

“Steadfast” | Psalm 107:1-9 | 5th Sunday in Lent  
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*Because of God’s covenant faithfulness to His people, He rescues us from aimlessly wandering through this sinful wasteland.*

Each Sunday during Lent we’re taking a closer look at the psalm appointed for each week, as we read them responsively together here in worship and reflect on them during the sermon, our goal is to take these psalms and make them our own, to make them our own prayers and praises to God. The 20th century pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer called the psalms “the prayer book of the Bible”, and indeed they are not just the prayers of the psalmists or of the ancient Israelites who used these psalms in their own worship. They are our prayers as well. Prayers that we can stockpile in our hearts and minds and bring out in times of praise and thanksgiving, times of confession, times of lament, even.

Last week we saw how Christ himself is the lens through which we must look in order to pray these psalms. Christ is at the center, even of the Old Testament and these psalms. When we pray them we must ask, what does this psalm have to do with Jesus? As we work our way through Psalm 107:1-9 we’ll be asking ourselves this question...and asking how we might, through Christ, pray this psalm aright as well.

### **Psalm 107:1**

We notice right off the bat that this psalm begins with praise to God. But it’s not a general, vague praise. It’s not praise for God’s power and might like we saw last week in Psalm 19. No, the psalmist praises God for his goodness...goodness that is made manifest in God’s *steadfast love*.

In seminary, when I was taking first year Hebrew class we learned this word that is translated as “steadfast love” in our text this morning. In Hebrew the word is *chesed*. We used to all sorts of confused because the Hebrew word has about 20 different glosses or definitions. It can mean God’s love, His mercy, His grace. But the definition that really stuck and the one I want to highlight this morning is that of ‘covenant faithfulness’. I want to use this one for our discussion this morning because it cements for us this attribute of God for which the psalmist praises God.

The psalmist praised God for God’s non-stop faithfulness...for his enduring and never ending love. For God’s eternal fidelity to His people. So we could paraphrase that first verse like this:

*“Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good...God’s faithfulness to his promises lasts forever”*

### **Psalm 107:2-3**

How do we know that God is good and faithful to his promises? Because the redeemed of the Lord, those whom God has saved and rescued, have testified to this fact. In fact, Psalm 107 is a historical recounting of the many ways in which God has been faithful to his people. It's a case-in-point reminder, not of Israel's faithfulness to God but God's steadfast, immovable faithfulness towards us.

### **Psalm 107:4-5**

Our Psalm for this morning brings to mind the inspiration for the Christian Church's observation of the season of Lent. It brings to mind the wilderness wandering not only of God's people but the 40 days of sojourning Jesus did in the wilderness as he was tempted by Satan. It brings to mind the vast Judean wilderness. As far as the eye can see, rocky, barren hills. To journey from one end of the desert wasteland to the other would be a daunting, if not impossible journey. Not only is it hot and arid but the terrain is treacherous. It's not flat and smooth but full of hills.

In such a place the Israelites wandered...in such a place Jesus was tempted. And we know that over and over again Israel whined and complained. They remembered fondly the days when they were in slavery in Egypt because at least then they had good food to eat and a comfortable place to sleep. They groaned that their leader, Moses, was simply leading them to their death. "What is the point?"

What is the point of leaving Egypt if all they would face was sure and certain death?

And, hey, to be honest, I don't blame them. I probably would have thought the exact same thing. What *was* the point? Why did God bring them out of slavery if they were just doomed to wander? They were plagued with meaninglessness. Pointlessness. Wandering and stumbling around. Their souls fainting.

Isn't that phrase so descriptive? Can't you just feel what that would be like? Your soul fainting? We might say something like 'having the life drained out of us'.

Doesn't wandering aimlessly in a desert wasteland sound like it would drain the life out of you? Physically, the life is sucked from you because there is nothing to sustain you. No food or water. The elements beat down upon you and the wild animals are not cute or friendly or cuddly.

Spiritually, the life is sucked from us because we find ourselves alone, helpless, scared. Spiritually we feel like we have been abandoned by God, left to die in the wasteland.

