

Consider God's Steadfast Love

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, church. Turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm 107. So Psalm 107 today, two weeks ago, I shared with you some of my own journey over the past several months. I'll be leaving Trinity at the end of the summer to pastor the Talcottville Church in Vernon.

I'm grateful for the opportunities that we've had to get together with several of you over the last couple weeks. If you'd like to meet together, I'll be here through this Thursday. Then we'll be back in August from the 11th to the 22nd. So we're very grateful for the time that the Lord has put us together here in the New Haven area and grateful for the opportunity to finish that well.

But I have two more opportunities to preach to you today and then my last Sunday in August. And so in these two sermons, I want to give you sort of some parting words from the Scriptures that will hopefully help you as you navigate this transition as well as other transitions that you may be facing at this point in your personal life and in the life of the church. This summer is sort of often a season of transition in a variety of respects for many people, and the Scriptures speak to that.

And there's two things that the Scriptures teach us to do when we're facing transitions, and one is to look back on God's merciful provision in the past. And that's what I want to do today, to look back on God's kindness and faithfulness in our own lives and in the history of this church.

And then in August, for my last sermon, I'm going to focus on looking forward. And Scripture teaches us, as actually the Scripture Jeff read at the beginning of the service, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. So whenever you're facing any significant transition, any loss or change, any new challenge or opportunity, these are healthy practices that can help to anchor you spiritually through that, so that the transition doesn't throw you off course, but actually can be a way of leaning into what God has for you.

[1 : 57] So there are many places in the Bible that call us to do these things, but I want to look at Psalm 107. This is one of my favorite psalms that I have thought for many years expresses a lot of the work that God has done in gathering us together as a church here. So let me read this psalm for us.

It's a long psalm, but it's a beautiful one. Psalm 107. O 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 and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. 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. 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 and the shadow of death and burst their bonds apart. 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 in two the bars of iron. 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. 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. 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.

[4 : 27] 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. 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. 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.

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. Lord, we thank you for your word. We thank you for how it's been faithfully preserved for us through the ages, and we thank you for the opportunity to read it freely and clearly in a language we can understand this morning. We pray that your spirit would seal it to our hearts, open our hearts to receive what you have for us today, to respond, to give you thanks, and to consider your great love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. So this morning, what I want us to do is exactly what the first and last verses of this psalm call us to do. That is to consider and thank the Lord for his steadfast love. If you notice that word, steadfast love, it appears in the first verse, in the last verse, and in that repeated refrain, let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love.

And so we're to consider it, and that word means to think about it inwardly, to ponder the Lord's steadfast love, to pay attention to it, and to thank him for it. That means to praise him outwardly for it, to tell others about who this God is and what he has done for us. So consider the Lord's steadfast love inwardly and praise and thank him for it outwardly. And one other dimension, verse 43, hints at is that we should consider God's steadfast love both on an individual level. It says, whoever is wise, let him consider these things. But then it says, let them, let God's people as a community consider the way that God has been faithful to us, not only in our individual paths, but in our life together as a church community. And so today as we look at this psalm, that's what I want to do. I want us to consider God's steadfast love in our own lives and journeys as we look back on them, but also I want to point to some of the ways that God's steadfast love has been demonstrated over the years, over the decades in the history of this church as a community. Now Psalm 107 has two main parts, a long first part, verses 1 to 32, and then a shorter second part, verses 33 to 43. So we'll look at part one and then part two today. So first in this long first part, the main thing we see is consider God's steadfast love in redeeming us. Now verses 2 and 3 give us a little clue about when this psalm was originally written because it says that God had redeemed his people from trouble and gathered them in from the lands. So some people think that's a reference to the return from the exile in Babylon, although really it could be any time that God's people had been scattered and troubled and God in his mercy had brought them back, brought them back home, gathered them together, and given them peace.

