

Psalm 107 - Trouble, Crying out, Hessed and Thanks

What I want to do this morning, is explore the context and content of this Psalm - Psalm 107

And I want to show three contexts where this Psalm is lived out

- the story of Israel,
- The story of Jesus
- And the story of Paul

The 150 Psalms, as you may know, are divided in five books.

The five books seem to be echoing the five books of the Israelite law

And they seem to be saying that

As God speaks in five parts

We respond in five parts.

Prayer as Response

The psalms are a response to God, and to the life that God gives us.

So you are in a life, and it is a life which has come from God

And the psalms are your response,

How good a responder are you... because the Psalms is about keeping up the dialogue.

That is already interesting isn't

That prayer is simply a response to God

Or the life evokes a response to us.

God gives you life, and you give God a Psalm.

So we already are saying that life demands a response to God - so the question here is "Are you living responsively to God, speaking to God, reflecting on God, finding the spaces simply to tell God what you are thinking?"

There is a Book 4 and Book 5

Now I said that the Psalms are divided in five books.

And the overwhelming thing in book 3 of the Psalms, is that God has given people disaster,

This great disaster where they are dislodged from the promised land,

Exile was also a disaster.... BUT

Exile was the thing that caused Israel's faith to mature

It was the thing that caused them to write the faith down,

And it was the discovery that in exile that the worst thing that you possibly thought could happen to you wasn't the end of the story.

And Books 4 and 5 of the psalms are the way of saying, there is a story after Book 3.

By the very act of writing Books 4 and 5

You are saying that Book 3 isn't the last book

So already we've picked up that
Prayer is a response to God and life - and God and life are so intertwined

And Book 3 is the disaster
But there is still a book 4 and a book 5.

Into Psalm 107

Now the reason that I say all this about the five books
Is that Psalm 107 is the big opener to Book 5

No remember that Book 5 follows on Book 3 - Exile
And is a response to life

And Life is Trouble.
Life has been trouble
And Life has been exile
Which is the worst thing that can ever happen to you.

So what is the response to all this trouble
And all this life

"Verse 1-2
Oh give thanks to the Lord,
For his Hesed endures forever
Let the redeemed of the Lord say so,
Those he has redeemed from **trouble**

Because verse 3

"And gathered in from the lands
From the east and the west
From the north and the south"

So there is thanks here
Giving out
There is Hesed
There is trouble
And where there once was scattering, there is not gathering.

And then you get this fourfold pattern,
Almost like it's echoing the north, south, east and west
And what the Psalm is calling us into the truth of
Which gets repeated four times is this

There is trouble

People cry out in trouble
God acts
Let the people thank the Lord for his Heseed
And his wonderful acts for humankind.

And I want to show you this fourfold pattern in four stories that happen in the book

This pattern of
Trouble
Cry
Heseed
Thanks

If you don't remember anything else at all this morning, remember this
Trouble
Cry
Heseed
Thanks

So the first story is in the desert. (Verses 4-9)
People are wandering and they have no home
And then they cry out in their trouble
And the Lord hears
And he lead them by a straight way until they reached a town which had homes in it
Let them thank the Lord for his Heseed
And for this wonderful works to humankind

The second story is in prison (verse 10-16)
People are in prison - because of their sin
And they cry out to God in their trouble
And the Lord hears
And he breaks the bars
And let them thank the Lord for His heed
And for his wonderful works to humankind

The third story is in sickness (verses 17-22)
People are sick because of their sinful ways
And they cry out to God in their trouble
And the Lord hears
And he heals them
And Let them thank the Lord for his Heseed
And for his wonderful works for humankind

And the fourth story is out on the sea (verse 23-32)
And people are going out onto the deep
And this story is full of colour
God commands and the waves are raised, and they went up to heaven

And they went down to the depths
(In modern parlance we call this a roller coaster - the roller coaster is a desire to experience this)
And they stagger around like drunk men
And they cry out to God in their trouble
And he brought them to their desired heaven
Let them thank the Lord because of his Hese

And this story gets told again and again
In fact I think the reason it happens is because of the story

There is always going to be trouble

And the big question is do you want the trouble to be the last act
No of course
In fact you have got to get in touch with your dissatisfaction with the trouble
Your unhappiness with the trouble
And tell God about the trouble,
Get crying
The story hangs on the crying.

Part of this morning is get into a bit more trouble
Particularly if life is too comfortable,
But really what I want to say is
Get Crying

And there is always going to be crying out - do you notice that you cry out whether the thing is
your fault or not
And there is always going to be Hese

There is always going to be trouble
And there is always going to be Hese

Life throws trouble at you
You throw cries at God
God throws Hese at you
You throw thanks to God

That's the story- again and again that's the story.

The word Hese, which means steadfast love,
It means a passionate holding onto
It means anti-trouble.

I remember when I lived in India, and my great friend Jacob and Joy had a daughter called Hese
Joja... and Hese Joja was told because of the strife that Jacob had in his life, and he had a
daughter whose name was Hese

I remember when I was out there, I went to New Year at Goa

And Jacob said to me we have spent the last few days giving thanks to God
For all the good things which he has given us
Imagine that was your plan for new Year - spend the time giving thanks for Heseed.

The story repeats

The story repeats with Jesus
It repeats with Jesus because he goes into the desert
Because he is one day in prison
Because he bears our diseases
Because he goes out into the story

Because even in the life of Jesus
There is trouble
And there is Heseed.

And I want to say this with life of Paul
Because you see there is illustration at the end of life of Paul, where he goes on this great Sea
journey.

And his life has been trouble
And he is realising Heseed
In fact his great gospel
Is whether you did the sinning part
Or it just hit you part
God still listened
And the one who stepped into the breach Both times was Jesus.

And this gets Paul into trouble with the pagans and the empire who want idols to serve the state
And it gets Paul into trouble with the Jewish Christians who want faith but only with law
Not unmerited Heseed
This is too much

And at the end of the story
Luke tells this great sea journey
Because I think he wants to show that Paul is being battered
By the pagans and by the Jewish Christians
He's got steer this path through the way where the Spirit is
Not as compromise
Because that is where the life is.

And you get this great sea journey like Psalm 107 here
In past Cyprus,
In the winds,

But Paul has this vision that not one person is going to be lost
The soldiers the crew, the other prisoners
All will be held in Heseed

That's Paul great vision that the Heseed is for us all.

And if I have this vision for a Church
I would like us to get the radicalism of the Psalms
Of the story of Israel
Of the story of Jesus
Of the story of Paul

I accept that we are going to hit trouble
Because there will be the pressures of law
And there will be pressures of power and empire and idols and false gods.

But he keeps coming with the refrain,
Not one will be lost

I have this vision for us as a Church
To understand the radicalism of Israel
To understand the radicalism of Jesus
To understand the radicalism of Paul

And this will get us into trouble
With believers who pull us closer to law
With nonbelievers who have smaller gods
But we cry out when in trouble
But not one will be lost
Not one will be lost

This is the life God give us
It's the story that we live again and again
Trouble
Cry out
Heseed
Let us give thanks

AMEN