We may have not done much wandering in the desert. But we've spent plenty of time in the wasteland we call sin and this sinful/broken world we inhabit. We, indeed, have wandered around in this place, haven't we. We have wandered around in this sinful world, and I don't know about you, but my soul is fainting. Without something to sustain me every minute of every day, the life is drained from me.

Although we try to find something, anything which might sustain us, in reality, there is nothing, nothing, in this temporal world that provides the nourishment and sustenance that we need to survive. Nothing to fill us up and energize us each and every day.

I know...we've all tried. We've all tried to find something in this world to revive that fainting soul.

Perhaps you thought your new and exciting job would be what your life was missing.

Perhaps you thought that once you got married, you would magically get your life in order and things would start to look up.

Maybe you thought that self-medicating with alcohol or drugs or porn would make the weariness go away.

Maybe you thought that one more self-help book, one more productivity tool would be the solution you were looking for.

Or maybe you thought that if you could manage to control everyone and everything around you, you could finally relax and your soul would feel full.

We could go on, I suppose, listing all of the ways we try and revive our fainting soul.

Let me ask you this. How's that working out for you? Let me guess...

That excitement wore off...Your spouse didn't magically fix all the things inside of you that you were hoping...You woke up the next morning feeling just a little bit worse...More organization or productivity or exercise regiment wasn't the solution and...There's no such thing as a universe that conforms to all of your expectations.

Yeah, that's what I thought. Been there...been there...and been there.

Because there is nothing in this wilderness waste of a world that will sustain us for very long at all. There is nothing in this wilderness that fills us up. There is nothing that revives our souls, nothing that quenches our thirst.

**Psalm 107:6-7**

Indeed, we have but one hope. We have but one stronghold. We have but One Deliverer, One Savior who alone can bring us back to life. For the psalmist exclaims,

*“Then they cried out 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.”*

Just as the Israelites had but one hope while wandering in the desert, we too have but one hope while wandering in this wilderness we live in. Nothing other than the perfect, immovable, steadfast love of God in Jesus Christ. Though we have seen God act on behalf of His people over and over again in Scripture, in Christ, He shows once and for

all that His love is not conditional...it is not fickle. It is not wavering. No, God's love and God's faithfulness to us, His Children, is sure and certain. Neverending. Never failing.

Nothing else can provide what Jesus give to us. The only remedy for a weary and fainting soul is an Identity rooted in Him...and Identity given to us in baptism that tells us in no uncertain terms that we are His children. We are His children that he has scooped up out of this wasteland and as brought us near to himself. Against the attacks of Sin and Death we have Security in Him. The treacherous paths of this world cannot befall us because Christ has us. We walk near to him and he will never leave us or forsake us.

More than an Identity and Security in Christ, we also have Meaning. We have purpose. We don't walk aimlessly through this life but we bear witness to his steadfast love. Through his Church, God is bringing the good news of Jesus to this desert waste. He's bringing the good news of restoration...of food for the hungry and drink for the thirsty. He's bringing *life* to the weary and rest for the faint. Our Identity, Security, and Meaning in life is founded solely on the steadfast love of God in Christ.

### **Conclusion**

If you are in the middle of uncertainty right now in life. If you have no idea what is coming next. If you don't know where to turn or to whom you ought to turn. If you are just plain empty...if you are hungry or thirsty in your life for something more: for purpose or meaning beyond the day to day grind of working, eating, and sleeping. Wherever you are in life, listen to this psalm. Listen to the promise of this psalm: "God delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in"

The steadfast love of God found in Jesus Christ does not fail. It is not uncertain. The death of Jesus on the cross for us and his resurrection from the dead assures us of that. We heard from the book of Romans on Wednesday night that "nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus". Nothing. Not life, not death, not time, not space. God's love for us is steadfast.

It's a steadfast love that has conquered sin and death. It's a steadfast love that is making a whole new creation out of this desert waste in which we now live. It's a steadfast love that gives drink to the thirsty and food to the hungry. It's a steadfast love that leads us on straight and level paths. It's a steadfast love that *satisfies*. Not just for a short time or temporarily. But *eternally*. Amen.