

The Wilderness Dweller is Heard and is made a City Dweller

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- [0 : 00] The beginning is from Psalm 107. Psalm 107, and from the beginning. Praise God, for he is good, for still his mercies lasting be.
- Let God's redeemed say so, whom he from the enemy's hand did free, and gathered them out of the lands from north, south, east, and west.
- They strayed in deserts' pathless way, no city found to rest, for thirst and hunger in them fains their soul. When strates them press, they cry unto the Lord, and he them frees from their distress.
- Them also in a way to walk, that right as he did guide, that they might to a city go wherein they might abide. O that men to the Lord would give, praise for his goodness then, and for his works of wonder done unto the sons of men.
- For he the soul that longing is, doth fully satisfy. With goodness he the hungry soul doth fill abundantly.
- [1 : 16] And so on. We shall sing these verses. Psalm 107, verses 1 to 9. Praise God, for he is good, for still his mercies lasting be.
- Let God's redeeming sins of her.
- From the end, he shantily. And gather them out of the land from north, east, and west.
- They still did guess the pathless way, no city found to rest.
- For sure shall not be. For sure shall not be. In heaven's place there, so blessed is and rest.
- [3 : 02] They cry unto the Lord, and King, And will ever be.
- And hémigan lying, nor Then gee shall we send that vids in the city.
- Thank you.
- For his goodness then, and for his works of Hungarian, until the sons of men, for he does not want to be the one who is God, for his others' eye, with goodness in the hungry soul, God can't have hung on thee.
- Let us come before God in prayer. Let us pray. Grant, O Lord, that we might continue before you in the spirit of prayer, and that praises would come from our lips.
- [5 : 32] We bless you and thank you that we have good cause to praise your name. Your goodness meets us every day.
- Your servant, O Lord, acknowledged that each morning that your goodness confronted him, and that your faithfulness was exceedingly great.
- And he could say no other, because every which way he turned, he was made aware of God's bounty.
- And we acknowledge that like him we can say likewise.

God's mercies I will ever sing, your servant said. God's mercies I will ever sing, your servant said. And when we reflect on what the mercies of God entail, we can join in the self-same, acknowledging praise.

[6 : 51] We give thanks that even on this day of which bears your name, that we are entitled to think about what it means to be with your people.

And while we are not physically able to gather as we once did, there are limitations placed upon many who cannot meet publicly, and even such as are met.

They are confronted with a different reality as to the way in which they worship God and the manner in which they conduct themselves. And yet the truth is that they can say, as others before them, that your tabernacles are a place where they would want to be made.

In your house. Blessed are they that dwell in your house. And they will still be praising you. They will continue to praise you.

Every opportunity that they have. May it be true of us that our voices would not cease except to bless the name of God.

[8 : 26] And if we do not testify to your goodness, we are told that the stones themselves would speak. Continue to watch over us. Pour out your spirit upon us.

That we be united in the same desire. To be collectively found at a throne of grace. Acknowledging our God as our God.

And not holding back. Bless our homes, our families. Bless our neighbourhoods, our communities. Bless our island and our nation.

Bless our land and our nation. We plead for your blessing to be upon our nation. A nation that has neglected the things of God. A nation that has departed from the truth of God.

A nation that sees the wisdom of embracing all faiths and no faith. In reality, what they are doing is denying the existence of the only living and true God.

[9 : 37] There is but one God. Your word testifies to that fact. And that you are Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To that we confess. There is one Saviour for sinners.

Even Jesus Christ. And him only. We pray that you would remember us this day in his name. That you would bless all that is done in his name.

That you would fix before our minds eye the beauty of his passion. The glory of his work. Help us to acknowledge that what he is will remain the same.

And that at your right hand he receives the fullness of glory from the mouth of the saints that have gone home. From the angels that are gathered in his presence.

But the day will come when the church in his glory will be there corporately. And he will come and take that church to be with him. For all eternity.

[10 : 46] We remember in your presence all who form part of that body. Though we know them not. They know the same Christ and Christ knows them. We pray that we would be found in him.

And that we would be assured of what that means for us and for all who share the same hope. We pray that you would bless us in our worship.