[8 : 36] But whenever it happened, this was certainly an answer to prayer. This psalm is connected actually with the last two psalms, 105 and 106, because 105 says God gave them the lands, but then 106 in verse 27 says that they lost the land because of their unfaithfulness, and then 107 talks about God gathering them back, gathering them in from the lands where they had been scattered. And the last verse of Psalm 106 or verse 47 says, save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the nations. And so Psalm 107 is presented as God answering the prayers of his people in redeeming them. Now sometimes in church we throw around that word redeem or redemption, and let me just give you a picture of what that word actually means in the Old Testament context. To be redeemed meant that you had fallen into severe trouble or distress. So that could be overwhelming debt, or perhaps you sold yourself into slavery, perhaps because of debt, or that you were being treated unjustly, but whatever it was, it was a trouble that you could not rescue yourself from. But

instead a relative stepped in on your behalf and said,

I will be your redeemer. And what that meant is, I will join myself to you, and I will take on all your distress and all your trouble as my own, and I will walk with you and bring you out of it.

And so redemption was not a distant transaction. It was actually a very personal act. In some cases, the redeemer literally married the person in need of redemption. It's actually what you see in the book of Ruth. When Boaz marries Ruth, he's what's called the kinsman redeemer. So as they were joined in marriage, everything that was hers became his, and everything that was his became hers. And that's also the picture of redemption we see in the New Testament. The New Testament talks about Jesus as our redeemer who came to rescue us from a trouble, from sin and death, that we could not deliver ourselves out of.

And he didn't do that in a distant or impersonal way. No, he did it by joining himself to us, by becoming flesh, and taking on every, taking everything that was ours on himself, and bearing our sin and unrighteousness and death on the cross, and rising again, bringing us with him. And he has promised to walk with us and be our redeemer. Now there are four subsections in this part one of the psalm, and each one of them gives us a picture of God's redeeming grace. Now when you first read this psalm, you might think these are referring to four different groups of people, but they could also be different images of or different angles on God's redeeming work in the lives of the same group of people, perhaps over time. If you think of the exiles, probably any of these four sections could describe their experience and how God intervened mercifully on their behalf. But also, you know, just take a moment and look around this room.

In our mission statement at Trinity, which I think we still put up at the beginning and end of our services, we say that we are gathered together by the gospel of Jesus Christ. And this psalm describes what God has done in this church over many years, gathering together many different kinds of people, redeeming us from our trouble. And each one of us might have faced that trouble in a slightly different flavor, but God has met us, brought us to the point of recognizing our need for him, our dependence on him, and his mercy for us, and he's brought us out of trouble and gathered us into his family, united by Jesus. Now if you look at these four subsections in part one of the psalm, there's a simple pattern. First, there's a description of the people's trouble. Second, there's a description of God's deliverance. And you heard that repeated refrain, they cried to the Lord in their distress, and he delivered them, or they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. Followed by a more specific or particular description of how God did that. The people's trouble, God's deliverance, and third, a call to thanksgiving. Again, a repeated refrain, let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love and his wondrous works for the children of man. And then there's a concluding verse which either elaborates on the description of God's deliverance or the call to thanksgiving. If you're familiar, there's an old catechism called the Heidelberg Catechism from the 16th century, and it describes the Christian life in three words, guilt, grace, and gratitude. And this psalm follows that same pattern. It starts with the problem, and shows God's gracious and merciful intervention, and then calls us to gratitude and thanksgiving.

[13 : 30] So let's look briefly at each of these four pictures of God's redeeming grace. Verses four to nine, we see God bringing his people from a wasteland to a city. So the image at the beginning is people are wandering in the desert. They're in a place of isolation, insecurity, hunger, thirst, and lostness. They can't find their way out. And God in his mercy brings them to a city, which particularly in the ancient world would have been a symbol of refuge and belonging and satisfaction and fullness, where their needs could be amply provided for. You know, some of you can trace a similar pattern in your own life story. You can think of a time when you were spiritually or literally hungry and thirsty, desperate, alone, wandering, lost, and you cried out to God, and he answered. And he didn't just leave you all alone in the desert. He brought you into the church. He brought you into a community of believers, and he's given you a place to belong.

