

PONDERING HIS WORKS

Psalm 107 ends with this simple phrase: “Let the wise ones consider the steadfast love of the LORD.” This line is a reflection on all that’s been said from 102 until 107, a little unit specifically is united by the theme of Yahweh’s “works.” This sermon series will go through each of these Psalms bringing us through a season of intentionally reflecting upon God’s work of creation and salvation despite continual human failure. God still does mighty things to bring people out of the darkness and into his light. Praising Yahweh is the proper response.

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PSALM 102

Lament and affliction is the context by which we consider the steadfast love of the Lord. Experience of evil is often the starting point.

Hear my prayer, O LORD; let my cry come to you! Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress! Incline your ear to me; answer me speedily in the day when I call! For my days pass away like smoke, and my bones burn like a furnace. My heart is struck down like grass and has withered; I forget to eat my bread. Because of my loud groaning my bones cling to my flesh. I am like a desert owl of the wilderness, like an owl of the waste places; I lie awake; I am like a lonely sparrow on the housetop. All the day my enemies taunt me; those who deride me use my name for a curse. For I eat ashes like bread and mingle tears with my drink, because of your indignation and anger; for you have taken me up and thrown me down. My days are like an evening shadow; I wither away like grass. But you, O LORD, are enthroned forever; you are remembered throughout all generations. You will arise and have pity on Zion; it is the time to favor her; the appointed time has come. For your servants hold her stones dear and have pity on her dust. Nations will fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth will fear your glory. For the LORD builds up Zion; he appears in his glory; he regards the prayer of the destitute and does not despise their prayer. Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD: that he looked down from his holy height; from heaven the LORD looked at the earth, to hear the groans of the prisoners, to set free those who were doomed to die, that they may declare in Zion the name of the LORD, and in Jerusalem his praise, when peoples gather together, and kingdoms, to worship the LORD. He has broken my strength in midcourse; he has shortened my days. "O my God," I say, "take me not away in the midst of my days—you whose years endure throughout all generations!" Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end. The children of your servants shall dwell secure; their offspring shall be established before you. — Psalm 102

1. The heading on this Psalm says that it can be used to pour out a complaint before the Lord. In your conversations with the Lord, what's the difference between lament and sinful complaining (Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world — Philippians 2:14-15)?

2. Share with your family, friend or small group a time in your life where you felt as lonely as "an owl in the waste places (ancient ruins)."

3. What does this Psalm teach us about the character of God?

4. In this Psalm, the circumstances of the lament never seem to be changed. How is the Psalmist able to get to the hope of verse 25-28? How do we move from lament to hope in our lives?

PSALM 103

The Lord works justice and righteousness. He is faithful and always deserving of praise.

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments. The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all. Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word! Bless the LORD, all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will! Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul! — Psalm 103

1. What do you think it means to “bless the LORD?” When is a good time to command our souls to bless Him?
2. Which of the benefits listed in verses 2-5 do you struggle to remember?
3. What is the measure of God’s steadfast love towards his followers? How have you experienced his steadfast love?

4. Given the Psalms descriptions of God's character and that we and followers of Jesus are to represent God to the world, what is one area in which you need to grow in being more like God?

5. Why does the psalmist command the angels and the "hosts" to bless the Lord? Does this mean we have a higher rank than the angels and can give them direction?

PSALM 104

The wonder of natural creation and its revelation of God's love/care. God even rules over the evil that has since taken root.

Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent. He lays the beams of his chambers on the waters; he makes the clouds his chariot; he rides on the wings of the wind; he makes his messengers winds, his ministers a flaming fire. He set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be moved. You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At your rebuke they fled; at the sound of your thunder they took to flight. The mountains rose, the valleys sank down to the place that you appointed for them. You set a boundary that they may not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth. You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills; they give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell; they sing among the branches. From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work. You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart. The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. In them the birds build their nests; the stork has her home in the fir trees. The high mountains are for the wild goats; the rocks are a refuge for the rock badgers. He made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting. You make darkness, and it is night, when all the beasts of the forest creep about. The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God. When the sun rises, they steal away and lie down in their dens. Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening. O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it. These all look to you, to give them their food in due season. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground. May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works, who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke! I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD. Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more! Bless the LORD, O my soul! Praise the LORD! —Psalm 104

Since God matters to you, re-pointing your soul is an essential life skill. Psalms will help you do that, repeatedly!