Remember those who join with us in worship who may not know you. Who are yet strangers to your grace. Enable them to close in with Christ. To cry out in truth what must I do to be saved.

That they may have an answer to their question. and that they may put their trust wholeheartedly in the one who is able to save body and soul.

We pray that you would remember all that we would leave in your care and keeping. those who are unwell that we know of. We pray for healing for them as we pray for healing for all.

[11 : 56] We ask that you would bless the those who are caring for them whose official duty it is to act as doctors and nurses and carers in hospitals and in the community and in places appointed to the care of the vulnerable.

We pray for those who have duties to perform within the community to ensure the well-being of the community. We pray for our armed forces the peacekeepers of the nations.

We remember them that are deployed locally, nationally and internationally. We pray for the war-torn nations of the earth. We think of the Yemen.

We think of parts of the world that are constantly struggling with internal strife. And we pray, Lord, that you would mercifully undertake for them especially these nations that are suffering mightily because of the situation that is rife there.

We think of Ethiopia and particularly the woman and the children and the elderly that have been displaced and are starving and are forced to flee for their lives and when those who govern them are denying the truth of what is going on there turning a blind eye to the suffering that is before them.

[13 : 34] Be merciful, Lord, to all who are suffering whatever they may be. We think of Nepal. We think of places that are suffering because of COVID. We think of those who are suffering from that illness.

We remember all that is done to alleviate that suffering, to bring out answers to the viruses that are arising in different places at different times and some of them are things for which there is no answer at the present.

So here are petitions. Make us thankful that we can come to our God who is almighty. Your arm is powerful and you are able to save to the other most.

Any and all who would come to you by way of Christ. Bless the reading of your word. Bless the preaching. Offer it wherever it is heard. In public or in through the medium of radio or television or internet, whatever means you have ordained by which the truth of God is communicated, may it be blessed.

May the hearing ear be opened and may each heart be attuned to the truth. May we reject that which is false. Embrace that which is true and recognise all the realities of faith and the part it has to play in our lives as Christian believers in the world.

[15 : 15] Watch over as each one cleansed from sin and all we ask with forgiveness of sin in Christ. Amen. I'm going to read from the Old Testament Book of Psalms.

The Book of Psalms and we're reading from Psalm 107. Psalm 107. The whole Psalm. O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good, for his mercy endures forever.

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered them out of the lands, from the east and from the west and from the north and from the south.

They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way. They found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses, and he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of apitation.

O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men, for he satisfieth the long of the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness, such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron, because they rebelled against the words of God, and condemned the counsel of the Most High.

[16 : 49] Therefore he brought down their heart with labour, they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses.

He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and break their bands in sunder. O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men, for he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in thunder.

Fools, because of their transgression and because of their iniquity, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat, and they draw near unto the gates of death.

Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble. He saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.

O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, for his wonderful works to the children of men, and let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.

[18 : 01] They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep.

For he commandeth and raises the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths, their soul is melted because of trouble.

They reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man, and at their wits' end, then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.

He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet, so he bringeth them into the desired haven.

O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men. Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

[19 : 12] He turneth rivers into the wilderness, and the water springs into dry ground, a fruitful land in the barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water springs, and there he maketh hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation, and sow the fields and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase.

He blesses them also, so that they are multiplied greatly, and suffereth not their cattle to decrease. Again they admonished, and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.

He poureth contempt upon princes, and causes them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way. Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock.

The righteous shall see it and rejoice, and all iniquity shall stop her mouth. Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.

[20 : 37] Amen, and may the Lord utter his blessing, to a reading of his word, and to his name, be the praise. We're going to turn to the psalm that we've read, and the words that we heard sung at the beginning.

We'll give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy, endureth forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south, and so on.

God's servant, whoever he or she may be, will always find reasons aplenty to turn to God with thanksgiving, and there is no greater reason than the discovery that he is the great redeemer.

As a work of poetry, the psalmist is not interested in a cosmetic symmetry. His interest is governed by the desire to encourage remembrance of the way God acts in the life of his creatures, in particular his covenant people, with a view to helping them discover who he is and what he ought to be to them.

