitful harvest;

³⁸ he blessed them, and their numbers greatly
increased, and he did not let their herds diminish.

³⁹ Then their numbers decreased, and they were
humbled by oppression, calamity and sorrow;

⁴⁰ he who pours contempt on nobles
made them wander in a trackless waste.

⁴¹ But he lifted the needy out of their affliction
and increased their families like flocks.

⁴² The upright see and rejoice,
but all the wicked shut their mouths.

⁴³ Whoever is wise, let him heed these things

and consider the great love of the Lord.

The word of God for the people of God.

LET US PRAY.

Title: **“The Great Love of the LORD”**

INTRODUCTION:

It is often asked (In fact, one of our church members has been asked similar questions just this week.), “Why is there suffering? Why is there pain? Why do bad things happen? Why cancer? Why gun violence? Why COVID? Why 9/11 and the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers? Where is God in all this?” And, the trail of these questions leads to asking, “Is there even a God?” And, that church member said one of the inquisitors had lost their faith because of the hardships that befuddled them.

Though the scripture reading was long, hopefully you were able to stay focused because I have a question for you. Where did the psalmist describe people turning to the LORD because they had been blessed? [pause] Not once did he give such an example.

It is unusual to give a conclusion in the introduction, but what might we deduce from this? We are given four negative instances where the

people cried out to the LORD in their tribulation. We are not given any examples where people sought the LORD in their times of ease and comfort. Maybe this psalmist has a limited viewpoint. Or, is it consistent with the whole counsel of God?

Hosea 11:1–7 (NIV84) *God's Love for Israel*

11 “When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.

² But the more I called Israel,
the further they went from me.

They sacrificed to the Baals
and they burned incense to images.

³ It was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
taking them by the arms;
but they did not realize
it was I who healed them.

⁴ I led them with cords of human kindness,
with ties of love;

I lifted the yoke from their neck

and bent down to feed them.

⁵ “Will they not return to Egypt
and will not Assyria rule over them
because they refuse to repent?

⁶ Swords will flash in their cities,
will destroy the bars of their gates
and put an end to their plans.

⁷ **My people are determined to turn from me.**

Even if they call to the Most High,
he will by no means exalt them.

That warning is pretty scary.

There appears to be something about a human being that takes God’s grace and goodness for granted. Nowadays, there is a sense of entitlement; the idea that we deserve all that we have. Some folks believe that they have earned their blessed lives through their efforts while ignoring God having gifted them with their strengths and talents. God has placed them in circumstances where their strengths and talents might flourish. Might this be the sin of pride? It certainly is a symptom of the affliction of affluence.

The conclusion I offer you in this introduction is that when the LORD brings hardships, trials, and tribulations upon people, it is a demonstration of HIS love for them – his unfailing love. His purpose is to bring them to the point of crying out to the LORD so that He can deliver them from their distress. Then they might know there is a God of heaven and turn to Him. The Most High God will redeem them.

BODY:

Let me proceed by demonstrating the Holy Spirit's guidance graciously bestowed upon me while I planned my preaching schedule. The last four weeks I preached to you about depression, its causes and its cures. Last week, I noted how that sermon series began and ended with a Holy Communion worship Service.

This week I learned, that yesterday, the 10th of September, was World Suicide Prevention Day. Remember also that every attempt is made to coordinate all elements of each worship service to present a unified message. This way a tapestry of Truth is woven together. And here we are this morning, exploring The Great Love of the LORD.

The thread that creates the beauty of the tapestry of Truth, is the unfailing love of the LORD. This love creates an exquisite picture of the Creator's

care for creation and His beloved children. It is challenging for us to comprehend the height, width, depth and length of the love of God.

We refer to Paul's 13th chapter of Corinthians as the Love Chapter. 1 Corinthians 13:4–8 (NIV84)

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.⁸ Love never fails.

Now, this describes the level of human love to which we should strive in our relations with other people. But, it is merely a poor reflection as in a mirror of the supernatural love of the LORD. Our God, loves completely, perfectly, and eternally. And, our Heavenly Father has never faltered in His love for us for even one instant of time.

Powerful and somewhat controversial preacher John MacArthur preached this psalm under the title "Giving Thanks for Redemption." Here is a portion of his introduction:

"When I think about salvation in an Old Testament context, I'm so often drawn to Psalm 107. And I

confess that I am stuck on this psalm. It is a glorious psalm.

It has a special significance to me because one of the most startling and one of the most amazing and one of the most God-glorifying conversions that has ever happened in this church and in my life occurred after I read this psalm. I didn't preach on it; I just read it, closed the Bible, sat down, and never referred to it again.

