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Speaker: Pastor Mark Hanke
Bible passage or verse: Psalm 107
Title of Sermon: When Your Dreams Die
Series: UnStuck

1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. **2** Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story—those he redeemed from the hand of the foe, **3** those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south. **4** Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle. **5** They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away. **6** Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. **7** He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle. **8** Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, **9** for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things. **10** Some sat in darkness, in utter darkness, prisoners suffering in iron chains, **11** because they rebelled against God's commands and despised the plans of the Most High. **12** So he subjected them to bitter labor; they stumbled, and there was no one to help.

13 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. **14** He brought them out of darkness, the utter darkness, and broke away their chains. **15** Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, **16** for he breaks down gates of bronze and cuts through bars of iron. **17** Some became fools through their rebellious ways and suffered affliction because of their iniquities. **18** They loathed all food and drew near the gates of death. **19** Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. **20** He sent out his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave. **21** Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind. **22** Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy. **23** Some went out on the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters. **24** They saw the works of the LORD, his wonderful deeds in the deep. **25** For he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. **26** They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away. **27** They reeled and staggered like drunkards; they were at their wits' end.

28 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. **29** He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. **30** They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven. **31** Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind. **32** Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people and praise him in the council of the elders. **33** He turned rivers into a desert, flowing springs into thirsty ground, **34** and fruitful land into a salt waste, because of the wickedness of those who lived there. **35** He turned the desert into pools of water and the parched ground into flowing springs; **36** there he brought the hungry to live, and they founded a city where they could settle. **37** They sowed fields and planted vineyards that yielded a fruitful harvest; **38** he blessed them, and their numbers greatly increased, and he did not let their herds diminish. **39** Then their numbers decreased, and they were humbled by oppression, calamity and sorrow; **40** he who pours contempt on nobles made them wander in a trackless waste. **41** But he lifted the needy out of their affliction and increased their families like flocks. **42** The upright see and rejoice, but all the wicked shut their mouths. **43** Let the one who is wise heed these things and ponder the loving deeds of the LORD.

We wrap up a series today on UnStuck, and we'll be moving into a new one next week, but we finish, and we've looked at things like shame -- things that get people stuck. Kerri and I had a friend that -- anger was a real battle for him. He couldn't drive. His wife had to drive, virtually everywhere, because when he would drive, he would get mad. He would jump out of his car. Rip somebody else out of their car, and it usually didn't go well, and it's tough to keep a job when you do that. He never drove. We had another friend who had a dream of getting married and having children, and being at home and raising those kids. And it was the delight of her life until her husband left. And then she got three jobs. And she grieved. And she had to come to the point where she realized her dream would never be realized. Another friend -- she never took communion, for 20 years. Twenty years there was a guy in the church that served, and he had hurt her friend years ago,

and she just couldn't overcome that anger. People get stuck. And there are different things -- there's anger, there's shame, there's unforgiveness -- all kinds of things, and one that we all share in common is that we all have dreams, and periodically, those dreams don't come true. And some people get to that place where they move from this glass half-full perspective that when their dreams get shattered, they don't realize it, but they move themselves to a glass half-empty perspective, and they're forever shielding themselves from dreams, anticipation, and hope. They get stuck.

That's what happened with the Nation of Israel. The backdrop of this is a nation who was dealing with disappointment, despair. Over what? A variety of things, but the bulwark of, kind of the focus point is a nation that had experienced this beautiful temple. It was the pride of their lives. But it got destroyed, and so, another one was going to be built, and they were oh, so excited. Kind of like a new church plant. Kind of like a new home. Man, you're thinking, "Oh, we're gonna have parties over here!" That's what the Nation of Israel was thinking. "We're gonna have parties, and people are gonna want to worship our God because they're gonna see our temple!" And then when it was built, it was like, "Oh, this little dinky, itsy bitty little log cabin." And they were embarrassed. And they didn't want to sing. They were in despair. And the writer takes them back through a series of events -- not just lasering in on one, but a series of things. What have my people done when they face the devastation of a dream that has not come real?

