

November 21, 2020 WholeLife Seventh-day Adventist Church,
2800 N Orange Ave Orlando, FL 32804 Psalm 107 While We
Wait: We Give Thanks by Andy McDonald

Today's message is titled "While We Wait: We Give Thanks."
Appropriate as we approach our national day of Thanksgiving.

I probably added to my wife to be's concerns about running out of gas when, on one of our early dates in college, on a progressive party, as we made our way from one home to the next gathering spot, I ran out of gas! We were stuck. To make it worse the rain was pouring down. I was embarrassed. Vicki, less than pleased. I don't think it would have gone over well if I'd turned to her and shared the sentiment of today's title, "Uh, while we wait let's give thanks!"

You feel that lump, or you have that persistent cough, or that same pain every time you eat. So you go to your doctor and they send you for tests on Tuesday afternoon before Thanksgiving. No chance you'll know the results until Monday or Tuesday after Thanksgiving. You don't want to hear, "While We Wait: Give Thanks!"

Application has been made for college. You got your acceptance letter. Now you've filed for a grant or a loan to enable you to enroll. And you discover that by some fluke you missed some deadline, and that there are funds you qualify to receive but they won't be available until second semester. While you wait are you really going to give thanks?

In our current waiting for the dominance of the Coronavirus to be in the rear view mirror; In our continued waiting for a more racially justice in our world; on our globe where so many are suffering from dislocation from their homes, or starvation, or grinding poverty while we are waiting for it to all end how do we simultaneously give thanks?

Psalm 107 is one of the most wonderfully crafted pieces of literature in all of scripture and holds its own with the best outside of scripture.

But its true beauty is not in its careful and skilled composition, its true beauty is in what it says and how it speaks to how we give thanks while we wait.

The opening lines of the psalm are the theme the call that will be repeated throughout and will demonstrate that God's actions, who God is and what he does for his children is reason to give thanks.

Psalm 107:1 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.

God is good. He is excellent, appropriate, and valuable. By contrast he is not anything that isn't good.

Not to belabor the word—do you realize how good that is. The false gods, other gods who are not “the God” deities created by man and worshipped by many, all had a good and bad side.

Sometimes some of that thinking has colored our perception of God and we've portrayed him or believed in him as being both good and bad. The only reason we might get pulled there is from a misunderstanding. Like when a young child, who wants their own way to their own detriment, needs to be denied their wish. The “loving” thing for the parent to do is to deny them, and for some short or long period of time the child may imagine in their immature thinking that the parent is being “bad” to them. When in fact they are loving them perfectly.

Our God is good, all the time, and all that he does is good. His love endures forever. Of course it does. God has defined himself as love and then through the Apostle Paul that love is described or

defined in 1 Corinthians 13 and true, real, God-like love never fails. It endures through all circumstances.

Regardless of what life throws at us, regardless of hard times, difficult circumstances, or glorious days without a care in the world, on high days or low days we can give thanks (maybe not for the day itself) to the Lord, for he is good, his love endures forever.

The rest of the psalm speaks of four groups who found themselves in a bad place,

The first group starts in vs 4: I like how Eugene Peters paraphrases it in the Message Bible.

“Some of you wandered for years in the desert, looking but not finding a good place to live, half-starved and parched with thirst, staggering and stumbling, on the brink of exhaustion.”

Not a great place to be. Not the kind of waiting we would consider pleasant. But here is the blessing of difficult times. We end up in tough times doing what they did in their tough times:

Vs. 6 Then, in your desperate condition, you called out to God.”

When we are fenced in with no way out. When the bank account is empty but the bills aren't paid. When the tests come back revealing a problem that isn't humanly fixable. When a relationship looks damaged beyond our ability to fix. Those and larger and smaller crisis points put us in a desperate condition and we call out to God.

Here's what the psalmist says happened:

He got you out on the nick of time;

He put your feet on a wonderful road

That took you straight to a good place to live.

So thank God for his marvelous love, for his miracle mercy to the children he loves. He poured great draughts of water down parched throats, the starved and hungry got plenty to eat.

The second group were locked in a dark cell cruelly confined behind bars. Not a soul in sight to help.

Then you called out to God in your desperate condition;
He got you out in the nick of time.

He led you out of your dark cell, broke open the jail and led you out. He shattered the heavy jailhouse doors, he snapped the prison bars like matchsticks.

So again, thank God for his marvelous love, for his miracle mercy to the children he loves.

The next group vs. 17, "Some of you were sick because you'd lived a bad life, your bodies feeling the effects of your sin, You couldn't stand the sight of food, so miserable you thought you'd be better off dead.

"Then you called out to God in your desperate condition,
He got you out in the nick of time.
He spoke the word that healed you,
That pulled you back from the brink of death.

SO thank God for his marvelous love,
For his miracle mercy to the children he loves.

The fourth group set sail in big ships.
Out at sea you saw God in action,
Saw his breathtaking ways with the ocean.
With a word he called up the wind – an ocean storm, towering waves! You shot high in the sky, then the bottom dropped out, your

hearts were stuck in your throats, You were spun like a top, you
reeled like a drunk, you didn't know which end was up.

Then you called out to God in your desperate condition,
He got you out in the nick of time.

He quieted the wind down to a whisper, put a muzzle on all the big
waves. And you were so glad when the storm died down, and he
led you safely back to harbor.

So thank God for his marvelous love,
For his miracle mercy to the children he loves.

I'm sure you see the pattern. It has a familiar ring. Trouble comes,
times of waiting not knowing what if any future awaits. And in
desperation there is a cry out to the Lord who gets his child out of
the trouble in the nick of time.