Perhaps you found that here at Trinity. We've been going through the Gospel of John, and in the Gospel of John, Jesus says that he's the way. He's the way out and the way into God's presence. He's the bread and the water of life, and he's the good shepherd who seeks us out and brings us home when we're lost in the desert. Or in Ephesians 2, the Apostle Paul uses a similar metaphor. He says, at one time we were separated from Christ. We were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But then he says, but in Christ, you who were once far off have been brought near by his blood. So then you are no longer strangers, no longer aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and fellow

members of the household of God. So that's picture one of God's redeeming grace from a wasteland to a city. Picture two is God bringing his people from bondage into freedom. And the picture in verses 10 through 12 is a picture of guilt and darkness and toil being locked up behind doors and bars. And this people's condition was their own fault. It says they were in this condition of bondage because they had rebelled against the word of God and spurned the counsel of the Most High. Maybe you found yourself in a bondage, perhaps an addiction to drugs, alcohol, pornography, sex. Or maybe it's a habit of lying and manipulating or self-pity, constantly comparing yourself to others. And that can all lead to a very dark place, a place of self-condemnation and despair, feeling that there is no one who can help.

But sometimes God brings us to a low place so that we look up to him. And in Luke chapter 1, it says that Jesus Christ came. In Jesus Christ, God has come to visit and redeem his people to shine light on those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death. Jesus said he came to bring release for the captives. And some of you have even stood up here and giving a testimony when you became a member or got baptized about how God has led you out of a place of bondage and brought you to a place of freedom. And you know, sometimes that happens instantaneously, miraculously.

And sometimes it happens one step at a time. Sometimes Jesus comes and meets us in the darkness and in bondage. And he walks with us even when the path seems to be slow and step by step.

But he's leading us toward light and freedom. And that's the God we serve. Picture 3, verses 17 to 22, God bringing his people from sickness to health. And this is not just a minor sickness, not just a little cold or something. No, this is a serious sickness where people are drawing are deathly ill. And again, this is also a self-inflicted problem. Verse 17 says, some were fools through their sinful ways and because of their iniquities, they suffered affliction.

[17:53] Notice in these two middle sections, picture 2 and picture 3, the people's troubles are their own fault caused by their own foolish decisions. In picture 1 and picture 4, which are desert wastelands and stormy seas, the people's troubles are simply the result of living in a fallen world and living as finite people under the sovereign rule of God. So here's the point. No matter what the cause of your trouble is, whether your trouble is completely your own fault or entirely not of your own making, the Lord hears when we cry out to him in the midst of our trouble. And he delivers his people from their distress. Jesus is the redeemer of sinners, those who have wronged others. And Jesus is the redeemer of sufferers, those who have been wronged. It's not one or the other, it's both and.

In Mark chapter 2, four friends bring a paralyzed man to Jesus. It's the one where they cut through the hole in the roof and lower him down. It's all dramatic and would be crazy to be there.

But Jesus says two things to the man. First, he says, your sins are forgiven. Now, we don't know the man's history. We don't know if there was a specific sinful pattern that led this man to an injury where he was paralyzed. We don't know that. But Jesus wanted him to know that through his encounter with Jesus, his sins had been dealt with and done away with. And then Jesus says, get up and walk. So there's physical healing and spiritual healing happening all at once through his encounter with Jesus. So that's the third picture of God's redemption. We've seen God bringing people from wandering in the desert to having a home in his city, from being in bondage and darkness to being in a place of freedom and light, from being in a place of deathly illness to a place of healing and life. And finally, fourth and final picture is verse 23 to 32.

We see God bringing his people from stormy seas to a quiet haven. This section is the longest of them all. It's quite a vivid description. Perhaps the psalmist had literally experienced this himself. But verse 27 says, the storm had brought the sailors to their wits end. Or literally, all their wisdom was swallowed up. And you know, sometimes, no matter how intelligent we are, sometimes God confronts us with our human limitations. And he brings us to a place where all our skills and all our cleverness and all our past experience is entirely inadequate.

