

“LET THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD SAY SO.”

Rev. Robert T. Woodyard

First Christian Reformed Church

August 25, 2024, 10:30 AM

Scripture Texts: Psalm 107

Introduction.

Psalm 107 is a psalm of four testimonies of faith of people who were in a bad way and they cried out to the Lord in their trouble and were rescued and redeemed by God, and they thanked God for hearing and answering and delivering them from their distress.

One of the greatest privileges of being a pastor and an elder is hearing the testimonies of faith from those who desire to make profession of faith or join our church. We hear so many incredible stories of God’s great mercy and grace in the journeys of faith He leads us on.

This morning all of you are going to share that same privilege we elders had a month ago. Two of the young women in the class have willingly agreed to let me read to you their stories. These two stories are two modern versions of the three testimonies we just read in Psalm 107. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.

Emily

“Over the past couple of years, I’ve struggled with my faith. I’ve struggled with questions, doubts, and not knowing if what I’ve been taught growing up was something I truly believed. I began struggling with anxiety during middle school, and I turned to God, praying every night that he could help me through what I was feeling, and I honestly felt an answer to my prayers. But as I entered high school, the weight of the world started pressing down on me and I began to deal with depression and self-harm starting my sophomore year. As I was struggling to deal with this, my faith in God struggled as well; I found it hard to believe that God was with me and that he loved me.

But he has led me through all my struggles, and he will continue to do so. I began meeting with Pastor Mike, and we talked about a lot of things regarding faith and my identity in Christ, and it honestly really helped me realize that running from God wasn’t the answer, and that it’s okay to have doubts and questions. I began to realize that I do in fact believe that Jesus is my Lord and Savior, and that He died on the cross to save me from my many sins.

So, I made my decision: I wanted to commit my life to Christ, and to make my profession of faith. I’m ready to make the commitment to Jesus and to open my heart to Him, I’m ready to put my trust in Him, especially as I go off to Trinity Western College at the end of this month. These past few years have been a battle for sure, and Satan has tried to pull me away from my faith, but I stand firm in the Lord and am ready for my faith to become not just my parent’s faith and the faith I was raised on, but MY faith and MY beliefs.”

Leah

“As most of you know, I was born and raised here in First CRC. Baptized as a baby, I attended Sundry School, and came to church (almost) every Sunday for as long as I’ve been alive. I was

raised in a Christian home, went to private Christian school. Up until recently though, I never had my own personal relationship with God. Here's how all that changed.

Growing up, my home life was pretty rough, pretty hard for me. That, plus loads of peer pressure, FOMO, and a disdain for the world, my job and a myriad of other things, led to years of partying. I wanted to feel like I had some control in my life. Yeah, that didn't happen! It just started a long dark spiral downward till I ended up bawling on my bathroom floor at 2 AM for no other reason than I had completely abandoned my faith. I had hit rock bottom. In that moment, I had forgotten how to even pray. I probably hadn't opened my Bible in years, and I had no idea where to even start. I'm pretty sure that night was the lowest I'd ever been.

The coming weeks after that I had countless conversations with my mother and others. She would keep telling me to "give it to God". I didn't understand what she meant. What was God going to do that I couldn't? We prayed together so many times but inwardly, my heart was defiant. As low as I had been, I wasn't willing to change. I thought that giving my life to God would mean that I would lose who I was as a person. I thought that everything I had made myself would be gone. Oh man, was I wrong!

I cannot praise God enough for the people He has put in my life to help me grow and to strengthen my faith. The most instrumental person would 100% be Cal B. We started going to coffee once a month. Every time, I felt my walls against God start to crumble. He got me into some counselling sessions and that's when the real work started to happen.

By the second session, I finally understood what my mom meant by "give it to God." I gave it all to Him! All my sins, all my struggles, all my anxiety and stress, all my hatred, all my past, everything! It was like breathing deeply, after being suffocated for years! It was like a huge burden that I had carried for so long was lifted off my shoulders! It felt like finally being clean after being sunk in the mud!

That's when my life began! I started looking at my life with a clear vision. Anything that happened from that point forward, I knew God was in control. Something that happened that would make me anxious, I gave it to God! Someone or something that made me mad, I immediately prayed about it! I read a devotional once that said, God doesn't give patience, He give us the opportunities to be patient. He doesn't take away things from our life that make us angry, He gives us opportunities to show His grace toward others.