There's a cycle in this psalm. We didn't take the time to read through it all, but we can look at it. Verse 6 -- "Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble. And God delivered them." He talks about another difficulty that they face, and then he says, in verse 12, "Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them." He talks about another moment of disappointment and despair that they go through, and then he says, in verse 19, "Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them." And then he talks about another one, and he says in verse 28, "Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble." What was his point? It's that in life, for a variety of reasons, some of God's choosing, some of yours, dreams die. And if you're not careful when your dreams die, it can actually lead you to death. There's a moment in the middle of this psalm he talks about those who cherish death. Who would cherish death? It's a person who hasn't processed their visions that have died, and they take it into their heart, and then they want to. Where does it begin? Sometimes with maybe a misperception of what life is going to be all about. And that is -- for some people, they actually believe that when they come to Christ, their life is gonna get easier. They do. I think actually it can sometimes be the opposite. I think sometimes when we come to Christ, when He wants to take us from our former sinful self and create in us a glorious representation of His Son, I don't know about you, but in my life, He had some work to do. Still does. And sometimes, we walk through that life and that open door that we think is going to lead to glory is actually a desert.

That's where he begins. He takes them all the way back. He speaks to them, and he says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord." Who's a redeemed person? It's a person who's been brought out, bought out, delivered. Who's he talking about? Well, he tells you. "Those he gathered from the land, from the east and the west, north and the south, some wandered into" what? Desert wastelands. Well, who did that? The Nation of Israel. Why? Because their journey with God often led to desert moments. It should not go unnoticed. For those of you who are new in your faith, or those who are seasoned in your faith, there will be seasons in your life that God will lead you -- not because you've sinned, maybe -- it can be that. We'll deal with that in a minute. But simply because that's the place where God often forges in you your greatest work, your greatest transformation. Job understood that. God invited him into this great, great chess match between God and Satan. And God says to Satan, "Try my servant Job." Dare I say, at some moment in your life God always does the same thing for you. Try my servant, Mark. See if it be the only time he will worship me is when you bless him, as Satan accused.

Sometimes, our journey with God will lead us into desert moments. It did for the nation of Israel, it did for Paul. Can you imagine the Apostle Paul thinking to himself, "My goodness, I thought I would walk with God and it would be a path of glory and ease." Where do we get that? I think sometimes we take it from verses we memorize. A lot of you have memorized Prov. 3:5 and 6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge God and he will make your paths straight." What's a straight path? Well -- it's smooth, a slight decline, with a tail wind. That's a straight path. It's not uphill, and it doesn't have a headwind, and it doesn't have a bunch of boulders that I've got to navigate around. Well, it's pretty easy to come to the conclusion that we put together something that is really dangerous. Hugely dangerous. It's not just this country -- it's Latin America, and maybe it's the world. It is the godly life, the blessed life, is the easy life. The godly life, the blessed life -- we sometimes put together and say, it is the path of least resistance. It is the path of blessing. It is the path of ease. And sometimes when he hit into quicksand, and we hit into difficulty, we think, "Wait a minute -- we're on the wrong path." But God wants them to understand that just because they hit a desert, doesn't mean they took the wrong path. They didn't. God was delivering them. They were the redeemed. Redeemed people don't go into the desert. Yes, they do when they're walking with God. They walked into the desert. He had some work to do with them.

Paul walked into the desert. The psalmist says -- David -- "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, there are times that I'm going to walk right by it. I'm gonna walk under the banner, if you will, of sin and difficulty and challenge and even death." Just because we hit the desert doesn't mean you're on the wrong path. It might mean, actually, as in Jeremiah's case, you're right where God wants you. We have to disconnect this idea that blessing always leads to ease. Actually, sometimes God says, "I want to bless you, and to do it, I wanna lead you through one of the greatest trials of your life, and I will refine you and I will strengthen you, and I will forge within you a courage that you can endure anything." I can't tell you

how many times in my life I was just like, "God, this is stupid. I wanna quit." And it's like, I can just hear the Father say, "Since when have I ever promised you an easy path?" "I know, I know, but can you give me a little bit more tailwind?" No. Some open doors lead to desert places. That's God's intention. Why? That they cried out to the Lord their God in trouble and He delivered them.

