

Four Pictures of God's Love

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Date: 02 February 2025

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[0 : 00] And in fact, I have said the exact same things now for the last six or seven years. And this Sunday, for the first time, I have to edit it. You may remember, I typically say, good morning, my name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church.

I can no longer say that. I actually need to say, my name is Matthew Capone, and I am one of the pastors here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church. Some of you know Andy Perch has been serving with us through the Skill Bridge Program.

The Skill Bridge Program and Andy's full-time work as a chaplain came to an end on Friday, January 31st. And on February 1st, Andy began officially working for us as an assistant pastor. It's a sign of really of God's grace and mercy to our church. You may not know this, but right now it's actually a very challenging time to hire pastors. Many men have left the ministry.

The pipeline is not what it used to be, and so churches here in town, some of us spent over a year looking for someone. God just brought us Andy and brought us someone in such a good fit for our church with his military background and his gifts.

[1 : 19] And so I am very grateful now to only be one of the pastors at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church. And it's my joy to bring God's word to you today.

What is the rest of the things I say? I think I say we're following Jesus together as one community, and as we follow him together as one community, we become convinced that there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in his word.

And we're continuing our short series. Actually, we're ending our short series this morning in the book of Psalms with Psalm 107. Next week, Jonathan Clark is going to begin a four-week sermon series on evangelism, which I'm excited about.

I hope you are as well. But we are not there yet. And so as we finish our series in the book of Psalms, we're in Psalm 107. And I have the sad news that we are only going to skim the surface of that psalm this morning.

It is the type of psalm that we could camp out in for weeks. Someone asked me earlier this week, someone outside our church, if I was going to end with a bang, and I make no promises to end with a bang.

[2 : 37] In fact, I'm going to tell you the same thing I told you around Advent, that the great English writer Samuel Johnson in the 18th century said people need to be reminded more often than they need to be instructed.

And this morning is a reminder sermon. And so that might be a bang. I'll let you figure that out. Some Sundays are reminder Sundays, and that's today.

We're going to have a very simple sermon from Psalm 107, which is actually what a lot of psalms are. A lot of psalms simply are there for us to rehearse and remember what we already know is true.

To rehearse and remember, remind ourselves of God's faithfulness. So our sermon this morning, our passage, is very simple. You'll see the title on page nine, which I've already referenced, four pictures of God's love.

And it's as simple as that. This psalm gives us four different angles on God's faithfulness to his people, which remind us of why we praise him.

[3 : 45] In fact, we're going to focus in on that this morning. So I'm going to read for us verses 33 through 42. But we're not even going to touch those this morning because there is so much here in this passage.

So I invite you to turn with me now to Psalm 107. You can turn in your worship guide. You can turn in your Bible. You can turn on your phone. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's word.

Proverbs chapter 30, verse 5 tells us, every word of God proves true. He is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

And so that's why we read now Psalm 107. Oh, give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble. Verse 4.

[4 : 46] Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.

He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in. Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man.

For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things. Verse 10. Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons.

For they had rebelled against the words of God and spurned the counsel of the Most High. So he bowed their hearts down with hard labor. They fell down with none to help.

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness in the shadow of death and burst their bonds apart.

[5 : 55] Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man. For he shatters the doors of bronze and cuts into the bars of iron.

Verse 17. Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction. They loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death.

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He sent out his word and healed them and delivered them from their destruction.

Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man. And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy.

Verse 23. Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters. They saw the deeds of the Lord, his wondrous works in the deep.

[7 : 03] For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. They mounted up to heaven. They went down to the depths. Their courage melted away in their evil plight.

They reeled and staggered like drunken men, and were at their wit's end. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.

He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven.

Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man. Let them extol him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

Verse 33. He turns rivers into a desert, springs of water into thirsty ground, a fruitful land into a salty waste, because of the evil of its inhabitants.

[8 : 07] He turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water. And there he lets the hungry dwell, and they establish a city to live in.

They sow fields and plant vineyards and get a fruitful yield. By his blessing, they multiply greatly, and he does not let their livestock diminish.

