

*They cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress;
He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from destruction.
--Psalm 107:19-20*

Psalm 107 is appointed for the Friday before the Third Sunday in Lent. We read verses 1 through 3 and 17 through 22. This Psalm is about different ways we get into trouble—getting lost in deserts (vv. 4-9), going to prison (vv. 10-16), caught in terrible storms on the water (vv. 23-32), famines, oppression, poverty, abuse of power (vv. 33-40). Our section in verse 17-22 could have been written yesterday about a COVID-19 outbreak! What is so fantastic about Psalm 107 is not just that it covers so many of our trials and troubles; it also shows us how God delivers us from every one of our trials and troubles. How we got into trouble does not stop God: whether self inflicted because of something we did or because of original sin, God delivers us every time! Each time God delivers us, it is by doing something that changes the circumstances so that we can praise and thank God again. In verses 17-22 about getting sick and nearly dying, God delivers us by sending God's Word into the circumstances of our illness and healing us! The Word of God is Jesus Christ, who comes to us through the Word of God in Scripture, preaching, prayer, and sacrament. We respond to being healed worshipping God: "Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. And let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices, and tell of his deeds with songs of joy" (vv 21-22).

Many centuries ago, St. Augustine of Hippo connected the opening verses of Psalm 107 to the way God delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt. "This people of God, freed from a great and broad Egypt, is led as through the Red Sea, that in Baptism it may make an end of its enemies," he wrote in a discourse on verse 3. His point was not holy history but rather contemporary troubles. We too can freely worship God even during the trials and troubles of the pandemic. The words of the Benedictus said during Morning Prayer in Lent brings all these hopes and desires together in a song of praise: "Through his holy prophets he promised of old to save us from our enemies and set us free from all who hate us that we might worship him without fear all the days of our lives."

Let us pray: Lord God, you fill the hungry with good things and break the sinner's chains. Hear your people who call to you in their need, and lead your Church from the shadows of death. Gather us from sunset to sunrise, that we may grow together in faith and love, and may give thanks for your kindness in Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord. Amen