- Think: He is SOVEREIGN in His power.
- Think: He is infinite in wisdom and understands creation.
- Think: He is caring for his creation and sustaining it, always!

Since this is God...

1. Check often to make sure God is to you who He is!
2. Praise and thank Him often. Make this part of your daily mission.
3. Steer your musings, meditations, concerns and anxiety by what He says is true about Himself, the world and you.

1. What about this Psalm sticks out to you?

2. As we live our lives, there are moments and places where we stand in awe of God's work of creation. What's been one of those moments or places for you?

3. Verse 19-23 direct us to think about God's creation of time and how he made the rhythms of days, nights, months and years. God's creation is ordered and structured. How does this passage relate to our struggles with anxiety?

4. What does verse 27-30 teach us about God? Why is this important to know?

5. At the end of the Psalm, the author identifies two groups people can be a part of: those for the glory of the Lord and those who are sinners. How does this Psalm direct our hearts in this choice?

PSALM 105

Remember the wondrous works! A specific reflection on Israel's "double" origin story: the covenant with Abraham and redemption from Egypt.

Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples! Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works! Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice! Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually! Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered, O offspring of Abraham, his servant, children of Jacob, his chosen ones! He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth. He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance." When they were few in number, of little account, and sojourners in it, wandering from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people, he allowed no one to oppress them; he rebuked kings on their account, saying, "Touch not my anointed ones, do my prophets no harm!" When he summoned a famine on the land and broke all supply of bread, he had sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave. His feet were hurt with fetters; his neck was put in a collar of iron; until what he had said came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him. The king sent and released him; the ruler of the peoples set him free; he made him lord of his house and ruler of all his possessions, to bind his princes at his pleasure and to teach his elders wisdom. Then Israel came to Egypt; Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. And the LORD made his people very fruitful and made them stronger than their foes. He turned their hearts to hate his people, to deal craftily with his servants. He sent Moses, his servant, and Aaron, whom he had chosen. They performed his signs among them and miracles in the land of Ham. He sent darkness, and made the land dark; they did not rebel against his words. He turned their waters into blood and caused their fish to die. Their land swarmed with frogs, even in the chambers of their kings. He spoke, and there came swarms of flies, and gnats throughout their country. He gave them hail for rain, and fiery lightning bolts through their land. He struck down their vines and fig trees, and shattered the trees of their country. He spoke, and the locusts came, young locusts without number, which devoured all the vegetation in their land and ate up the fruit of their ground. He struck down all the firstborn in their land, the firstfruits of all their strength. Then he brought out Israel with silver and gold, and there was none among his tribes who stumbled. Egypt was glad when they departed, for dread of them had fallen upon it. He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light by night. They asked, and he brought quail, and gave them bread from heaven in abundance. He opened the rock, and water gushed out; it flowed through the desert like a river. For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham, his servant. So he brought his people out with joy, his chosen ones with singing. And he gave them the lands of the nations, and they took possession of the fruit of the peoples' toil, that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Praise the LORD! — Psalm 105

1. Verses one, two and five all mention the idea of talking about God's deeds and works. The Psalm then goes on to tell us what those works are. How would you summarize God's works mentioned in this Psalm?

2. What would it look like for you to take the call in verse four seriously?

3. Imagine that you are an Israelite returning from exile in Babylon. How would recounting God's deeds in your history help in your own faith journey? As a Christian disciple, would your answer be the same or different?

4. Share a story with your family or a friend of an act of God in your life. How can we speak to each other more about the things God is doing in our lives?

PSALM 106

Israel's failure to remember the works of God leads only to more trouble. Our relationship with Yahweh is marked by our rebellion.