Verse 39. When they are diminished and brought low through oppression, evil, and sorrow, he pours contempt on princes and makes them wander in trackless wastes.

But he raises up the needy out of affliction and makes their families like flocks. The upright see it and are glad, and all wickedness shuts its mouth.

Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things. Let them consider the steadfast love of the Lord. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word.

[9 : 13] Our Father in heaven, we do praise you and thank you for your steadfast love, which endures forever. We thank you that one way that you show that to us is through your word, which guides us and instructs us, and most of all shows us Jesus Christ.

And so we ask that you would do that by your Holy Spirit again this morning, that you would use these words in a powerful way in our lives, that you would grow our love and affection for Christ.

You'd grow our reverence and awe for him. You'd grow our obedience to him. And we ask all of these things in his mighty name. Amen. If you are not living under a rock, which I assume you're not since you're here this morning, you, like me, probably find that more and more of your purchasing comes online through websites rather than stores.

And you can almost set your clock by the emails that you will receive after you make the purchase. Of course, you have emails confirming and emails telling you about the shipping and emails telling you about the delivery.

But even after it's delivered, there's one final email, that email that asks you for a review. And so here are some of the emails I've received from online sellers.

[10 : 35] Share your two cents. It's okay. Here's another one. Don't forget to rate and review your purchase. Maybe I want to forget.

Your thoughts on product name are valuable. Leave a review. That's a little better. I love, always love to hear that my thoughts are valuable. Flattery can go a long way.

We're all ears. Leave a review and get rewarded. I opened that email. It didn't say what the reward was, so I didn't leave a review. Here's another one.

Review your recent purchase and win. This time they told me what I could win. Wasn't a guarantee, so I didn't fill it out. It was a \$100 gift card.

What are these emails asking for? In a word, they are asking for praise. And I bring that up to remind you that praise is a normal, a constant part of the human life.

[11 : 43] Sometimes when people come to passages in the Bible that command us to praise God, they think, man, what a strange, unnatural thing. Who is this God who needs praise? What does that say about him?

Is he somehow tiny and small or insecure? No. This is actually something we do all the time. Praise is a normal part of being human.

So much a normal part that you have and you will continue to receive emails requesting, asking, demanding it. Even, in some of the examples I've given you, bribing you for it.

One time I got an email asking for review saying I would get a gift card. So I filled it out. It wasn't a gift card. It was a discount code. You can imagine my shock and upset.

Verse 1 here in this psalm gets right to the point. Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. Give praise to God.

[12 : 43] Now, when we come to a passage of Scripture, really any passage of Scripture, our task, our goal includes many things. But the primary thing really we're trying to get at is this.

What do we learn about God? And what do we learn about ourselves? How does God meet us in his grace? Ultimately, how does he meet us in Jesus Christ?

And then how do we respond to that grace? And those are the two questions that preachers, pastors, struggle with week after week as we prepare sermons and then deliver them to congregations.

That's not just for pastors, really. That's the question of any good Bible student. What is this passage revealing about God? And what is it that I am supposed to do with it? And sometimes that's a real struggle.

That's a real challenge. You're working through commentaries and ideas and books trying to figure out what is God revealing in this passage. Then, every once in a while, you'll hit a passage of Scripture where you don't have to do that work.

[13 : 44] Because it tells you. And this morning, we are in one of those passages. We don't have to wonder what we're supposed to know about God and how we're supposed to respond.

What do we learn about God? How does he meet us in his grace? Verse 1, He is good, for his steadfast love endures forever. And if you were listening, you heard that repeated over and over throughout the psalm.

How are we supposed to respond? What is asked and commanded of God's people? Well, we don't have to search for that either. Verse 1, Oh, give thanks to the Lord.

What is the point of Psalm 107? Praise God because he's good. And how is he good?

He is good in his steadfast love. Now, this Hebrew word for steadfast love includes more than anything any of our English words have in it.

