

November 24, 2019

## **Title: More than Turkey?**

**[Slide 1]**

**Text: Psalm 107**

### **Turkey Day!**

#### **Food Holiday**

Thanksgiving 2019: it's almost here. What will your Thanksgiving holiday be like?

In an increasingly secular society, Thanksgiving has become what Joy Reid of MSNBC calls a "Food Holiday" with a "problematic history."

Notice what's missing in this description of Thanksgiving? *Thanksgiving*. Somehow our self-indulgent society has forgotten how to say "Thank you." Why? Because our society has stopped recognizing the God to Whom we say "Thank you"!

#### **Thanksgiving Day:**

Things sure have changed since 1621, when the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag gathered at Plymouth Colony for a thanksgiving feast of wild turkey, waterfowl, venison, fruit, pumpkin, squash and cornbread. The Pilgrims hosted Chief Massasoit and 90 other Indians for the harvest festival.

The Pilgrims had much to be thankful for. Their first year on North American soil had been horrific. Of the 102 settlers who arrived on the Mayflower, only 44 remained. The nearby Native Americans had helped them through the winter and had supplemented their meagre food supplies. They had learned from Squanto, a local Indian, how to grow corn.

In the words of Edward Winslow:

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*"And although it be not always so plentiful, as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plenty." (Edward Winslow, Mourt's Relation)*

## **Turkey Day!**

The ancient Hebrews were no strangers to thanksgiving. They regularly brought “thank offerings” to the Lord, and shared in a festive meal – just like the Pilgrims. One particular psalm stands out as a song for Thanksgiving. It encourages us to give thanks by telling our own story of how God has come through for us.

### **[Slide 3]**

*Psalm 107:1-3 NIV*

*Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
his love endures forever.  
Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story—  
those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,  
those he gathered from the lands,  
from east and west, from north and south.*

In the verses that follow, we encounter 4 Thanksgiving stories. In each case, we will meet people who had come to the end of their rope. They were in a life situation with no way out. But God came through for them. Their story is the reason for giving thanks.

## **Unfailing Love**

### **Finding our way:**

The first Thanksgiving story focuses on people who have lost their way:

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*Psalm 107:4-5 NIV*

*Some wandered in desert wastelands,  
finding no way to a city where they could settle.  
They were hungry and thirsty,  
and their lives ebbed away.*

Ever been there? You may not have been lost in the desert, but you may have felt like you are lost on your life journey. Somebody took down the

road signs. You don't know where you are or where you're going. Israel could well relate to this condition. They had wandered about in the Sinai Desert for 40 years! More recently, they had been exiled in Babylon, with no hope of ever seeing home again.

But God was there for them:

**[Slide 5]**

*Psalm 107:6-7 NIV*

*Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,  
and he delivered them from their distress.*

*He led them by a straight way  
to a city where they could settle.*

And for that reason, the psalm writer says it's time to give thanks!

**[Slide 6]**

*Psalm 107:8-9*

*Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love  
and his wonderful deeds for mankind,*

*for he satisfies the thirsty  
and fills the hungry with good things.*

Has the Lord brought you out of a desert place? Something to thank Him for!

**Breaking chains:**

The second Thanksgiving story focuses on captivity and imprisonment:

**[Slide 7]**

*Psalm 107:10 NIV*

*Some sat in darkness, in utter darkness,  
prisoners suffering in iron chains,*

The writer goes on to explain that the imprisonment and suffering were the result of rebelling against God's good commands. I guess we've all been there at one time or another. When we turn away from God's Word, we open

ourselves up to being captive to Sin. But when God's people turned back to God, He rescued them:

**[Slide 8]**

*Psalm 107:14 NIV*

*He brought them out of darkness, the utter darkness,  
and broke away their chains.*

Another wonderful reason to give thanks on Thanksgiving and every day:

*Psalm 107:15-16 NIV*

*Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love  
and his wonderful deeds for mankind,*

*for he breaks down gates of bronze  
and cuts through bars of iron.*

What gates of bronze and bars of iron has God shattered to set you free? Do you remember what it felt like to be enslaved by fear, by resentment, by unforgiveness? Do you remember how it was to be held captive by a substance or behavior?

And when Jesus set you free, how did that feel like?

**The healing Word:**

The third Thanksgiving story talks about the destructive power of Sin to destroy our very lives:

**[Slide 9]**

*Psalm 107:17-18 NIV*

*Some became fools through their rebellious ways  
and suffered affliction because of their iniquities.*

*They loathed all food  
and drew near the gates of death.*

Sin not only enslaves us; it unleashes the forces of death within us. James writes that evil desires give birth to sin, "and sin when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." (James 1:15 NIV)

But when we repent and return to the Lord, He promises to forgive and heal:

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*Psalm 107:19-20 NIV*

*Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,  
and he saved them from their distress.*

*He sent out his word and healed them;  
he rescued them from the grave.*

When we know that we are forgiven and healed there is but one thing to do:

**[Slide 11]**

*Psalm 107:22 NIV*

*Let them sacrifice thank offerings  
and tell of his works with songs of joy.*

**Life's biggest storms:**

The last Thanksgiving story describes what it is like for mariners when their world is turned upside down by a powerful storm:

**[Slide 12]**

*Psalm 107:25-27 NIV*

*For he spoke and stirred up a tempest  
that lifted high the waves.*

*They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths;  
in their peril their courage melted away.*

*They reeled and staggered like drunkards;  
they were at their wits' end.*

Ever been there? You're up, then you're down. You lose all hope and all courage. You are at your wits' end.

Life dishes out Category 5 hurricanes: you lose your job, get hit with a terrifying medical problem, go through a divorce. Your world comes crashing down on you like a one hundred foot wave crashing on the deck of a ship.

But the same Lord who walked on the waves to the disciples has promised to be there for you in the storm:

**[Slide 13]**

*Psalm 107:28-30 NIV*

*Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,  
and he brought them out of their distress.*

*He stilled the storm to a whisper;  
the waves of the sea were hushed.*

*They were glad when it grew calm,  
and he guided them to their desired haven.*

If you've ever been out on the lake in a storm, you know what a relief it is to slip into a quiet cove. All of a sudden the water flattens out, the wind stops howling through the rigging. You can *think* again. You feel safe. It's time to say "Thank you!"

**[Slide 14]**

*Psalm 107:31 NIV*

*Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love  
and his wonderful deeds for mankind.*

**More than Turkey!**

**Pilgrims' psalm:**

I have to think that Psalm 107 was very special for those Pilgrims who celebrated the first Thanksgiving here in North America. They had escaped the prisons and persecution that they faced for their faith in England. They had seen God bring them safely through the gales on the North Atlantic to the quiet waters of Cape Cod. God had provided food for them in the wilderness. They had experienced God's protection when sickness and death devastated their community. And now they had, in the words of Psalm 107:37 (NIV) "sowed fields and planted vineyards that yielded a fruitful harvest."

It was time to give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind.

**More than turkey:**

So what will you thank the Lord for this Thanksgiving? How has He shown you and your loved ones His unfailing love and wonderful deeds? Make sure that Thanksgiving Dinner is more than a food holiday. Make it a time to join the redeemed of the LORD as we tell our story of how He rescued us from the hand of the foe.

Find a way to give everyone at the table a chance to thank the Lord for something important in their life. Welcome Him to your table.

*"Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, his love endures forever!"*