

Ps 107 Talk for St Mary's 17 8 25 Give Thanks to the Lord

Good morning! We have a wonderful topic to look at together this morning, and hopefully our introduction to this theme helped us to understand thankfulness a bit better and the different ways of expressing it.

Open your bibles to the passage, please, so that we can look at it in more depth.

Let's pray: *Lord, we thank you for your presence with us now, please help us to hear your word to each one of us, in Jesus's name Amen*

Short story about missionary who saw the motto card 'try thankfulness' which empowered his prayers. From Prayer book Os Sanders

We will start by having a **quick overview** of the psalm and then as our title is to give thanks to the Lord, our first question to think about is...Why? Here are a couple of thoughts to consider..(slides 1,2, 3)

Then we will look at the question, '**What can we learn about this amazing God we worship which impels us to thank Him?** ' **Finally we** will try and discern what this psalm encourages us to do, in other words, our response today .

For our overview....

As we heard the reading, I wonder what leapt out at you? The poets amongst us will no doubt have quickly noticed the repetition of phrases, and of a theme: God's people get into a pickle of varying sorts, they cry to God in prayer and He rescues them which leads to an exhortation to show thankfulness. *Let them give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness, And for His wonderful acts to the children of men!*

When we look at a Bible passage it is always helpful to consider "Now what does this tell me about the nature of God?" There is so much in our reading today-I will give you a few moments to look at it! Slide 4

He is good, compassionate with a loving kindness which lasts forever! (the word 'hesed' 'for steadfast love is a mix of 2 ideas of absolute faithfulness and warm affection -beautiful, isn't it? Where would we find such qualities in the world today, I wonder?

He redeems or saves us, rescuing us from different 'distresses' which we will look at later.

He leads and guides us, satisfying our hunger and thirst, ministering to the needy

He performs wonderful acts, healing, breaking bonds of those bound like prisoners, calming the storm

He blesses His people, as well as their livestock and crops

Wow-the list goes on doesn't it!!

Now you might be looking at the list in the psalm v 4-6 READ *They wandered in the wilderness in a [solitary] desert region and did not find a way to an inhabited city.*

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Hungry and thirsty, They fainted. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, And He rescued them from their distresses.

⁷ and think to yourself, well I am not in a 'desert'...slide 5..no, there isn't one here in Crawley-but could it also mean a 'spiritual desert' do you think? Do you feel in a dry place, hungry and thirsty for spiritual refreshment but somehow all your prayers seem to bounce off the ceiling? If so, do not panic as this is not unusual and has been experienced by many Christians down the ages....it is as though sometimes we are called to walk by faith, rather than by sight which can strengthen our love for God. One way to do this is to think of the many blessings we have, and to thank Him for them.

It may not be a desert, but perhaps the verses 10-12 which describe places of deep darkness where one feels trapped in circumstancesjust leapt out as you as they were read. Slide 6 Some can feel bound by issues out of your control and it seems there is no one to help. I have a book called 'gentle darkness' which is one of the 1st books I would grab if our house was burning down! I found it in a Christian bookshop when looking for something to encourage a friend going through a very dark time and each chapter shares something of the areas of darkness which can affect any of us.....loneliness,bereavement,sickness and so on.

As I looked at it, I realized that I, too, needed to read it and found such comfort in knowing that going through bleak times is not uncommon. It explained that even Jesus felt the bleakness of separation from his loving heavenly father on the cross which was the hardest thing to bear on top of the physical and emotional pain of the terrible ordeal of betrayal and abuse He had suffered. Pic 7 Think back to the night before, when He shared the bread and wine as a picture of his body and blood which would be shed for us all. The word we use for the celebration of the breaking of bread is 'the Eucharist' a Greek word meaning -would you believe-thankfulness. I didn't realise until researching for this talk, that at the heart of the holy communion we share together is this word thankfulness-so by taking it we are expressing our thanks to Him as we meditate on all that was won for us on the cross-forgiveness of the wrongs we have done, and the free gift of eternal life He offers to all who come to Him because He loves us so much. Verse 2 speaks of the redeemed, those rescued from the hand of the adversary which includes us when we come to Him in faith.

Even when stormy times come, as we read in 23-27, pic 8 you may be thinking, "well I don't spend much time in boats' ! It might remind you of the calming of the storm on lake Galilee when the disciples thought they were lost & would be drowned before Jesus rebuked the waves and wind bringing calmness and safety. This psalm may well have been in their heads when they recognized that Jesus truly was the Son of

God. I've been reading Hudson Taylor's biography and when he set out to China in 1853. There was a storm in the Irish sea which only prayer for God's mercy was able to conquer-otherwise he would never have reached China ! heartfelt prayer brought a calmness and five and a half months later he go to Shanghai. For us today this could represent stormy times due to financial , emotional , relational issues taking a person to their wit's end. One can literally feel 'all at sea' perhaps about how to go on and I know that many folk here in our fellowship face real challenges in life of differing sorts.

So, how are we to respond? **What does this psalm encourage us to do?**

For a start we are told to give thanks at least SIX times in these 43 verses! Over and over again v 31. We are encouraged to cry to Him, to pray, when we are in a fix-to trust in his absolute faithfulness and love for us.

We are also told to follow Him and his guidance (may be for some, the challenges start coming when we step further away from him-now he is calling us back as He tells us not to rebel against him, to be foolish or disobey him!) V 32 says we should offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving, speak of his deeds by giving testimony with shouts of Joy. We do this here at testimony time, and it is lovely how so many of you will give thanks when you receive answers to prayer as it encourages everyone! V 32 describes exactly this. In Covid lockdown, I heard people say about how being thankful each day for a couple of things as a regular discipline helped them to keep their mental state healthy. Even wikipedia tells us that for people of faith who practice thankfulness or gratitude, they are happier people than those with no faith who do not habitually do this. I would occasionally use this when talking to patients who came with awful situations going on in their lives...we might explore together what things there were in their lives for which they could be thankful despite the challenges. It can help reframe the emotional state to shift the focus. Practising thankfulness is a powerful thing to do as our 1st story demonstrated.

We here now can all be very thankful that a new rector has been offered the job of coming here to south Crawley and has said 'yes' to moving into the rectory. We haven't met this person yet, but we have been trusting God and we can pray with thankful hearts that He has all the details in His hands!

In the next moments, as you sit there, think of a couple of things you can be personally thankful for -perhaps you could share this at coffee time? In Uganda we learned much from our Ugandan brothers and sisters who would pray 'thank you lord that I am alive today. Thank you, Lord, for this cup of tea we are about to have together. It taught us we take so much for granted in life and can forget easily to be grateful to God for everything. Experiment this week and try this on a daily basis-looking back over your day as you have your nighttime cocoa & get into bed. How have you seen God at work in your life, where have you noticed His footsteps,

or heard His whisper to you that He loves you? Let's see how we can grow in this together and encourage one another. Slide 9

So thank God for His marvellous love,
for His miracle mercy to the children He loves;

If you are really wise, you'll think this over—
it's time you appreciated God's deep love. Amen