[14 : 47] And so we really need to dig deeper into it to understand the depth, the power, the significance of this. Some people will tell you that if you are starting on a topic, a subject, and you're

doing some research, and you want to learn as much as you can, the best place to start is a children's book.

The best place to start is a children's book because it makes everything so simple. You want to learn about the Civil War? Find a children's book on the Civil War.

You want to learn about space exploration? Find a book about space exploration. I'm not saying you stop there. I'm saying you start there. My favorite definition of God's steadfast love comes from a children's book, and it's on page 8 of your worship guide.

God's steadfast love is this, his never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love. And so we could read Psalm 107, verse 1 like this, Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. For his never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love, endures forever. Next question is this, how do we see God's steadfast love?

[16:06] Well, this passage tells us, verse 2, it's because he has redeemed us from trouble. And then verse 3, he's gathered his people together from every corner of the earth.

This is a reference, by the way, to God bringing his people back from the exile when they had to leave the promised land because of their rebellion. Of course, we take that now in a fuller sense of God gathering his people, his church to himself from every tribe, tongue, and nation, and ultimately God gathering his people to the new Jerusalem, to heaven.

And so that gets us to what I mentioned at the beginning. This is the introduction. It tells us the point of the sermon. We're supposed to give thanks to God for his steadfast love. And then we are given four pictures of God's steadfast love.

Before we jump into that, I want you to take a look with me at the very last verse, verse 43, which tells us this. Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things.

Let them consider the steadfast love of the Lord. Do you consider yourself to be wise? Would you like to be wise?

[17:33] Then attend to these things. Consider with me the steadfast love of the Lord. Picture one is a picture of God's people being brought from a desert to a city.

You'll find this in verses four through seven. Now, we could take this at times in a literal sense. There were times when God's people were in a literal desert separated from his promised land, right?

They're crying out that they would be able to return to Jerusalem, God's holy city. We think now, though, as Christians in the New Testament, our hope is not tied to earthly Jerusalem.

No, instead, we are thinking here of a spiritual desert, God's people, as they are separated from God's presence and his blessing.

So this cry is coming from people who are experiencing the opposite of verse nine. Look with me there. What does it mean to be in the desert?

[18:45] If you are in the desert spiritually, you are trying to satisfy your soul with things that won't deliver.

If you are in the desert, we might think of that common phrase, looking for love in all the wrong places.

Those who are in the desert are those who are separated from God's people and his power and his presence. Those who need to be brought into God's church, into relationship with Jesus Christ. Looking, of course, not ultimately to the church, but as I mentioned before, the new Jerusalem, looking forward to heaven, when God brings all his people from around the world and throughout time, finally and fully together.

And so what do we learn from this picture? We praise God for gathering his church. We praise God for gathering his people.

[19:50] That includes God gathering his people here on February 2nd, 2025 at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church. That includes praising God for calling you to himself.

Right? You were one of the people in the desert. To go from looking in all the wrong places for what can be only fulfilled by God is to be in that place.

Finding no way to a city to dwell in, hungry and thirsty. This is verse 5. You might say your soul fainted within you. God takes his people out of the desert and he brings them to a place of life and blessing and flourishing.

Is that true of you? If it is, give thanks to the Lord for he is good for his steadfast love endures forever.

I warned you during the announcements that we were going to go back to page 2. We were going to look at our summary of this psalm that we already sang. What is the first picture if not this?

[21 : 17] We were wandering in the desert with our souls so starved and weak. We were hungry for a homeland we did not know how to seek. But we lifted up our voices to the only one who hears.

And the God of mercy came and brought us near. If you are a Christian, the God of mercy has come and brought you near.

Give thanks to the Lord for his love endures forever. Of course, we see this fulfilled fully and finally in our Lord Jesus.

The last time I preached on, I think it was Psalm 46, I reminded you of John chapter 14. Jesus says, Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God.

Believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you.

[22 : 16] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself. That where I am, you may be also.

He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in. And how do we reach that city?

Jesus tells us also in John 14.

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Jesus is the one who brings his people from desert wastes to a city to dwell in.

