

Psalm 107:1-22 ▪ Seeing God in His Mercy

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Intro: If I were to tell you to take out a sheet of paper, and list 5 attributes of God, which one would be the first? Would it be Holy, or Love, or Good, or Sovereign. Whatever attribute we put down first is what we tend to emphasize when we think and talk about God.

When God revealed himself to Moses in what becomes a confessional statement—what attribute comes first?

Exodus 34:6 ESV

The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,

Mercy heads the list of attributes.

- The Psalm for today is a Psalm that calls us to see God as merciful, and celebrate his mercy.
- The KJV reads:

Psalm 107:1 KJV 1900

O give thanks unto the LORD, for *he is* good:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

It's the Hebrew Word *Hesed*, which can be translated steadfast love, faithfulness, love,...or mercy (Ps 23:6)

Q: What kind of people are wired for praising and thanking God?

- It's not the people who think they have it all together; they can manage life on their own.
- It's not the successful and self-sufficient; the person who has all the answers.

The people who end up praising God are the broken, needy, and helpless.

The call is to celebrate God's mercy—to be outspoken about it (v2).

Having a heart of thankfulness is so vital for our souls—especially when our environment is so negative and critical.

We have 3 types of people who find mercy:

—The Lost

—The Prisoner

—The Fool

Mercy for The Lost (4-9)

- The first group: wandered in the desert wastes

Now I've been lost driving in major cities, and backroads. I've been lost hiking in the woods, but desert wastes - that's bad.. My guess is everything looks the same in the desert waste.

It took Israel 40 years to get out of the wilderness.

- It's not just that you can get directions nailed down—you are also *homeless* and *hungry* (v5, 9)

› The desert waste is also a desperate place

- When we think of lostness, the story Jesus tells of the Prodigal Son comes to mind.

Not only is he far from home....but he is hungry.

Luke 15:15–17 ESV

So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!’

Most of us have no idea of what it's like to be hungry or to starve. We have the opposite problem: check to see how many calories to be sure we are not eating too much.

Lost and starving people are *desperate...which is the main prerequisite for receiving mercy.*

Many people miss mercy because they don't see their *desperate condition*.

From the start, if we don't understand our desperation—we won't "get" this Psalm.

Mercy only applies in situations of desperation.

Hear the promise (107:9)

God's mercy does not just "get you through" but it fills and satisfies.

Mercy for The Prisoner (10-16)

- The second desperate situation is bondage and captivity (v10).
- Now in the Bible, some people are in bondage due to some injustice.

--like Joseph in Egypt, or Jeremiah the prophet.

--In the New Testament some become prisoners for Christ. (Paul)

- But you can also be in captivity and bondage for just reasons you deserve (v11).

These are those who rebelled against the Word—

That describes Adam, Israel...and us

- Jesus explicitly said he came to set the captives free.

Luke 4:18 ESV

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

But again, just like admitting we are lost, we need to admit we are held captive by our sin....and that only Jesus has the power to set us free.

John 8:36 ESV

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

- › That's a massive promise—do you believe it?

Can you picture Jesus shattering the doors of bronze, and cutting the bars of iron...taking you out of your captivity of sin? Saying to us: Come out; be free!

—Past sins no longer define you...not part of your core identity

—We are free from the present control and reign of sin

—Our eternal future is a state of sinless existence in Paradise

Mercy for The Fool (17-22)

- The third group that finds mercy are the fools

It's one thing to admit we are lost, it's another to accept the reality of being captive (prisoners are tough)....but to willfully admit: "I'm a fool" —there's a certain level of humility in that

- (v17) "Fools through their sinful ways"

One commentator:

"This variety of fool is the fathead...typically he treats everything as a joke; flippant. Very often he thinks he knows just a bit better than everyone else present." (Alec Motyer, Psalms)

How do we know if we are fools?

—We take a joking posture to life.

—We indulge our time in things that are flippant and a waste of time.

—We think we know better than most (parents, peers, elders).

- In Proverbs, the fool is often punished, suffers and brought to point of death, desperate—but when they cry out, God meets them.

- Note how mercy meets the fool (v20): sent out his Word and *healed* them.
- Sick people need healing. Our sinful ways make us sick.

Our world is frantically focused on COVID—how many people really take to heart the sickness of sin...which carries eternal consequences?

- In theology there is something called the *noetic* effects of sin

It means that in our depravity, our thinking is really messed up....we become idiotic, our minds dark.

If you've ever heard a person called "sick in the head" that's essentially what we are when we follow our sinful ways.

Romans 1:21 ESV

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Now one of the "gospel reversals" is that God in his mercy works on our minds—rewires our thinking.

His mercy reaches our "sick heads".

So the gospel brings a transformation, even to how we think....a result of sheer mercy!

Romans 12:1–2 ESV

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

So we see:

The God of mercy leads lost people; releases prisoners, and heals the sinners.

Sounds like everything that Jesus came to this earth to do.

Jesus seeks the Lost.....

Jesus redeems the captives....

Jesus showers mercy on the fools....

- › His mercy is totally unaided...he does not need or ask for our help!

Ephesians 2:4–5 ESV

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

We simply receive...and praise!

Conclusion:

There are a few responses:

1. You can totally reject and ignore the help that God giveshow sad though, not to know, not to see a God of mercy.
2. Be assured that no one is ever too far gone—too far beyond the reach of God’s mercy.

It may be *you* today:

Spiritually you are lost, captive, and a fool—the Psalm gives you language of faith and repentance. Cry out to the Lord. Acknowledge your troubled soul. Cast yourself at his mercy.

It may be someone you love: keep crying out to God for loved ones who don’t know a God of mercy.

3. For those who are vessels of mercy, prepared beforehand for glory...Join in the song of the redeemed.

The redeemed never outgrow their need to give thanks to the Lord for his redeeming grace.

If his mercy endures forever, so must our thanks and praise.