[20:42] Of course, we see this in the New Testament with Jesus' disciples as well. Mark 4, Jesus' disciples find themselves at a storm on the lake. A great windstorm arose. The waves were breaking into the boat. The boat was filling with water. And what did they do? They cried out to Jesus in their distress. And he rebuked the wind and said to the sea, peace, be still.

And they probably would have known this psalm. And then when they saw that Jesus was the one who could speak to the winds and the waves and make the storm be still, they look at him and say,

who is this? Because guess in this psalm, only God can do that. And they realized this man that we've been walking with is none other than God himself. He's the one we can try, cry out to. Jesus is Lord, even of the stormy seas. He's with us in the boat all the way. And he can speak peace into even the most chaotic and volatile situation. Now, if you've experienced God's redeeming grace in any or all of these ways, the psalm calls us to respond with thanksgiving. Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving and tell of his deeds with songs of joy. Extol him in the congregation of the people. One of the things that I am grateful for about Trinity is our practice of new members having the opportunity to share a testimony. Because we get to hear people tell the story of God's redeeming grace in their own words. And I know for some of you, it's hard, right? Sometimes it's hard to write a brief, concise story about what God's done in your life. Sometimes you're terrified to stand up here and we remind you, you don't have to say anything. We can send it out by email. We can write it up, you know, you can just stand up here and say yes to those two questions and we'll pray for you and that's all you got to do. But it is so beneficial for us to hear and publicly thank the Lord for his redeeming grace in each of our lives. And that's something we do when people come into membership, but that's something that we want to do on an ongoing basis in our life together as a church to tell one another and thank God together for the ways that he has met us and the ways that he's rescued us and the ways that he's been so kind and intervened on our behalf. So brothers and sisters, don't ever stop thanking the Lord and standing in awe of the marvelous works that he has done.

I think especially these last couple of weeks, it's been great to hear everybody singing, singing your hearts out and rejoicing as we declare God's mighty deeds in song. Amen? So consider God's steadfast love in redeeming us. That's part one of this psalm, but there's also a part two. And part two, I would summarize with this phrase, consider God's steadfast love in refining us. Verses 33 to the end. See, the main theme of verses 33 to 42 is that God brings down the proud and lifts up the proud. It's the same thread that runs through the song of Mary, which Esther read for us earlier in the service. So verses 33 and 34, we see a picture of God bringing down the proud, sort of bringing them back out into that wasteland, desert wasteland again. But then verse 35 to 38, we see a picture of God lifting up the humble, providing for the hungry. And then the pattern is repeated in verses 39 to 42. Now the picture we get in verse 39 is that there are people in power who are evil and oppressive, and so God's people who in verses 37 and 38 are bearing fruit and multiplying are instead, in verse 39, diminished and brought low. And this doesn't seem to be God humbling them because of their pride. It seems to be the effect of evil oppressors who are in power for a time. So for a time, it sort of seems like the bad guys are winning and God's people are losing, but God doesn't let that go on forever. Verse 40, it says, God pours contempt on princes and makes them wander in a trackless waste. Those who were in power but were misusing it, God sort of sends them out into the desert again. But then verse 41, he raises up the needy out of affliction and makes their families like flocks. So even when evil oppressors seem to succeed in the world for a time, God doesn't let them have the last word. So again, throughout this section, we see this pattern of God bringing down the proud and raising up the humble. Or as I might put it, refining his people through the ups and downs of life. Now I think that these verses are a very interesting and perhaps somewhat unexpected conclusion to this psalm. Because if you just read the first section, you might think that the Christian life is basically this. God rescues us and now we live happily ever after. And on the surface, that sounds like an attractive story. But guess what? That's not the whole story. [26:07] And so the end of this psalm reminds us that the story that God's redeemed people tell throughout the Bible is something more like this. God has redeemed us and now he's committed to refining us.

And so through the ups and downs of life, he's teaching us to depend on him and to delight in him. Can you look back on your own life and see how God has refined you through both the ups and the downs of life and has called you into a deeper dependence on him and delight in him?