That's picture one. Picture one doesn't speak about sin explicitly, although of course it's there. That is part of God calling his people from the desert to the city.

The second picture, what we see in verses 10 through 16, becomes much more direct. Picture one was a trip from the desert to the city. Picture two is release from prison.

[23 : 24] Verse 10, some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. We find out that these folks are prisoners. And why are they prisoners? Well, verse 11, because they rebelled against God and they spurned him.

Verse 12, it turns out now they are facing God's punishment. What do they do? Verse 13, they cry out. Verses 13 and 16, God sets them free.

Has God set you free? The image here of a prisoner is one we're familiar with from the New Testament when the Apostle Paul and others speak about being slaves to sin.

Has God set you free from your slavery to sin? Remember, we've talked about the three Ps that we reference when it comes to sin.

There's a presence, a power, and a penalty. If you have been set free from slavery to sin, sin no longer has power over you and you no longer face a penalty.

[24 : 40] Yes, the presence is there, less and less. If you've been set free from the slavery to sin, it doesn't mean you don't struggle with sin anymore.

Actually, it means now you're able to struggle with it. Sin is no longer the dominating force in your life. It's present. It's not in control.

Instead, since it is not in control, since you are now a son and a daughter of God, the Holy Spirit is at work growing and multiplying and increasing the fruit of the Spirit in you.

You have, year by year, by God's grace, sin is pushed back and is weakening year by year.

Righteousness and holiness are moving forward and advancing. Has God set you free from the slavery to sin?

[26 : 00] Is that true of you? That's the Christian life. If you experience that, you can say, By the way, notice what it doesn't say.

It doesn't say the prisoners pulled themselves up by their bootstraps and figured out a way to destroy their chains. No.

Verse 13, That's God's grace, brothers and sisters.

God's grace here is that in all of these scenes, none of these folks are able to deliver themselves. They must be rescued by someone else.

They don't break their chains. No. Verse 16, For he, that is God, shatters the doors of bronze and cuts into the bars of iron.

[27 : 13] We might describe it this way. We were locked out of the garden and our backs bent down with pain. In the shadow of death's darkness, we were slaves to sin and blame.

Then we cried out in our labor to the only one who hears, and the God of mercy wiped away our tears.

Oh, give thanks to the Lord for his love endures forever. Of course, we see this ultimately in our Lord Jesus. Jesus tells us in John chapter 8, Truly, truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.

The slave does not remain in the house forever. The son remains forever. So if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Christian, the son has set you free. You are free indeed. You may have the presence of sin.

[28 : 28] You have not the penalty nor the power. Oh, give thanks to the Lord for he is good for his steadfast love endures forever.

The next picture we have here is even more specific. The idea of slavery to sin, that's kind of this general idea. Now we're gonna dial in a little bit and see not just the slavery, but the damage of sin. Verses 17 through 22 show us fools and sinners. Verse 17, these are fools who are suffering affliction, and they're suffering affliction.

This has gotten so bad. Verse 18 tells us, excuse me, not, yeah, verse 18, they drew near to the gates of death.

The presence of sin here had become so destructive, in other words, that they were almost gone. One pastor puts it this way.

[29 : 30] He says, the picture is of those who have badly damaged their spiritual and physical health through foolish, self-indulgent lifestyles and addictions.

And so the psalmist here is talking about a person who has found himself or herself ensnared. That their sin is in fact destroying them more and more.

Could be the person who is buried in credit card debt, chasing that feeling of fullness and satisfaction from consumption that never delivers.

Could be the person who's ensnared in an addiction to pornography or drugs in a desperate attempt to numb the pain. It could be the person who wakes up and because of their loth and their sloth and their laziness, they are avoiding life.

And they realize suddenly there's not much of a future for them. And so of course it says, what do these people do?

[30 : 38] They find a self-help book, they get to work, right? You see that in verse 20. That was a joke, you can laugh. Verse 19, they cried to the Lord in their trouble and he delivered them from their distress.

Once again, brothers and sisters, this is God's grace. The answer here is not that suddenly they discovered more focus and self-discipline.