I bet you're like me. I've never cried in the midst of blessing. I've cried because of grief. I've cried because of disappointment. I've cried because of death. I've never cried on an easy path. Maybe you cry because it's easy -- I don't. I just enjoy it. I've never gone out for a bike ride when the tail wind's behind me and I'm cruising along and I'm going, "Oh God, I just feel moved to tears because of how good it is out here." I have cried when I was going up over a mountain, and a 75-year-old woman passed me and smiled at me, and she said to me, "Honey, it's gonna be okay. Keep going!" I've cried at that moment. Tears of embarrassment. Yeah, I've cried when I'm going uphill. Some open doors lead to desert places, and some open doors, my friends -- you feel like they lead to freedom, but they actually may be a wide-open gate to prison. This is the disappointment that is kind of the boomerang. You think -- "Ho ho, I've got it! That's glory!" And God tells you -- "No, it's really not. And by the way, I'll be here when you come back home."

What causes it? There are two reasons He gives in this text. Number one is how they relate to the Word of God. He said, verse 10, "Some sat in darkness." Well, what caused that? Well, they turned off the light. What light? "Some sat in darkness, and the deepest gloom, prisoners suffering in iron chains." What got them there? "For they had rebelled against the words of God. They despised the counsel of the Most High." Wow. What happens? They close the book. It's really not all that profound -- it's simple. They just close the book. They just think somehow that they can go through life, and they have a wisdom within themselves that they can navigate life, and they can travel through all of the difficulties and the challenges, and that within themselves they're sufficient.

I don't know if you've ever gone hiking on a cliff in the middle of the night. If you ever want to -- in Colorado -- hike the fourteeners, you've got to leave usually around 2:00 in the morning, because if you get up to the Continental Divide, the storms can come in on you in about five minutes -- and man, I'm telling you what, you're a dead person, so you always have to hit the peak at about 8:00, 9:00 in the morning. And so -- the first three, four hours of your hike it's completely pitch black. And you're going up cliffs, and you've got shale, and you got all kinds of things. You can slide down and see Jesus face to face. And so the reality is, every person up there -- every person up there -- has a headlamp. And you don't have some dull headlamp -- you've got something that sees the Shekinah glory. Why? Because you like living! Imagine turning that lamp off, saying to yourself, "I don't need the light -- I can go it alone! I mean, man -- I'm all that is man!" That's good -- 'til you hit the first boulder, you miss the first turn, and the next thing you know, you're seeing Jesus face to face, and it's like -- "Turn on the light!" That's what they did! The Scripture is a light unto my path. It's a light -- it shows me where I'm walking. It

teaches me. And for some reason in life, people think -- "Ah! I don't need the Bible. It's too restrictive, it's just a bunch of do's and don'ts, and I want to live my life to the fullest!" God says no. When you turn the lamp of God's Word off, you've now become a person taking a hike in complete pitch black.

What happens? You stumble. They cried out to God. He saved them from their distress and He brought them out of darkness. And by the way, the deepest gloom. They made a mess of their lives. It's tragic, but I see it all the time. Kids that grow up in the church, taught the Word of God, raised in a family that honored the Word of God -- they've even memorized some of it. For some tragic, tragic reason, Satan tempts them, and they buy off on it. "I think I'm sufficient apart from God's Word." And they close it, and they begin to live their life, and they make a mess.

There's another one. It's not just the Word -- but this one, he says in verse 17, "Some became fools through their rebellious ways." What's a fool? It's not an unintelligent person. There are a lot of fools that are brilliant. It's a person that has no morals. It's a person who has no boundary. It's a large ship with enormous power that has no rudder. Imagine coming out of a harbor, discarding the rudder, throwing it into full gear -- "We've got power! We're gonna tackle the ocean!" Yeah, until you run into an island. Or 'til you run into another ship, because if you have unrestrained power and a wide-open horizon with no rudder, you'll be fine for a few days. But at some point, you're gonna hit land, and you're gonna wreck yourself.

Freedom from God's morals at first feels so exhilarating. It does. If you're having the time of your life -- this pastor doesn't have a clue what he's talking about! Would you come back to me when you wreck? I won't say "I told you so." I'll wrap my arms around you and say, "Let's walk together." But when we have a freedom that feels like it's a wide-open case -- sometimes it's to a prison, and it's to a prison of affliction when you discard the morals of God. That's what He says. Verse 17 -- some became fools through their rebellious ways, and they suffered affliction because of their iniquities. What's the difference between this rebellion and those who discard the word? Those who discard the word simply close up the Bible. They just -- I don't need it.