There was a young man sitting over in this area that Sunday morning who was one of the leaders of the gay and lesbian community in Los Angeles; a well-known and admired leader in that movement, also dying of AIDS. And he had said to somebody in Hollywood, in his environment, "I'm afraid to die and I don't know what to do about it. I need help." And whoever this person was, said, "You need to go to a place called Grace Community Church," and he did.

And I read the Psalm 107 and he was just literally shattered to the very core of his being. And he was a heap of brokenness and tears and sadness and joy, all mingled together because that psalm says there is a God who breaks the chains and sets the prisoner free.

He said to me later, he said, "Then you got up and you talked and you kept preaching and preaching

and just kept going, and I kept saying, “Why doesn’t that guy shut up so I can get down there and find out how this can happen in my life?” (Laughter) And so finally I shut up and he came down here and was just totally transformed and revolutionized. I had the privilege of baptizing Robert Logerstrum, that young man, and he had an incredible testimony in that world before he died.

So this psalm is precious to me because it’s a psalm of salvation. As much as any part of the Old Testament, it puts us in touch with how people in the Old Testament were saved. It’s just a profound, profound psalm. And it’s really all about praise. Worship and praise and honor to God is really a matter of thanking God.”

Maybe you don’t think gratefulness is not a big deal. Hear what the Apostle Paul tells his protégé Timothy:

2 Timothy 3:1–5 (NIV84) *Godlessness in the Last Days*

3 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days.² People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ***ungrateful***, unholy,³ without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good,⁴

treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

Now, a word from a grateful preacher:

“Thankfulness for Mercies received, a necessary Duty”

A Farewell Sermon, preached on board the *Whitaker*, at Anchor near *Savannah*, in *Georgia*, *Sunday, May 17, 1738*. By George Whitefield. Like the merchants in this psalm, Whitefield’s journey to America was upon very stormy weather and he gives thanks for safe arrival in America. After four months on the journey, he will be preaching the gospel throughout the land. And though I had forgotten about this term applied to America, Whitefield called it the “New World.” Yes indeed, when we are redeemed, we enter a new world.

Here is an excerpt: “Matter for praise and adoration, can never be wanting to creatures redeemed by the blood of the Son of God; and who have such continual scenes of his infinite goodness presented to their view, that were their souls duly affected with a sense of his universal love, they could not but be continually calling on heaven and earth, men and angels, to join with them in praising and blessing that “high and lofty one, who

inhabiteth eternity, who maketh his sun to shine on the evil and on the good," and daily pours down his blessings on the whole race of mankind."

CONCLUSION:

Alexander Duff was an eloquent pastor and missionary pioneer, **the first** sent to India by the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. On October 14, 1829, he and his wife set out for the Indian subcontinent on a ship called the Lady Holland, and four months later, at midnight on the 13th of February 1830, the ship ran aground while attempting to navigate the Cape of Good Hope. The pounding surf soon destroyed the ship, washing everything it held away, but miraculously all the passengers and crew made it safely to land.

Nothing remained of their belongings, but as one sailor walked along the shore looking for food and fuel, he came upon two books, a Bible and the Scottish Psalm Book. He found the name of Alexander Duff in both of them, so he brought them to the missionary. Duff had been transporting eight hundred books to India, where he hoped to (and later did) establish a college, but of those eight hundred books only these two remained. In spite of this loss, Duff at once opened the Bible to Psalm 107 and read it to the other survivors, concluding with the words,

Whoever is wise, let him heed these things
and consider the great love of the Lord.

Have you ever felt homeless and adrift, with nowhere to go? Maybe your life was shipwrecked in godforsaken isolation. Have you ever felt imprisoned by circumstances, addiction, sin, or bars of any sort? Have you ever been so sick that you thought death was the best option? Have you ever been in any perilous place with no rescue in sight?

If you are ever in such a condition again, you need to cry out to God. He will deliver you from your distress. Give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; His love endures forever. Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the GREAT love of the LORD.

If you have had a life of ease; if you have been blessed over and over again; if God has drawn you with cords of love you can skip the crying out to God, but the rest is the same. Give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; His love endures forever. Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the GREAT love of the LORD.

If you are anywhere in-between these two extremes, your response should be same.

If you have been redeemed, born again into a living hope, become a new creation in Christ, then you are the most blessed among humankind. The second verse commands, "Let the redeemed of the LORD **say this.**" Verse twenty-two commands, "Let them sacrifice thank offerings

and **tell** of his works with songs of joy." The forty-second verse proclaims, "The upright see and **rejoice.**"

Do you? **Do you rejoice, tell and say,**

"Give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; His love endures forever. Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the GREAT love of the LORD."

Amen and amen. Let us pray.