No, the answer is that they experienced and cried out for the great and matchless mercy of God. That is what caused them to break free.

So this psalm reminds us, God offers freedom from these things too. He doesn't offer us freedom by muscling our way down, by exercising greater self-control and listening to the right influencers and podcasts.

No, he reminds us that these addictions, these habits entice and seduce us, but they cannot fulfill us. And he reminds us of and provides for us what can only fulfill, which is the relationship with God that flows out into healed relationships with ourselves, with the world, with others.

[32 : 09] We might say this, as God fills us in a variety of ways, our hunger for these things becomes less and less.

We might summarize it in this way. We were fools in our rebellion with our hunger strike of pride. We were sick and growing closer to the death we should have died.

Then he heard of our condition and he called us by our names and the God of glory took away our shame.

Has the God of glory taken away your shame? If so, give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Our final picture comes in verses 23 through 32. This one's a little different. This is not about people trapped in the desert or necessarily experiencing direct affliction from sin.

[33 : 22] No, these are sailors and they hit a storm that is too much for them. Verse 23, some are going down to the sea in ships. They see the deeds of the Lord, his wondrous works in the deep.

Then in 25 and 26, this storm comes up that is more than they are able to manage. Verse 26 tells us this, their courage melted away in their evil plight.

Verse 27, they were at their wit's end. Now that phrase, at their wit's end, if you're reading an ESV translation of the Bible, you'll see a little note at the bottom that says, and all their wisdom was swallowed up.

One version puts it this way, all their skill was useless. The point is this, no matter how strong or wise or experienced you are in this world, no matter how much power you have, you will run up against forces that are too much for you.

There are some things that you cannot outrun. run. We might think of economic and political forces. [34 : 52] We might think of the limitations of our own bodies, the tragedy and chaos that nothing can protect us from. These verses are reminding us of a simple truth.

You are just not that powerful. and there are some things that no human can stand against.

There are moments where we're overwhelmed by the power of nature and of this world. And our only hope is God and His mercy.

Our wisdom, our wealth, our experience, our influence cannot and will not save us. We might say this, we were far out on the ocean, making wealth and chasing dreams, but the waves of great destruction brought us trembling to our knees.

Then we cried like drunken sailors to the only one who hears, and the God of comfort took away our fears.

[36 : 09] God there is only one maker of heaven and earth. There is only one God more powerful than the forces of this world.

We see this again in our Lord Jesus. You may remember when we were together in the gospel of Mark, we saw this story in Mark chapter 4 that Jesus is with his disciples in the boat and this great storm comes up.

Jesus is asleep and the disciples are afraid that it is going to kill them. Jesus has the audacity, we're told in verse 38, to be in the stern, asleep on the cushion.

The disciples woke him and said to him, teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? Jesus awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, peace, be still.

The wind ceased and there was a great calm and he said to them, why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?

[37 : 26] Christian, there are forces in this world that are greater than you can handle, but they are not greater than our God.

Verse 29, he made the storm be still and the waves of the sea were hushed. Has the God of comfort taken away your fears?

If he has, give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever. I started this morning by talking about the proliferation of online reviews and the emails and the requests that you receive for them.

why do you receive so many? What is the point ultimately of a review? The point is so that when you shop, you would know what is good.

You'd grow in knowledge. You would make the right choice. know what is the point of this psalm? That you would know what is good.

[39 : 02] That you would grow in knowledge. That you would make the right choice. That you would praise God and you would follow him because his steadfast love endures forever.

forever. We might even go so far as to say this. Oh, give thanks to the Lord for his love endures forever.

We were wandering and lost and our father brought us home to a safe dwelling place, to a feast of joy and laughter.

Oh, give thanks to the Lord for he is good. God. Let's pray. Our father in heaven, we do praise you and thank you that you are good and your steadfast love endures forever.

We ask that you would help us to meditate on these things so that we would become wise and even more than that, we would trust and follow you. We ask all of these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

[40 : 14] Amen.