Throughout the psalm, as we saw in our reading, there is a repeated refrain found. in verse 8, O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men.

[22 : 31] Repeated in verse 15, O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men. Again in verse 21 and verse 31.

There are also four distinct scenarios identified by the psalmist. They have been variously described but the following will satisfy.

First of all there is man in the wilderness then there is man in bondage or prison man in sickness and then man in the storms of the ocean.

We can apply these as literal dangers or metaphors for the dangers and threats that life brings our way. I want us to consider the first of these as described to us by the psalmist.

We can begin by highlighting the fact that this is the song of the redeemed. Secondly, what they were redeemed from. Thirdly, who redeemed them from that?

[23 : 44] and fourthly, to what they are redeemed. It is the song of the redeemed. When we consider the praise book of the saints, as many have, we find that various descriptions are applied to the psalms.

Some call this psalm the pilgrim psalm for obvious reason. It is identified as a psalm that bears testimony to the loving kindness of the Lord.

Eternal mercy appears as a theme. However, what we also find after the directive that is given to come to God with thanksgiving is that the preeminent reason is cited in verse 2.

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy. On Thursday evening we spoke of the words of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 1, verse 7, where we see the Apostle emphasise the role Jesus Christ has as Redeemer.

It is in him we have redemption, through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace. We mentioned that evening some of the things associated with the word redeem.

[25 : 21] For example, in passing we mentioned that story of Ruth where Boaz was the kinsman redeemer required by law to pay the debt of his near relative because they were unable to do so.

God has promised to do this for his chosen people. It did not matter where they were or what they had done. There is no doubt that there is a universal application given to this activity.

not that God saves everybody but that there is no one else who experiences redemption except in this way.

There is no other way than by the way of Jesus Christ that redemption can be experienced. That's what I mean to see. There is no one else and no one can enjoy redemption except by way of Christ and no one out of Christ will seek that redemption or want to experience it.

And the psalmist here makes the point that they are gathered from all the lands north, south, east and west. We find the same emphasis in the words of the prophet Isaiah.

[27 : 04] Fear not for I am with thee he says. I will bring thy seed from the east and gather thee from the west.

I will say to the north give up and to the south keep not back. Bring my sons from far and my daughters from the ends of the earth.

When the gospel is preached it is meant to be preached to all without reservation. When Jesus sent out his disciples prior to his ascending into glory he told them to teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.

So what are they to sing about? Well the redemption is from the hand of the enemy. You could argue that the psalmist may have a specific enemy in mind be it Pharaoh or the Babylonians.

There's various opinions cited as to who exactly the psalmist is thinking of. But in the broadest sense the psalmist is projecting the idea of salvation from sins or the consequences that come with sin.

[28 : 35] One of the commentators sees the division that we alluded to in the psalm the four part division where we see the psalmist look at the way redemption is proposed or presented.

This commentator says that the middle two are descriptive of the redemption that takes place as a result of the rebellion of those that God comes in mercy to.

You have noticed that in verse 11 for example because they rebelled against the words of God and condemned the council of the Most High.

In verse 27 similarly they reel to and throw and stagger like a drunken man and after wood's end. There is a culpability at the heart of what is said.

But surely rebellion is not mentioned in this first part. But then again if you think of it in verse 40 he says he pours contempt upon princes and causes them to wander in the wilderness where there is no way.

[30 : 17] The suggestion being that these princes that are caused to wander it is God who is responsible for doing that as a response to their flagrant breach of God's word.

The Sing Psalms translation puts it like this they faced decline their fortunes fell they suffered great distress brought low by him who scorns the proud they roamed the wilderness.

Now whether you agree with this analysis or not there is one thing that leads to the need for redemption and that is a life of sin separated from God in his grace.