I've been at Trinity now for 20 years. Ten years as a pastor, ten years before that, since I first came as a college student. And as I look back on my time in this church, one of the things that I see is that God in his steadfast love has refined this church through the ups and downs that we've experienced over the years. A couple of years ago, I talked to a man named Wayne Harvey. And he was part of the original group that founded Trinity, which happened 50 years ago this fall. I want to share with you some of what he has shared with me, partly because I think probably none of you know anything about this, but mostly to give God thanks that he deserves for gathering this church and

for sustaining and refining it ever since then. Because if God hadn't done his work back then, we wouldn't be here today.

Trinity began in 1971 with only three people. There was a pastor from the First Baptist Church of East Hartford who had a vision to see churches established throughout Connecticut. And he connected with two Yale Divinity School students. And together their goal was to begin a church that would reach students and families in New Haven and in the surrounding area with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Wayne was one of the Div School students. He said, we didn't really know what we were doing, but we did what we could and we saw what the Lord could do. He said, we first named the church the New Haven Fellowship of Christ. Looking back, that name sounded like a cult. But we didn't know any better at the time. We started meeting in a motel, but then they booted us if another group needed their conference room. So we went to the YMCA, but that didn't work out either. So then we rented space at the Hamden Hall School and later at a dance studio on Whitney Avenue. We tried various strategies to find new members. First, Paul, the other Div School student, and I sat down in his apartment, opened the phone book and started with the A's. They would alternate. One of them would make a call, then the other would make a call. We went door to door and gave out New Testaments. Most people were reluctant to even talk with us. We also advertised on the radio. He said, looking back, we knew that we didn't know what we were doing, but we were just trusting the Lord and hoping our efforts would somehow bear fruit.

[29 : 19] And by God's grace, they did. He says it was often mysterious how people would come to the church. Sometimes we didn't even know how they had heard about us, but they came. A few people became Christians and were baptized. Some people who had previously been quasi-Christians became real disciples of Jesus. He says the church was a spiritual rock for the students, providing solid Bible teaching. It was a good place for families as well. By 1972, there were 30 to 40 people, half students, and half people from outside the university. Recently, Wayne wrote, in 1971, I never dreamed that God would bless the church as he has done. Despite the mistakes we made in our church, God has proven faithful. I pray that God will continue to support and bless you and that you will see growth as more and more people come to Christ and become disciples. So that's how Trinity was first gathered, but that's not the end of the story. In the 90s, Trinity fell on some hard times, and for the most part, those hard times were the church's own fault. At some point, the church had drifted from biblical doctrine, at least somewhat. One person even told me that when she came to Trinity around that time, the pastor did not believe and preach that Jesus Christ was fully God.

Around the same time, there were growing tensions and conflicts that were never addressed or resolved in a biblical manner. The church had also made some unwise financial decisions. It had a balloon mortgage and no way to make the large, looming final payment. Then the pastor abruptly resigned, and many people left the church, and the church lost the building that they had owned in Hamden.

For the next five years, Trinity had no pastor and only about 20 adult members. Some of the people who were there back then, there's a few of you here, call that period of time the wilderness years, a humbling, refining, and sometimes exhausting season. And yet, even in those years, the Lord did not abandon his people. And there was a core of faithful members who kept coming and kept praying that God would refine and renew his church. And eventually, God answered those prayers. In 1999, the church had a prayer meeting where people confessed their sins and sought reconciliation, and much healing took place.

Later that month, the church was literally about to close its doors for good. And God brought a pastoral candidate, a faithful preacher of God's word, all the way from England. For the next decade, God used that pastor, Josh Moody, and a growing core group of faithful members to lead Trinity through a season of growth. Josh was my pastor for seven years. In 2008, Josh left Trinity to pastor a church in the Midwest. That was another challenging transition. The church had to discern its next steps.

Nearly all of us had joined the church while Josh was a senior pastor. But over that season, after he left, God taught us that his work at Trinity was not dependent on any one individual.

