

Happy Thanksliving

Telling Our Story!

November 5, 2023

Overarching Theme: 2023 – Living the Dream

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Point: 2023 can be a year of living the dream of faithful discipleship as we take a next step forward in following Jesus Christ.

Reflect on this Scripture: Ps 107:1-9; 33-37;43 (NIV)

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;

his love endures forever.

² *Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story—
those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,*

³ *those he gathered from the lands,
from east and west, from north and south.*

⁴ *Some wandered in desert wastelands,
finding no way to a city where they could settle.*

⁵ *They were hungry and thirsty,
and their lives ebbed away.*

⁶ *Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.*

⁷ *He led them by a straight way
to a city where they could settle.*

⁸ *Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for humankind,*

⁹ *for he satisfies the thirsty
and fills the hungry with good things.*

*He turned rivers into a desert,
flowing springs into thirsty ground,*

³⁴ *and fruitful land into a salt waste,
because of the wickedness of those who lived there.*

³⁵ *He turned the desert into pools of water
and the parched ground into flowing springs;*

³⁶ *there he brought the hungry to live,*

and they founded a city where they could settle.
37 They sowed fields and planted vineyards
that yielded a fruitful harvest;
Let the one who is wise heed these things
and ponder the loving deeds of the LORD.

Commentary:

Psalm 107 is full of indications that it was intended to be used in worship, probably at one of Israel's great festivals. There are repeated patterns and standardized calls to give thanks. Indeed, the opening words, "*Give thanks to the Lord,*" illustrate why we should give thanks. Instead of teaching a principle in a didactic way, Psalm 107 moves us with stories of redemption.

All of the stories have one main point, announced in the theme text. "*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good...*" But what does Yahweh's goodness consist in? The dimension of God's goodness that always moves God's people to the highest praise and deepest thanks is his chesed; "*his love endures forever.*" No matter what happens to us, no matter what we do, no matter how dire our situation or depraved our sin, "*his love endures forever.*" God will not break covenant with his people.

That is the great truth that stood at the center of Israel's faith. But true as it may be, the mere repetition of that truth won't move us to thanksgiving and praise. That's why Psalm 107 tells these stories of people had lived through Exile and other hard times and had actually seen Yahweh's steadfast love (Hebrew chesed) at work in their lives. Each of these stories follows the same pattern. Whether it is the story of people wandering in the desert (4-9), living in foreign bondage (10-16), dying on a bed of illness (17-22), or suffering through a storm at sea (23-32) each story includes:

- a description of their distress,
- a prayer to the Lord,
- the details of their deliverance, and
- a call to give thanks for that deliverance.

Indeed, the Psalm opens with an invitation to do just that - "*Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.*" It is a call to remember God's redeeming love, to tell that story and to give thanks. Originally the "redeemed" congregation is identified as "those he redeemed from the hand of the foe, those he gathered from the lands..." (Babylonian exile). But the ultimate redemption and return from deepest exile is accomplished through Christ, who invites us to live in gratitude sustained by his grace, such as is offered in the Eucharist (meaning, "thanksgiving" – Holy Communion)
-adapted from online commentary by Stan Mast

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. Psalm 107 invites the congregation to give thanks to the Lord for his 'hesed' (Hebrew). 'Hesed' is defined by Rabbi Sandy Sasso as "*the consistent, ever-faithful, relentless, constantly-pursuing, lavish, extravagant, unrestrained, furious deep never ending love.*" Of those adjectives describing 'hesed', which is most meaningful for you right now and why?
2. Psalm 107 is addressed to the "redeemed" of the Lord, the ones that the Lord has been delivering from exile. While none of us have spent decades in Babylon, what kinds of 'exiles' can people experience today?
3. Psalm 107 describes the distress of the exiles and how they prayed ("*they cried out to the Lord in their trouble*"). Do you tend to try to fix things first and that doesn't work, pray? Or do you pray for God's help when you are in need? How might Psalm 107 guide your future prayers?
4. "*Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story.*" Do you have a story of how the Lord has made a difference in your life? Consider sharing a brief story with your LIFE group.
5. Close with a prayer of gratitude to the God of "hesed", redeeming love.

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Psalm 107:1-2a *Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.² Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story!*