**SUMMER IN THE PSALMS - PSALM 107 - GIVING THANKS**

In October 1829 the ‘Lady Holland’ ship left England for India, and onboard was a missionary from Scotland called Alexander Duff – a good Presbyterian he was! Rounding the Cape of Good Hope on February 13th 1830 the ship struck rocks and it was feared all on board would be lost. It was night and a few onboard managed to clamber aboard a lifeboat and head to what they thought was the shoreline. In the morning they gathered remnants of the ship which washed up on the beach, looking for luggage and valuables. But everything had been swept away including many books Duff had been taking to India to start a library. But later than morning just two books washed up onto the shore, Alexander Duff's bible and a book of Psalms and he opened it to Psalm 107 “Some went down to the sea in ships – v28 then they cried to the Lord in their distress and He delivered them from their distress.” The Psalm opens…

***V1 Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his faithful love endures forever.***

**It amazes me how we as human beings can reflect and analyse while holding values and beliefs that might contradict our life experiences.**

We believe and hold the value that God is good, and that He somehow over-rules what we face each day in our lives. Yes, we live with moments where it looks like God is in-active and un-involved. We believe in healing and wholeness and recovery, yet we live from time to time with illness or physical disability, frailty and weakness. We believe in unity and restoration of relationships but we live with frayed and stressed personalities that want to run and hide rather than be transparent and honest. To be human is truly complicated!

**In Psalm 107 David does the same …..** In the opening of this Psalm – give thanks to God for his loving kindness endures forever. But, in the next breath he is saying – God, where are you? He is on the run from an enemy or feeling cornered by some situation that desperately needs intervention. Is he living in denial? Or a double life? No, he is being human.

Why these Psalms are so good for us, is because they make faith real, and not just a crutch that is for life, or a sweetener when sours things come our way.

The life of faith is for **real people facing real issues**! In this Psalm, David reflects upon his life and some of the experiences he has faced.

Geographic Application of the Psalm

By the way, this Psalm is grounded in the *geographic location of Israel*. It speaks of being ***lost at sea (West). Living with sickness (South)*** in Egypt where the people caught many of the local diseases they had no immunity for. ***Becoming slaves (North)*** where their adversaries the Babylonians and Assyrians lived. And being ***disoriented in the Arabian desert (East).***

**In Verses** **4-32,** There are **FOUR PICTURES** of life experiences of people.

1. V4 THE **WILDERNESS WANDERER**

In a place where you become tired of waiting, a dry place, unfruitful, there is little joy and sense of moving forwards and onwards. Sometimes this is because we don’t obey God’s word to us, we grizzle and complain. David is saying yes I’ve wandered at times into some dry places, then I called out to God and he reached down and helped.

1. V10 THE **PRISONER**  - WE WAITED BOUND WITH CHAINS

Today all kind of chains bind people, childhood experiences, misbeliefs, or just even the inability to find purpose and direction in life. But there are more subtle chains that many of us might find ourselves bound in. Chains of **tradition** – where we resist anything new or different. Chains of **comfort** where we insulate our lifestyle from challenge or dislocation. I'm just as bound as an addict because I’m addicted to my comfort. I’ve realised that I can become bound by things at certain stages of my life. I need to let go and let God lead me onwards, if I don’t I will get stuck in a comfort or tradition rut. Or even a **religious** rut which is the worst kind of all, that’s where the life has gone out of faith and what is left is just the husk of something which used to live. And David says – I cried out to God and he came and unshackled the chains.

1. V17 **THE FOOLISH REBEL** - WE WERE FOOLISH REBELS

Rather than eat what God supplied in their lives, they starved themselves v18. Trying to **demonstrate control** of their lives – I will show you God – who is in control – I am. All along God wanted to provide and heal them. Incidentally, this is a reference here to self-starving as a way of showing control – right here in the Bible….it’s not a new thing! There is a rebel inside many of us, but it’s foolish.

1. V23 **THE RESTLESS TRAVELLER** - WE TRAVELLED THE SEAS OF LIFE

Seeking financial reward or a better life across the seas. But what did they find? They found storms and heartache, they saw God’s power in the storms and seas, and their lives were humbled. V29 He calmed the storms with a whisper and stilled the waves. These are restless people on the move, but who need to find what Augustine found ‘Our hearts are restless until they find rest in you!’