[32 : 32] And God raised up other people to teach and lead, to love and serve his people. Looking back, God has refined and sustained Trinity through many transitions. There are times when God's people at Trinity have perhaps been tempted to become comfortable, complacent, and

self-satisfied, instead of humbly depending on him and boldly advancing the gospel. But God has not let us stay there. Over and over, God has called his people at Trinity into deeper dependence and delight in him.

Compared to many other churches, I think Trinity has a high proportion of people who are unusually competent and successful, talented, and intelligent. And as long as Trinity meets in this building, two blocks from the Yale campus, and does a reasonably effective job at reaching our immediate neighbors, it's probably true that the average IQ of this church will be higher than most.

But here's an important thing to remember. When the all-knowing and all-wise God of the universe looks at Trinity Baptist Church, he is not impressed by the relative intelligence or human skills or competence of its members. The Bible never promises God special blessing on churches that have many people with unusually high IQs. No, the prophet Isaiah said that the holy God of the universe chooses to dwell with those whose hearts are broken and humble and contrite. And the apostle Paul says that God shows his power in and through those who recognize their own weakness and vulnerability. In order to flourish as a church, Trinity needs people who are like the ones that this psalm talks about. People who are in trouble. People who are wandering and hungry. People who are in bondage and darkness. People who are sick and afflicted. People who are at their wits end. If that describes you or your circumstances, you've come to the right place. Because the God we serve is a God of redeeming grace. Cry out to the Lord Jesus in your distress. He will hear and he will respond and you can join others in bearing testimony to his steadfast love and his redeeming grace.

For those of you who have found a home here at Trinity, who have perhaps been preserved for severe addictions or certain kind of physical bondage, who are in good health, who are sailing under sunny skies, do not turn away from people who are even outwardly and obviously hungry and thirsty and lost, in bondage and darkness, sick and afflicted, or at their wits end. Do not see people in those circumstances merely as annoying burdens or problems to be endured. These people are gifts to God's church in whom the redeeming grace of God can be displayed to God's own glory.

And God has put these people in your life to teach you, to teach you to depend on him, and to teach you to love. And there is no more valuable lesson to learn. Let me also speak for a moment to those of those of you who are outwardly competent and successful, talented, and intelligent. I know that outward success can be a burden as well as a blessing. Because when some people look at your life from the outside, they can see your success, they can see your degrees, but they don't see you. Andy Crouch, in one of his books, talks about how every good leader has unseen vulnerabilities. In other words, every good leader, every position, everyone in a position of power or authority must at times bear burdens and take risks that most people will never know or understand.

But God meets us in that place of unseen vulnerability. God meets us when even though we may be outwardly intelligent and successful, that we become keenly aware of how finite and flawed and not ultimately in control we are. And that's a gift when God brings us to a place like that.

[37 : 04] Martin Luther once said, affliction is the best book in my library. And he had read a lot of books, and he had written a lot of books. But the best education is not necessarily found in a university or even in a seminary, it's found through turning to Christ and depending on his word and crying out to him in the midst of afflictions that we did not choose for ourselves. Because it's through those afflictions that God humbles us and refines us and makes us wise. And ultimately, it's through those afflictions that he brings us into a place of multiplying and flourishing and peace and joy.

So one of my prayer for Trinity is that this season of transition and every transition that God leads you through, with all the pain and loss involved as well as the excitement and anticipation, that every transition would drive every one of us into a deeper dependence and delight on our Redeemer and Refiner. Consider the Lord's steadfast love in redeeming us and in refining us.

Let's look back and let's give him thanks. Let's pray. Father God, we thank you for your steadfast love. We thank you that you deliver us when we humble ourselves and cry out to you. We thank you that your deliverance takes many forms in relation to the specific trouble that we experience. But you are the one and the same God and Redeemer. We thank you, Jesus, for delivering us from our greatest enemies, from sin and death and separation from you.

We thank you for your Holy Spirit. We thank you for your Holy Spirit. We pray, Lord, that we would look back and consider and thank you for your steadfast love. And that would equip us to be wise in all the ways you call us to go forward. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.