Praise the Lord! Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! 2 Who can utter the mighty deeds of the Lord, or declare all his praise? 3 Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times! 4 Remember me, O Lord, when you show favor to your people; help me when you save them, 5 that I may look upon the prosperity of your chosen ones, that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation, that I may glory with your inheritance. 6 Both we and our fathers have sinned; we have committed iniquity; we have done wickedness. 7 Our fathers, when they were in Egypt, did not consider your wondrous works; they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love, but rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea. 8 Yet he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power. 9 He rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry, and he led them through the deep as through a desert. 10 So he saved them from the hand of the foe and redeemed them from the power of the enemy. 11 And the waters covered their adversaries; not one of them was left. 12 Then they believed his words; they sang his praise. 13 But they soon forgot his works; they did not wait for his counsel. 14 But they had a wanton craving in the wilderness, and put God to the test in the desert; 15 he gave them what they asked, but sent a wasting disease among them. 16 When men in the camp were jealous of Moses and Aaron, the holy one of the Lord, 17 the earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. 18 Fire also broke out in their company; the flame burned up the wicked. 19 They made a calf in Horeb and worshiped a metal image. 20 They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass. 21 They forgot God, their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt, 22 wondrous works in the land of Ham, and awesome deeds by the Red Sea. 23 Therefore he said he would destroy them—had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him, to turn away his wrath from destroying them. 24 Then they despised the pleasant land, having no faith in his promise. 25 They murmured in their tents, and did not obey the voice of the Lord. 26 Therefore he raised his hand and swore to them that he would make them fall in the wilderness, 27 and would make their offspring fall among the nations, scattering them among the lands. 28 Then they yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor, and ate sacrifices offered to the dead; 29 they provoked the Lord to anger with their deeds, and a plague broke out among them. 30 Then Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague was stayed. 31 And that was counted to him as righteousness from generation to generation forever. 32 They angered him at the waters of Meribah, and it went ill with Moses on their account, 33 for they made his spirit bitter, and he spoke rashly with his lips. 34 They did not destroy the peoples, as the Lord commanded them, 35 but they mixed with the nations and learned to do as they did. 36 They served their idols, which became a snare to them. 37 They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons; 38 they poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood. 39 Thus they became unclean by their acts, and played the whore in their deeds.

40 Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against his people, and he abhorred his heritage; 41 he gave them into the hand of the nations, so that those who hated them ruled over them. 42 Their enemies oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their power. 43 Many times he delivered them, but they were rebellious in their purposes and were brought low through their iniquity. 44 Nevertheless, he looked upon their distress, when he heard their cry. 45 For their sake he remembered his covenant, and relented according to the abundance of his steadfast love. 46 He caused them to be pitied by all those who held them captive. 47 Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise. 48 Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise the Lord! — Psalm 106

1. Who is the problem in repetitious cycle of this Psalm? What is our problem (hint: what idea is repeated in vs. 7, 13, 21)?
2. What causes forgetfulness of the Lord in your life? Is it the same as forgetting your keys somewhere or is it a deeper issue?
3. How does this Psalm instruct our hearts and words when we repent of sin before the Lord?
4. What cyclical sin do you need to repent of?
5. What miracle do you long for in your life? Will that actually help you believe God more and feel closer to him?

PSALM 107

Yet God indeed saves even from the outermost places. He is faithful and loving, God indeed saves!

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 3 and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. 4 Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in; 5 hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. 6 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. 7 He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in. 8 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! 9 For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things. 10 Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons, 11 for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High. 12 So he bowed their hearts down with hard labor; they fell down, with none to help. 13 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. 14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and burst their bonds apart. 15 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! 16 For he shatters the doors of bronze and cuts in two the bars of iron. 17 Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction; 18 they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. 19 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! 23 Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters; 24 they saw the deeds of the LORD, his wondrous works in the deep. 25 For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. 26 They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their evil plight; 27 they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end. 28 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. 29 He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. 30 Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven. 31 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! 32 Let them extol him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders. 33 He turns rivers into a desert, springs of water into thirsty ground, 34 a fruitful land into a salty waste, because of the evil of its inhabitants. 35 He turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water. 36 And there he lets the hungry dwell, and they establish a city to live in; 37 they sow fields and plant vineyards and get a fruitful yield. 38 By his blessing they multiply greatly, and he does not let their livestock diminish. 39 When they are diminished and brought low through oppression, evil, and sorrow, 40 he pours contempt on princes and makes them wander in trackless wastes; 41 but he raises up the needy out of affliction and makes their families like flocks. 42 The upright see it and are glad, and all wickedness shuts its mouth. 43 Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD. — Psalm 107

1. Which section (each beginning with “some:” verses 4, 10, 17, 23) do you identify with most?

2. Verse six and eight are repeated in each section of this Psalm (verses 13, 19, 28 and verses 15, 21, 31). Take some time to share the story of a “verse six” moment in your life with your family or friends.

3. Why do you think Psalm 107 ends the way it does in verses 33-43?