Then the best part of the Psalm comes in verses 33-43

The Psalm up until now is building rapport with you and your story.

Its raising real-life situations that you can identify with.

The Psalm is trying to connect with you in some way….find yourself in here.

*Now it says whatever and wherever you are….God can change it….*

***He can reverse what you see into the opposite of what is there.***

**God can reverse the trend of your life!**

God can make *good things go bad and bad things turn for the better.*

**V33** He can change rivers of life into **desert and springs of water** into dry thirsty land.

**V34** He can turn fruitful responsive land into salty marshland – bringing judgement upon people’s choices.

So the idea that God only improves your life is not actually true, he might cause it to crash and burn. So you will discover what is true in value. Now you would think it would be the opposite, wouldn’t you? That it would say he can reverse the desert into rivers! But shockingly it’s also the opposite. People whose lives are going swimmingly will find themselves in a wasteland. Why? So they will seek God and come to know him in their desperation.

**V35** But equally he can bring prosperity **and fruitfulness into a wasteland** and He can bring **rescue to the poor**

**V36** He brings the hungry to settle and to build their cities, they have children and *businesses that increase* and their lives prosper.

**V39** and when those who lead them oppress and abuse them he rescues them and shepherds them. The heart of God goes out to these homeless poor in our world.

For many years I was director of an organisation that bought relief to the world’s poor. It **married together the great commission – and the great commandment**.We did projects in south-east Asia and Africa among remote villages where water supply was difficult, sanitary conditions compromised, food supply was uncertain. And into these places, we shared the goodness of Jesus with the good news of potable water and medical clinics.

**What motivates us to do this? The steadfast love of God**

Now how do you bring these two irreconcilable things together?

A God who is enduringly faithful, loving and great….AND

A world who is bent on oppression and abuse of the vulnerable and poor?

The answer is the church – and the gospel. That is why we are out there trying to make a difference in mission. That’s why our church Trust does what it does.

This is why – we praise Him (Let all the nations praise Him). Because his steadfast love endures forever.

**Can you see yourself in here somewhere?**

**The wilderness wanderer, the prisoner, the foolish rebel, the restless traveller.** We too have been bound in chains and been rebels**.** We too have been restless travellers – and felt some storms in life**.** And God’s enduring steadfast faithful love has reached us and lifted us.But then he says to us, now GO and reach out to others.

And I need to hear this message for my life today, that you can reverse the trend of my life, or be reminded that you did that for me.

Today I give you thanks….that you reached down and touched my life….

Bought living water into the thirsty place.

Bought fruitfulness into my wasteland

Bought rescue into my poverty

Bought safety and serenity into my storms

Bought stability into my rebellion

Bought freedom into the chains that bound me.

Each of us has a story…..**but there is something common in all our stories….here it is – the steadfast love of God never ceases, his mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning.**

**David says in this Psalm…..107 Give Thanks**

Has God lifted your life?

Has God stilled some storm for you? Then **speak it out v1**

Has God gathered you up from some exiled place and bought you home?

We have all been bought home from somewhere to God!

When we recall this in our lives – we want to worship and go to work for God!

The challenge is for many of us, we don’t believe that what we are facing today is worth troubling God about OR we don’t think God is in it.

**In the New Testament years later Apostle Paul** would pen some powerful words to a church in modern Turkey – Thessalonica. 1 Thessalonians 5.14-22

*Encourage the timid. Take tender care of the weak. Be patient with everyone.*

*Always try to do good for each other. Don’t pay back evil for evil. Always be joyful. Never stop praying.* Be *thankful in all circumstances* for this is the will of God for you who belong to Christ Jesus*. Don’t stifle or quench the Holy Spirit. Don’t scoff at prophecies. Test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. Stay away from every kind of evil.*

Thank you, God, for where I am right now – today in my life.

I’m thankful because you are with me.

I’m thankful because you can reverse the trend and circumstances of my life.

I’m thankful because right here and now I can prove you to be steadfast,

I’m thankful because you can lift my life into a new place,

And I will praise you right now for where I’m at….because we are there together.