

Psalm 107:28-32 (Fourth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 7—Series B)

“Rescued from Your Distress”

Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield CT

June 20, 2021

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our text is the Introit Psalm appointed for the day from Psalm 107:

²⁸And they cried to Yahweh in their distress, and He brought them out of their distress. ²⁹He caused the storm to become a whisper and the waves were silent. ³⁰Then they were glad because the waves were quiet, and He led them to the harbor of their pleasure. ³¹Let them give thanks to Yahweh for His loving kindness and for His wondrous acts to the children of mankind. ³²And let them extol Him in the congregation of the people and let them praise Him in the assembly of the elders.

Last week we had the opportunity to explore God’s plan of salvation. We learned that God is indeed involved in flesh-and-blood history, even to the point of God of the Son taking on real human flesh, being born, growing, and ultimately suffering, dying, and rising again to purchase and win the forgiveness of sins and eternal life for all people. But as the Lord is actively involved in His creation, He does so according to His will and His ways, which are always best, even when we sometimes find ourselves at odds with the mysterious ways that God moves in this world working out His plans and promises. In the words of the hymn writer, “God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform; He plants His footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm” (*LSB* 765:1).

Perhaps after their experience in the boat in the storm Jesus’ disciples would sing that hymn stanza with gusto! God the Son was certainly moving in a mysterious way—sleeping as the windstorm on the Sea of Galilee pounded the boat, the waves already filling the craft. Maybe they wanted God to plant His footsteps in the sea and ride the storm away from them like a cowboy on great bucking bronco. But Jesus was asleep. No worries. Nothing to fear. Wait, what? There’s a whole lot to fear. And they cried to Yahweh in their distress, “Jesus,

don't you care that we are going to die!" "And He brought them out of their distress. He caused the storm to become a whisper and the waves were silent." "Be quiet; be still. . . . And they became greatly afraid, and they said to one another, 'Who, then, is this, that both the wind and the sea obey Him?' "

He is Yahweh. Jesus is God the Son in human flesh and blood involved in the flesh-and-blood lives of people. Psalm 107 relates different aspects of Israel's history in which God Himself was involved. For Israel, these scenarios likely reflected the overall experience of being in captivity in Babylon. In a sense and in different ways, we also experience some aspect of these four perils in our lives: Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them (vv. 4–5); Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons, for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High (vv. 10–11); Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction; they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death (vv. 17–18); and finally, Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters; they saw the deeds of the LORD, his wondrous works in the deep. For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their evil plight; they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end (vv. 23–27).

All those in danger and distress cried out to the Lord for help. And He delivered them. The words of our Introit today are that refrain: "And they cried to Yahweh in their distress, and He brought them out of their distress."

But why did God let them have this distress in the first place? Wrong question. His ways are not ours. His thoughts are not ours. It's not always for us to know "why." It is, however, for us to know Him who is available to us to redeem, deliver, and rescue us from the situations in which we find ourselves. Because of sin, this world is chaotic and even inhospitable. It is often simply dangerous and unsafe. Jesus told His disciples plainly, "In the world you have trouble and suffering," but He added, "take courage —I have conquered the world" (John 16:33 NET).

Because of His love for His fallen creation, God chooses to bring us out of our distress. Sometimes He removes the trouble. Other times He grants us the power of His grace and Spirit to accept the distress and to cope with it in this life. Think here of the apostle Paul. He pleaded with the Lord three times to remove his "thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan." But God's response was not to remove the trouble. Rather, He said to Paul as His Word often says to us, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9 ESV).

Think also of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. "Going a little farther, he threw himself down with his face to the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me! Yet not what I will, but what you will.' . . . He went away a second time and prayed, 'My Father, if this cup cannot be taken away unless I drink it, your will must be done'" (Matt. 26:39–42 NET). For us and for our salvation, Jesus was willing to drink the cup of God the Father's wrath against our sins. Jesus willingly gave up His life into death so that you and I might be brought out of the distress of eternal death and hell, which are far worse than anything we might suffer in this life. Through Jesus' death, you have the forgiveness of

sins. Where there is forgiveness, there is also eternal life and salvation from death and hell. In Christ Jesus, by grace through faith, you are “the redeemed of the LORD.” You have been redeemed from trouble, the greatest of troubles—sin and death.

How wonderfully does Martin Luther put this in words that even children can understand in the explanation to the Second Article of the Creed: “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.”

This is what Psalm 107 is about. We cried to Yahweh in our distress, and He brought us out of our distress through the perfect life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. As the forgiven and redeemed people of God in Christ, we continue to cry to the Lord in all the struggles of life, knowing for certain that He is working all things together for good for those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose in Jesus (Rom. 8:28) For all this we give thanks and praise to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for His loving kindness and for His wondrous acts to the children of mankind. And those acts are in Jesus! Those acts are Jesus bringing the reign and rule of God to us in His person and saving work. Those acts are in His miracles that show that Jesus is true God and true Man who has

come to save the world from sin and death. Those acts are Jesus' death on the cross, His resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, and indeed, His coming again.

So let us extol our God and Savior in the congregation of the people. Let us thank and praise. Let us give glory to God, our light and our life, as we come to worship Him and receive from His bountiful grace forgiveness, eternal life, and the strengthening of our faith so that we may fight the good fight of faith and persevere through this life until we are together in the new creation without distress and trouble. As Psalm 107 concludes, "Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD" in Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer (Psa. 107:43 ESV). Amen.