

**“Give thanks to the LORD” Psalm 107 (10/26/25)**

How is your Psalm reading going? The end of our long two-month journey is near. For those who are reading Psalms, I encourage you to continue to the end. And if you have not yet started, I invite you to begin today. If you read Psalms for just one hour a day, you can still finish before the end of this month.

Personally, this two-month Psalm series was a great challenge for me. When God first gave me the desire to preach through the Psalms, I wondered if it would even be possible. But God also gave me the expectation that—even in the difficult passages—it would be a precious journey of discovering God’s meaning. As I prepared each sermon and meditated on Psalms, I came to understand more deeply the authors' hearts and the heart of God.

Today, we finally arrived at the last section of the Psalms—the fifth book—and its introduction, Psalm 107. When we look at Psalm 107, we can see that its tone is quite different from the introduction of Book IV, which is Psalm 90. In Psalm 90, the Israelites rejoiced in God’s grace, but at the same time, they looked back on their painful history with uncertainty about God’s heart toward them.

In contrast, Psalm 107 is full of confident declarations about who God is. Unlike the tone of Psalm 90, Psalm 107 confidently proclaims God’s goodness and steadfast love. As we mentioned in earlier sermons, the entire Psalms eventually ends in praise to God. As the introduction to the final book, Psalm 107 shows Israel now responding to God with confident praise.

If the fourth book of Psalms reflected on God’s heart in Israel’s past history, the fifth book looks ahead. It speaks to the time after the people returned from fifty years of Babylonian exile and now lived within the Persian Empire. They faced the question of how to recover their identity and how to live faithfully in this new world.

Psalm 107 reflects on how God's people should remember God and live in the midst of the new empire.

The author of Psalm 107 describes four kinds of people who experienced God's work in their lives:

1. The Lost in the Desert — those who wandered and were found.
2. The Captives in Darkness — those imprisoned in chains, freed by God's power.
3. The Sick in Affliction — those who suffered because of sin, healed by God's mercy.
4. The Sailors in the Storm — those terrified by chaos, rescued by God's calm.

These four situations might seem different from our lives in this area. The first group wandered in a wilderness—but we have no desert around us, and even if we lose our way, GPS can easily guide us. The second group was captives—referring to Israelites who had been exiled to Babylon. We are not likely to be taken as prisoners by another nation. The third group, the sick, might feel more relatable. But ancient Israelites often believed that illness was caused by sin, a view we do not have today. The fourth group, sailors in a storm, is also hard to find here in Wisconsin.

But even if these four examples do not literally describe us, their situations still reflect realities we experience. There are people today who wander, having lost direction in life. There are people bound by some reasons, unable to find freedom. There are those who suffer from sickness—not because of sin but still enduring deep pain. And there are people overwhelmed by fear—not from a physical storm but from the storms of life. Therefore, the message of Psalm 107 remains fully applicable

to us today.

So how does the author of Psalm 107 describe God's work in these lives, and what does this author tell Israel to do? We need to pay attention to two repeated verses in Psalm 107:

1. "Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress."
2. "Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind."

More simply, the psalm calls us to "Cry out to the Lord" and "Give thanks to the Lord."

About the first phrase, "Cry out to the Lord," When we face difficulties—when suffering or challenges come into our lives—we must first turn to God and ask for God's help rather than relying on our own strength. To cry out to the Lord means more than simply asking God to remove our difficulties; it is the cry of someone who acknowledges total dependence on God. It is the confession that I can do nothing on my own and that my life needs God's complete intervention.

If we go deeper, this cry is not only about life's troubles but also about salvation itself. To cry out to the Lord means recognizing that we cannot save ourselves. We must cry out for God's mercy and salvation.

Now let's think about the second phrase, "Give thanks to the Lord," It is interesting that Psalm 107 does not begin with "Praise the Lord" but instead emphasizes "Give thanks to the Lord." The author even calls the people to offer a Thanksgiving offering to God.

In ancient Israel, giving thanks to God carried special meaning. Offering

thanksgiving to God was not a unique liturgy of Israel; many surrounding nations also gave thank-offerings to their gods. But the purpose and meaning of Israel's thanksgiving were special.

In the Ancient Near East, people typically offered thank-offerings to their gods only when good things happened—victory in battle, a successful harvest, and so on—as a response to favorable outcomes.

However, Israel's thanksgiving offering was different. According to the Law, the thank offering was a type of peace offering. It always required the death of a sacrificial animal, and the meat of the sacrifice had to be eaten on the same day. The sacrifice—an unblemished ox, lamb, or goat—had to be completely eaten or shared with the priest and neighbors.

This meant that the thanksgiving offering was not a private act of gratitude but a communal celebration of reconciliation and grace. The death of the animal symbolized that peace between God and humans had been restored through the shedding of life. Sharing the meal on the same day symbolized that the joy of salvation should be immediately shared within the community.

Thus, Israel's thanksgiving was primarily about God's salvation and the restoration of a relationship with God, not merely about receiving good things.

So the author's message to the people who had regained their homeland was clear: "Cry out to the Lord" and "Give thanks to the Lord." I encourage us to remember our past suffering and difficulties, and remember how God saved us, and live each day by crying out to God and giving thanks to God.

We, too, must remember the God who has worked in our difficulties. We must live by crying out and giving thanks. God is already present among us. God always listens to us in every situation, in every moment. So let us cry out to God.

And we have enough reason to give thanks—because God has already saved us through Jesus Christ, the ultimate peace offering. Through Jesus Christ’s sacrifice, reconciliation has been made complete. So, we have abundant reason to give thanks. Actually, just one reason is enough to give thanks to God: Jesus Christ.

May this two-month journey through the Psalms end with God’s heart deeply rooted in our hearts. May our lives be filled with the cry out and thanksgiving that lead to praise. And may the grace of God revealed through the Psalms continue to overflow in our lives, even after this reading journey ends. Amen.