

**A Sermon by Rev. Frances Savill
Sunday July 31st
Worship on the Waterfront**

Psalm 107

Our Psalm this morning begins with a bold proclamation and call to witness:

***"Oh, thank God—he's so good!
His love never runs out.
All of you set free by God, tell the world!"***

Then the Psalm tells of all the ways that God's people are rescued when they are in trouble. The Psalm tells of all kinds of troubles – people who wander away from God's path, people who are imprisoned because they did what was evil, people whose ways cause them to become sick, and finally those who are in trouble just because of the circumstances of life and they find themselves in a terrible storm.

In all these cases, in every kind of trouble, whether it was their fault, or just the circumstances of life, in every case, as people cried out to God, God rescued them from their trouble and set them on a course for life. God's help is proclaimed, and the psalmist urges us to join our voices:

***So thank God for his marvelous love,
for his miracle mercy to the children he loves.
Lift high your praises when the people assemble,
shout Hallelujah when the elders meet!***

The final words of the psalm are:

Good people see this (see all that God has done, that God delivers his people when they cry out to him), and are glad;

bad people are speechless, stopped in their tracks.

***If you are really wise, you'll think this over—
it's time you appreciated God's deep love.***

It's time to think this over, deeply and appreciate, celebrate, proclaim and witness to God's great love.

What the psalmist is not talking about is the good life, how God has kept him out of all difficulty. The Psalmist boldly proclaims that there are all kinds of difficulties in this life, problems of our own making and choosing, and troubles that come because there are storms and trials and sickness and terrible things happen.

But over and over again the psalmist affirms that as we cry out to God, God delivers us.

And these words of witness and affirmation are not just the private experience of a lucky few.

The whole congregation, God's people together see God's deliverance, and God's strong arm, and together sing: ***Hallelujah! Praise God for His marvelous love and his mercy to His children He loves.***"

"Christians are not fussy moralists who cluck their tongues over a world going to hell; Christians are people who praise the God who is on our side." (who answers when we call)

"Christians are not pious pretenders in the midst of a decadent culture; Christians are robust witnesses to the God who is our help." Christians are not fatigued outcasts who carry righteousness as a burden in a world where the wicked flourish; Christians are people who sing "Oh, blessed be God!... He didn't abandon us defenseless." (Long Obedience, Peterson p.77)

The Psalms are the poetry of faith and the prayer book of God's people and have been for centuries.

These words tell the honest truth that has been lived by God's people throughout time.

This Psalm magnifies the items of life that are unpleasant, suffering, sin, catastrophe, disaster.

"They are a very real part of life, and they constitute a dominating, fearful background for many. We look for relief among experts in medicine and psychology; we go to museums to get a look at beauty. Psalm (107) is an instance of a person who digs deeply into the trouble and finds there the presence of the God who is on our side. In the details of the conflict, ..., the majestic greatness of God becomes revealed. Faith develops out of the most difficult aspects of our existence, not the easiest.

The person of faith is not a person who has been born, luckily, with a good digestion and sunny disposition. The assumption by outsiders that Christians are naïve or protected is the opposite of the truth: Christians know more about the deep struggles of life than others, more about the ugliness of sin. A look to the heavens can bring a breathtaking sense of wonder and majesty and, if a person is a believer, a feeling of praise to the God who made heaven and earth. This psalm looks the other direction. It looks into the troubles of history, the anxiety of personal conflict and emotional trauma. And it sees there the God who is on our side, God our help.

We speak our words of praise in a world that is hellish; we sing our songs of victory in a world where things get messy; we live our joy among people who neither understand nor encourage us. But the content of our lives is God, not humanity. We are not scavenging in the dark alleys of the world, poking in its garbage cans for a bare subsistence. We are traveling in the light, toward God who is rich in mercy and strong to save. It is Christ not culture, that defines our lives. It is the help we experience, not the hazards we risk, that shapes our days." (Long Obedience p. 79)

In every time of trouble God has been with us, and as we have cried out to God He has rescued us!

So thank God for his marvelous love,
for his miracle mercy to the children he loves.
Lift high your praises when the people assemble,
shout Hallelujah!

If you are really wise, you'll think this over—
and consider the steadfast love of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!