Those who are living out of rebellion as a fool are individuals who have discarded the conscience. Every person made in the image of God has a conscience. And they have the Holy Spirit pinging them. John 16 -- pinging them, helping them to see the order of the world, helping them to see the glory of the universe, helping them to hear the voice of God that has been implanted in them. Every person -- John 16 says. But what happens is, they discard that. They say no to that. They stiff it. They press it back. They deny it. What happens? It says they suffered affliction. Is that a bad cold? Is that COVID? What is it? It says they loathed all food. Who does that? Who hates food? It's a person who wants to die. It's a person who said, "I don't wanna live. I hate the very thing that gives me life, the very thing that sustains me, the very thing that allows me nourishment." They said they hate. How do you get there? It's when you've made choice after choice after choice and

you've suppressed God's voice and you've denied it, you get to the point where you hate living. They loathe all food. And the next line, "And drew near the gates of death." What at one point felt like freedom becomes now a day you want to die.

This week Kerri and I lost a friend -- she's not really a friend. We raised her son. 46 years of age -- she died. Her husband would drop her off at the treatment center, she'd walk through it and walk out the back. To freedom. So she thought. Every day he would take her to the treatment center -- she'd walk through it, she'd walk out the back to freedom. She even said, "This is going to be the year that I die." 46. Who cherishes alcohol more than food? Who drinks and purposely doesn't put food in their stomach? It's a person who wants to die. Over the years, she's been shared the gospel so many times. She rejected it. She could never get over the disappointments and the drain on her life. She never processed it. There were moments in her life -- as we've known her for years -- 20 plus years -- more than that -- that she bragged of her freedom. She boasted of her ability to make her own decisions. But it was prison -- it was a lie. And today she's dead. And all around her -- her children, her husband, her parents -- grieve, fight anger, at a person who over the years turned God off. Severed the conscience. Closed the book. She was bigger than the book. She didn't need God -- it was a crutch to you who are weak. She has met that God and I don't believe it was a great day.

What sometimes feels like freedom may actually be a wide-open gate to prison. But that's not where God wants you to stop. Because after every one of these cycles, what does He say? They cried out to God. And in every broken dream and every major disappointment, there's one thing that you and I can be assured of, and that is that God's love will never disappoint us. It won't. That's what He says. "Whoever is wise, let him heed these things." What things? They walked through a desert path, they cried out to God, He met them. They rejected His word, they cried out to God, and He received them. They turned God off in their conscience, and they suppressed Him, and He met them and He loved them. Why? Because actually, disappointments can actually be our friend. What do they do? They make us desperate for God. They can. Oh, you can fly in the face of them and press into them and allow them to crush you, but here, what He says is that this desperation is actually a gift to them. Why? Because they cried out to Him. That broken cistern that you've been digging, that life that you've tried to find satisfaction -- Jeremiah 2 says that cistern's never gonna hold water, and the glorious day is when you look at the broken cistern and you say, "Wow! This thing doesn't hold water!" Yes! "Wow. This relationship doesn't satisfy." Yes! "Wow, this career -- I've made all the money in the world and I'm not happy." Yes!

That disappointment makes us desperate for God. And when you're desperate, you cry. You don't cry when you're happy -- you don't. You cry out to God when you're desperate, and that's a good thing. Why? Because blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Yes. Those disappointments make us desperate for God, and we discover in that moment what they did -- that we need a person

more than we need an answer. They cried out to the Lord, and He saved them. They cried out to the Lord and He saved them. And what you'll find out is, what they did, and that is you'll discover that God will never ever abandon you but He will always lead you to a new place. God will never look at you and say, "You closed my book. I'm done with you." No! At each moment, whether they discarded the Bible, whether they closed off the conscience of God, whether they found themselves in a desert place -- the same thing, God says, "Doesn't matter. I don't care what path you take. When you cry out to me, I'll be there." Like a faithful grandparent that tells his grandkids -- you know, "You play basketball, I'll be there. You swim, I'll be there. You go to a math tournament, I'll be there." Why? "Because I'm retired. And I love you more than life." That's God. He will never discourage you. He will always be there for you.