God is not encouraging "Pollyanish" thinking. It may have a ring of
authenticity that it all works out in God's eternal plan—all things
work together for good from an eternal perspective. But...

We know some die in the desert
We know some get beheaded in prison
We know some sick people die
We know some ships never reach port

While we wait, even when things don't work the way we'd like,
even then we give thanks to the lord because we know he is good
and that even when we don't understand we trust that his love will
prevail, his love endures forever.

And listen, our lives are richer when they are filled with gratitude.

Our natural bent as humans seems to be a giftedness at noticing all
the troubles, all the bad stuff, all the brokenness that needs fixing.

And so we are pulled toward whining and complaining about all that isn't right instead of being filled with gratitude for all that is good and for our God whose love endures forever

It is really sad because we know from good research today that Gratitude being grateful can center us in the now! It allows us to celebrate the present moment. Sure good and bad things have happened before this moment and will follow this moment. But when we are thankful and express gratitude we can be present in the moment.

The research also shows that gratitude blocks and overrides toxic emotions. Gratitude counters envy, resentment, regret, depression.

In a world filled with stress we know gratitude increases stress resistance.

And a thankful heart a heart of gratitude strengthens our social ties and ups our sense of self-worth.

Knowing this it make sense that long ago the psalmist would invite us to give thanks to the lord for his love endures forever.

One day Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem and traveling along the border between Samaria and Galilee as he was going into a village , ten men who had leprosy met him They stood a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us.!" He said back to them,. "Go show yourselves to the priests>" And as they went, they were cleansed.

They were lepers, They were outcasts. They couldn't just go and do as they liked. So when Jesus said to go they went. Imagine they are walking along maybe an hour or so later Jim looks over at Bob whose leprosy had already resulted in some missing fingers. And Jim does a double take as he looks at Bob's hand swinging by his side with all new flesh, restored finger, better than new. Can you

imagine as they inspected each other and shouted and screamed with joy. Nine of the lepers hurried on toward finding the priests. And one turned around to head back to Jesus. When he found Jesus he threw himself at his feet and thanked him.

Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this Samaritan foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well." And his wellness was enlarged.

He was present with Jesus in the moment. His gratitude was so great there was no room for wandering thoughts. He was here with Jesus. Bubbling over with gratitude there was no space for envy, resentment, regret, or depression.

As gratitude spilled out of his heart he felt ready to take on anything. And while all ten were healed he felt a closer tie to Jesus and he felt better about himself cleansed!

I wonder if part of the gratitude of this one foreigner was his clarity on not having any expectations or sense of entitlement. He knew he was in a mess, knew he was a foreigner, knew that no respecting Jew would give him the time of day no less heal him. So when the reality that God got him out of his leprosy in the nick of time, the only proper response was to thank God for his marvelous love for his miracle mercy to him.

There are three primary reasons we might fail at gratitude. The first is a sense of pride. We like to imagine that we are all self-made people and any modicum of success that is ours we earned! Success in this day to day world or in our spiritual lives even.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians a verse that a friend used at his ordination service to remind himself and the others present that who he was and what he had accomplished so far and his very readiness for ordination was all a gift. 1 Corinthians 4:7 For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not

receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?"

If we think more highly of ourselves than we ought, if we give ourselves credit for achieving on our own all that we have simply received, it removes all motivation for gratitude.

The second blocker of gratitude is a sense of dissatisfaction. A hunger for more, that lack of contentment for what we have. 1 Timothy 6:7&8 "For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that."

I remember when comparisons were made with something others had that we didn't or something we wanted more than what we had I would sing the little song.

O be thankful for the good things that you've got
 O be thankful for the good things that you've got
 For the good things that you've got are for many just a dream
 So be thankful for the good things that you've got.

If we haven't learned to be content in good times or bad, in times of plenty or want it will be really hard to be truly filled with gratitude.

The third inhibitor of gratitude is simply carelessness or forgetfulness. We know expressing gratitude seems to enlarge our heart of gratitude and this is probably why Paul was inspired to write, "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

"All circumstances is pretty inclusive and it should mean that giving thanks, expressing gratitude should be woven into all our daily life. Not reserved for one week or one day a year.

And here's the clincher for followers of Jesus.

Jesus has come to this earth, retraced the steps where Adam fell. Our genealogical heritage through Adam is a death sentence, BUT Jesus came as the second Adam. He lived a sinless life. In his life death and resurrection he reconciled all of the fallen world, everything in heaven and on earth to the Father.

He brings us, not as servants but as friends, as adopted brothers and sister, right into the throne room of the Holy Trinity, and we are accept as absolutely perfect in God's sight because we are in Christ.

And all we can say is thank you. We give you thanks your love endures forever, you got us out of this mess in the nick of time. This earth is not our home we are just passing through heaven is our home, eternity is ours and for this amazing gift we simply humbly with full satisfaction, careful to honor that gift we give thanks. So while we wait, give thanks to the Lord, his love endures forever.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good his love endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for us.

And as you live in a state of constant thanksgiving wait for God to get you out of your waiting just in the nick of time.



What do you think about giving thanks while you wait?

How hard is it to believe that God is 100% good and 0% bad?

When God says no or wait does it make it hard to believe he is 100% good?

What is it about “desperate conditions” that pushes us to call on the Lord?

When has the Lord gotten you out of desperate situation, “just in the nick of time”?

When have you felt “locked up” and what did it mean for Jesus to set you free?

How does it feel when God turns raging winds to a whisper and muzzles the high waves of your sea?

How do you keep in balance of the reality of bad stuff in our temporal world and the promise of all good in eternity?

Jesus has set everything right in the universe and gives us eternity, could it be that our “thank you” is God’s best praise?



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