I started to pray about everything! For God to show me His will for my life because I was so sick of pretending that I had any control. It's amazing, astounding how quickly He answers prayers! I started to read my Bible again, to actually listening to the sermons in church instead of daydreaming and apply what I was hearing to my everyday life. I can never begin to understand the will of God and the mysterious ways that He led me, but I trust Him fully. I've recently been promoted to manager at my work and I'm so grateful for all the people God has put in my life to help me through this next challenge. I've been through enough to realize that the struggles, that hardships, the temptations never stop. But that doesn't seem as daunting when I have a heavenly Father on my side!

It seems so perfect that Pastor Robert has been preaching about dying to sin, realizing fully that we are so completely dead without Christ. It's been exactly what I need to hear right now! It's exactly what I've witnessed in my own life. And I plan to die to my sin everyday so that I can live for Christ! I want everyone to see what God has done for me.

[“Cuz I’m just a nobody, trying to tell everybody, all about Somebody who saved my soul. Ever since you rescued me you gave my heart a song to sing! I’m living for the world to see nobody but Jesus!”

It feels so amazing and beautiful to know that I am saved! That without a doubt, though I’ve sinned horribly and can in no way repay the debt that I owe, I will spend eternity with God! That it’s only by faith that I am saved! I will spend the rest of my life praising God for what He has done for me on the cross! That my life can now be a testament to what God can do for others. That I will get to raise my future children in the love of God and to guide them the way that my mom guided me. That every relationship from this point forward will have God as its foundation.

I am especially thankful for First Christian Reformed Church and the family of believers that I will be a part of. For all the people that kept me in their prayers, especially Cal & Laura B. I don’t think I would be alive today if it weren’t for their prayers. I am so excited to stand up in front of everyone and profess my faith in God!! And then to live every day for the rest of my life for God!

Huge thank you to Pastor Robert for his recent sermon series! It has taught me so much and strengthened my faith more than you know! I greatly appreciate the new members class as well. It’s been an awesome learning experience and helped me form a deeper relationship with everyone in the class and more importantly taught me how much a church family means!”

Psalm 107:19-22 Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. 20 He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction. 21 Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! 22 And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!

Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God
'Cause all my life You have been faithful
And all my life You have been so, so good ...
You have led me through the fire
In darkest night You are close like no other
I've known You as a Father

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.

Psalm 107:1-2 Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!
2 Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble.

Ephesians 1:7-8 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us.

In Psalm 107 we see the redeemed were delivered and rescued from all kinds of trouble.

Four kinds of people.

Those who are wandering in a desert, lost, alone, without a clue, no direction, hungry, thirsty, weary in a dry and thirsty land. Lost travelers whose souls are faint with exhaustion, their life is ebbing away.

Those who are in darkness, or in the valley of the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction, in chains. Those who have rebelled against God's Words, knowing what was right, they didn't do it. Those in any sort of bondage, physical, mental, spiritual.

Those who are suffering because of their own sin or the consequences of their own folly, suffering affliction because of their iniquities. They have brought their troubles on themselves. The Psalmist puts it bluntly, fools, no one to blame but themselves, self-inflicted. All the more undeserving. Our sinful guilt doesn't disqualify us from the greatness of God's grace.

Those who are in some great difficulty, in the storms of life, in a crisis of circumstances, natural disasters, flood, fire, cancer, financial straits, something completely outside of their control.

This is a psalm of hope for the hopeless, those who have made a mess of their lives, who have made shipwreck of their faith, or someone else has to them. They find themselves in circumstances that have them reeling, staggering, *literally at their wits end* (Psalm 107:27).

Do you know what wits end is, where wits end is? Wits end is that place where all of your wisdom has been shallowed up, you are in over your head, covered up, at end of your rope, or as Leah put it, rock bottom. Wits end is where all our wisdom, all our smarts, all our skills and abilities become useless. God brings us to that place to show us ourselves and to show us Himself.

In one way or another each of these people felt isolated, alone, lost, confused, anxious, scarred. Does that describe any of you? Are you quietly struggling, battling with fear, doubt, hopelessness, depression, feeling isolated or alone in the world?

The Apostle Paul was there once and he gives a testimony of it in II Corinthians.