If you read with me again from the epistle we referred to earlier Paul's epistle to the Ephesians and the second chapter which many are familiar with describes to us the state that man is in because of sin.

chapter 2 you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world according to the prince of the power of the air the spirit and the children of disobedience and so on this this is the bottom line the hand of the enemy held them firmly in his grip the grip that sin has upon the sinner there's the grip that the devil has on those who are within his Princeton they wandered this way and that and found that they could not settle anywhere

[32 : 32] I believe that is the explanation for the listlessness that is in the world in Psalm 39 where the psalmist is aware of the proximity of death behold he says you have made my days as a hand bread God is responsible for this I am a stranger with thee and a sojourner they were looking for a location a place to stay but there was nowhere they wandered through the wilderness as a wasteland but they found no road to a city in which to live how many have had that wasted search for satisfaction that lasted beyond the experience it makes them crave another similar better greater more lasting experience perhaps a different one this time the world says bishop horn is a great wilderness wherein mankind have wandered about from the creation and there is a deadly danger in all that wandering that sudden destruction may befall the wanderer or that they may choose a lesser object of satisfaction which however it may appear it is not

Christ and if it is not Christ it cannot but be a lesser object because there is nothing that can compare to the greater which is Christ there were some doctors who had spiritual discernment some of them were not even professing

Christians and yet when they saw some appear before them who were troubled and who were struggling because not because of ill health even though they misunderstood their condition they knew to direct them to a physician greater than the physician before whom they presented themselves maybe that discernment is lacking today and if you present these symptoms to your GP many of them will just refer you to a psychiatrist or maybe prescribe some drugs that will in their opinion alleviate your suffering I'm not saying that every situation that presents itself that is similar to this can only be ascribed to a spiritual condition what I'm saying is that there are spiritual conditions that can only be met by a spiritual answer when we read here these words the psalmist tells us of the person coming to

God and crying to God and God answering there is a psalm there that speaks of the longings of soul of the believer psalm 42 my soul he writes for God the living God the thirst when shall I near unto thy countenance approach and in God's sight appear this is someone who has already experience of God's grace who has temporarily experienced the hiding of God's face but there is no hiding the intensity of language do you who have never tasted that grace know anything of it must it be true of you that desperation that takes over your life before you seek God as wisdom in coming before God even with the need that you have that arises out of understanding that you have not met the greatest spiritual need that any creature can have and that is the needs of your soul let us look briefly at the final thing we have here what is the result of what

God does we see in verse 3 God gathers his saints from the four corners we see in verse 6 he delivers them from all their distresses we see in verse 7 two things he leads them to the right way as the new english bible puts it onto a level road he takes them to a city not just any city but a city for habitation a city to live in there are no half measures with God what he does he does for a reason and these reasons are the best of reasons I believe God deals with individuals it is personal it is intimate and when he deals personally and intimately like that it may not make sense at times to others or at least as much sense to anyone as it does to yourself remember when

[39 : 03] God is answering it is your cry that he is answering but it is to bring you to himself along with every other person that he is taking to himself everyone he will point to the right way the one who is in the way is presented with the way the truth and the life any and all must come to this one way many have discovered the ways of the Lord are mysterious and yet it is by these ways that he fulfills his will for the good of his people a writer Michael Ross tells the story of Alexander Duff the first Presbyterian minister sent out from the Church of Scotland we are told that he sailed to India along with his wife however the ship rung aground in

South Africa and the ship was lost along with its cargo but thankfully all aboard survived one of the sailors was searching for food for the survivors all he found was two books that were swept ashore one of these books was the Bible and the other a psalm book both of these books belonged to Duff shall understand the loving kindness of the

Lord the world is a terrible wilderness full of dangers for all in it but God through his word promises guidance and provision for the way he promises a city of habitation for those who arrive at their destination that picture can evoke many thoughts in our mind but it speaks of safety and permanence William Jay has this description Christians shall not only enter but abide they are now a traveler but there they will be resident he is now on the road there he will be at home it is a place of repose where he will be at rest give thanks unto the Lord he says for he is good for his mercy endures forever if you are still on your knees crying out to

God for his help you in a good way if you know to look to God as we saw in this psalm the psalmist says then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble and he delivered them out of their distresses it seems a certain response to all who come because most surely he will not turn any away who come to him may he bless to us these few thoughts that is again join in prayer Lord have mercy upon us bless your word to us that we have read bless our reflections upon it and may we be directed to our knees before God hear our prayers and continue to watch over us and now may grace mercy and peace from from from God Father Son and Holy Spirit be with you all now and always Amen Amen