

“HIS LOVE ENDURES FOR EVER”

Psalm 107

“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures for ever.” Give thanks to God for his love. God’s people gather to praise him, to rehearse his deeds, his activity in their lives, to give thanks to him for his love, which goes on and on for ever. In temple and synagogue, in church and chapel, under trees and in houses, openly in market squares and hidden in forests, great crowds and little huddles, in suits and saris and shorts and slacks – the redeemed of the Lord speak out their testimony to God’s enduring love. Those who have been saved, who recognise that the transformation in their circumstances is due only to the great breadth and depth of the love of God; from north and south, east and west, men and women and boys and girls of all colours and languages and customs and cultures – they give voice to their praise. The lost and the lonely and the foolish and the fearful speak of the ways in which God has worked in their lives, of the changes in their circumstances since they cried out to him from their situations of disorientation and darkness and disease and despair.

The lost (vv4-9) had been wandering around with no idea of what was going on. They were rootless, alienated, disorientated, hungry, thirsty. There was an ache in their soul that could not be satisfied, a lack of fulfilment and satisfaction, a sense of futility. Wherever they looked there was only a desert wasteland, nowhere to settle, nowhere to call home, and no signpost for the journey.

And in their distress, they cried out to the Lord. They shouted to God, screaming with the frustration of their situation – “What are we to do? Where are we to go?” And God heard them and spoke softly to them, comforting words – *“I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6)*. And as they heard the words and let them sink in, they began to see that there was a way out of their lostness, there was a point to their existence, they were no longer doomed to wander helplessly and hopelessly for the rest of their lives. God broke in to their situation and through the power and the gentleness, through the death and resurrection of his Son Jesus, brought them help and hope and a future. Their needs were met, the emptiness in their lives was filled. So they *“give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love, and his wonderful deeds for humankind.”*

The lonely (vv10-16) languished in darkness and despair. In the gloom and solitude of their cells they felt hemmed in, unable to express themselves, unable to fulfil their potential. Their daily life seemed just like a life sentence to hard labour, a monotonous grind from which they could never escape. When they fell they had to pick themselves up. There was no-one else to help them. The depth of the darkness and gloom was apparently infinite.

But there was no-one else to help them because that’s the way they wanted it. They had *“rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the Most High”*. The lonely had chosen to go it alone and ignored, rejected God’s ways. They had known what they should be doing, but had walked away from it. Oh, they had their reasons. They knew what they were doing and why. But they hadn’t known it would lead to this.

And from the bottom of that pit they sobbed out to God. They cried to him for help – *“We didn’t know it would be like this. Help us. Restore us. Release us.”* And God heard them. In his love and grace he spoke softly to them, offered them a way of escape through the death and resurrection of his Son, and *“if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36)*. The barriers that had grown up around them fell down. The attitudes and patterns of behaviour that had held them like chains disappeared. Life began afresh as the light of Christ shone into the darkness and bathed them in the warmth of God’s love. So they *“give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love, and his wonderful deeds for humankind.”*

The foolish (vv17-22) had been struggling with all kinds of physical problems. Their bodies were racked with pain, their appetite had gone, they seemed to be staring death in the face. Their whole lives seemed to have gone wrong and everything seemed to have collapsed around them. Whatever they did was a real effort and even the simplest tasks became almost too much to cope with.

The struggle they were having was as a result of their turning against God, too. Like the lonely, they had allowed their attitudes to be influenced not by God but by the forces of evil. Life was a drag. Death seemed the simplest way out, now. They were shunned by others and given up as a bad job by many. God had spoken to them: they knew his words and had tried his ways – but they had decided it wasn't for them. They knew better than God – after all, whose body was it: not his, so they'd do what they liked with it. And that took its toll.

But as the seemingly welcoming escape of death called out to them, they cried out one last time to God. Out of their pain and their disease they prayed for God to deliver them, to give them a sign that he hadn't forgotten them, that they could be forgiven and restored. "Lord, why is this happening? Bring your healing. Restore us to what you wanted us to be." And he heard them. He spoke into their situation, challenging, rebuking – but also healing and renewing and promising. *"I have come to bring you life – life in all its fullness"* (John 10:10). They knew he had touched them and as their twisted and painful and diseased bodies began to heal, the prospect of death no longer seemed so welcoming. They experienced a renewed enthusiasm for life – life here in all its fullness and life to come in the presence of the loving God who had heard them. So they *"give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love, and his wonderful deeds for humankind."*

The fearful (vv23-32) had been going about their business, aware of the difficulties they might encounter, but marvelling at the power and activity of God. As they looked around them they could see just what a wonderful Creator he was, and they could revel in his goodness and his love. But then the storms of life had hit them. Things no longer went quite so smoothly. One moment they were up on the crest of a wave, the next they were plunged into the depths of fear and anxiety. Their nerve went; their courage failed them; their faith melted away; they were at their wits' end.

So they cried out to God. Above the noise of the storm, from the depths of their despair, out of the turmoil of situations they had never expected to affect them. "Help us, Lord. Show us a way out of this. Don't allow us to be subject to this roller-coaster of emotions." And God heard them. Through the howling of the winds and the crashing of the waves, they heard his firm but gentle whisper, *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you ... Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid"* (John 14:27).

The storms subsided. They were able to regain their bearings, to see more clearly what was happening. God guided them to the shelter of a safe haven where they could renew their strength and experience the peace of God himself in their very souls. There would be more storms, of course, but they would be ready for them. God was there. God was with them. The Lord had rescued them and put his Spirit within them. So they, too, *"give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love, and his wonderful deeds for humankind."*

God transforms the situations of his people. Sometimes he changes things to give them a wake-up call because they have forgotten him or they're in danger of rejecting him. Often he turns things around to bring restoration, renewal, the prospect of a new start, the hope of a better future. You are God's people. Many of you can bear testimony to that; you have known the power and the peace of God in your lives. We come together here regularly to share that testimony in our words, our songs, by our presence, in our

taking of bread and wine. If you've got any sense at all, says the Psalmist, you'll take heed of that and "*consider the great love of the Lord*" (v43). Let's do that as we share communion together.