II Corinthians 4:8-10 For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. 9 Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. 10 He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us.

It is an interesting thing to notice in the Psalms whenever the Psalmist is pouring out his heart, whenever he feels alone, whenever he feels God has abandoned him or is far from him or isn't answering his prayers, he always does the same thing. He takes those thoughts and feelings and offers them up to God as a prayer. At some point in their deep struggle, they realized they weren't completely abandoned or alone, they turned to God.

When they arrive at wits end, the point of desperation, what do they do?

“They cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.”

They prayed in the right way, an earnest, fervent cry of the heart, sincere, genuine. And they prayed to the right person, to the Lord.

Our God is at His best in our crises, when we are at our worst. God rises to every occasion of our worst experiences. No problem, no trial, no scary scenario is a match for Him, too much for Him, above of His paygrade.

The steadfast love of the Lord is steadfast, it is sufficient, it is eternal, from everlasting to everlasting. In the midst of our guilt we experience God's grace.

What should those who have been redeemed do? The answer is given four times.

“Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!”

The Psalm begins with “Oh.” That is meant to be emphatic, it is for emphasis, meant to intensify our prayer. This is a prayer of hearty thanks, fervent prayer.

We shouldn't just feel grateful, we should say so. Give thanks to the Lord for His steadfast love. We all know of or have experienced ungrateful people, don't be one of them.

Implications and application.

Don't miss an opportunity to give a testimony to the goodness and mercy and kindness of God.

We all have a redemption story of salvation and then countless other stories of God's grace and mercy delivering us out of trouble and saving us and lifting us up and doing more than we could hope or ask or imagine.

If God has redeemed you, say so! If God has forgiven your iniquity, thank Him! If God has taken you down into the pits of wits end to humble you before rescuing you, know that He is Yahweh and His hesed endures forever, and worship Him. Honestly like Emily and Leah.

Earlier we sang:

Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it! Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;
Redeemed through His infinite mercy, His child, and forever, I am.

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so. Let the redeemed of the Lord give thanks to God for His great works of deliverance and redemption and salvation, for His goodness, grace and mercy. Let the redeemed of the Lord give Him the glory, honor, praise, worship, adoration due His name.

Let the redeemed of the Lord give thanks with their lips and with their lives, with thanksgiving and with thanks-living.

We are the perpetual partakers of God's grace and goodness, it flows in streams of mercy to us all day long. So we should be perpetual praisers of God's goodness.

Is God good when He takes away as well as when He gives?

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.

Is God good when His providence is painful as well as when it is pleasant?

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.

Is God good when He humbles us and disciplines us as well when He lifts us up?

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.

Is God good when He is the potter and we are the clay, when He is the shepherd and we are the sheep?

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.

Is God good when He sends the rain and the storm as well as when He sends the sun and calm?

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.

Is God good when we are persecuted as well as when we are praised?

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.

Is God good when we are in that gap before we see and experience the goodness of the Lord?

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.

Announcements:

b-day: 26th Jennie B. Bill Feller

Nate S, Darren G., (Wayne's dad Pete G) Sade N. Phama?

Tonight our annual prayer service for the new church year.

Next Sunday congregational meeting after worship to vote on councils' recommendation to call Zac Harrison as Associate Pastor. Absentee ballots are on the information table.

Notice the thread of redemption, of being redeemed in the service this morning. Profession of faith Emily and Leah will sing and we will hear their testimonies of faith and God's grace.

Call to Worship:

See bulletin

God's Greeting:

To all you who are beloved by God and called to be saints: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Call to Confession:

See bulletin

Prayer of Confession

Holy Father, we pray in the name of Christ who is our redeemer, justifier, sanctifier and righteousness. By His precious blood cleanse us of all our sin, crucify our flesh with all its affections and lusts, mortify our besetting sins that cling so close and tempt us. By your Holy Spirit create in us a clean heart and a renewed and sanctified soul. Don't let sin continue to reign in us, but set us free so we can be free to walk in your paths of righteousness for your name sake. Amen.

Assurance:

See bulletin

Profession of Faith:**God's Blessing:**

New members come to narthex.

Titus 3:5-7 Now may he who redeemed us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.... pour out on us generously His Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ our Savior, justify us by his grace, and make us heirs of eternal life.