I have a friend who's going through a divorce right now. It's really sad. It's not his dream. Was never his vision. He's got a great job -- he's a pilot. Makes a lot of money, has a really nice home. Beautiful kids. His wife just doesn't want to be married. It's tragic, but he's discovered some things. One, he goes, "The environment which we created in our home was not grace-filled." And he goes, "For the first time in my life, I'm actually in a place where I'm feeling the kindness and the grace of God. Even though she leaves him, he has discovered God hasn't. When you're desperate, be assured of one thing. When you cry out to God, He will never abandon you. And you will discover that God's word brings new hope and joy. Verse 42 says: "The upright see and rejoice." See what? They see the truth. They see the Word. Their eyes have been enlightened. The scales have been taken away. They're like, "Man! This is glorious." They see the truth. And what do they do? They rejoice.

I think there are two kinds of people who read the Bible. Some read the Bible, and they check the box. "Yup, I'm done. I've done my three chapters for the day, I'm gonna read through the Bible this year." Others -- they read it, and they rejoice. What makes the difference? Typically, hunger. Some people sit down in front of a meal, and they're kind of like -- "Uh, you know what? This is -- I asked for well done, it's not well done." They're kinda picky. There are other people who are ravenously hungry, and they sit down, they don't ask what it is, they don't tell you what temperature. They don't really care how you spiced it. They're furiously hungry. And they sit down, and they eat, and you can see the glory on their face. That's these guys. What's the difference? Desperation. Dreams that have crashed. And they discover that God's Word brings new hope, and they also discover that God will not be silent forever.

You can read through this psalm in probably about 90 seconds, right? Minute and a half. That's all it takes to read it. It took way more than a minute and a half to live it. Some of these people remained stuck for a long time. It takes a long time. It really does. It really happens quickly that you close the book and say, "You know what? I can go this life on my own." You take off on this hike. It's dark. Your eyes acclimate maybe a little bit, and the reality is, you know, I'm doing okay! I'm doing fine! You

can read it in a minute and a half. It takes you longer to come to the place where you cry out to God and you think God's never going to speak to me, He's not -- He's silent. And He won't be. He won't be silent forever. Because He promises you, when your dreams die, and when you cry out to Him, God will give you a more glorious future than you could ever imagine. He will.

The backdrop of this psalm was a nation that was embarrassed of their temple. Embarrassed of their relationship with God. They became desperate. And they cried out to God. What did He give them? He didn't give them a bigger temple. He gave them a person. There's a brilliance to God's work in our lives. He quite purposely, I believe, built a second temple that was inferior to the first. He built a temple that was embarrassing. They didn't want to sing. Why? Because He wanted them to yearn for something more. He wanted them to yearn for something that a building couldn't fix -- only a person by the name of Jesus, who would come and He would die and He would give His body and His blood.

Some of you, my friends, you've closed the book. Your life hasn't completely fallen apart, but you see the beginnings. And God says, "I want to give you a person." Some of you have been severing your conscience. You've been trying to drown out the voice of God. He's been speaking to you -- you just haven't been listening. And He wants to give you a person, His name is Jesus Christ. And on this day, there's this moment where you can feel it in your heart. "I am not satisfied. I'm not happy." And that may be the best gift God could ever give you -- that when your well is broken, that you don't feel satisfied. There's a reason God does that. It's because the yearning of your heart creates a desperation, and you cry out to God, and He says -- "I'm here!" And so, if in this moment, that's you, let's bow our heads together. And I want you to do what the Nation of Israel did -- they cried out to God, and He rescued them. My friend didn't get his wife back, but he got God at a level he's never tasted, and he's satisfied. Our friend never got her husband back. She worked three jobs most of her adult life. But God met her, strengthened her, and her kids all walk with Christ. Sometimes God doesn't give you a different building -- He gives you a person; His name is Christ. And He gives you life. He's God's answer to your disappointment. And Christ will get you unstuck if you cry out to Him.