

Psalm 103 “Bless the Lord, O My Soul”

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Preacher: Will Spink

[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama.! Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

! And, as we've heard this morning, God is good.

So, no matter what other emotions we're experiencing that are very appropriate, we always have so many reasons also to give Him thanks. Which led me to Psalm 103. I'm going to read it for us and talk for just a few minutes.

God's Word to shape our hearts in relationship with Him. Just think of God's people singing it together, hearts turned toward Him. Psalm 103.

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.

[1 : 16] 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 eagles.

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.

[2 : 22] 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, and all places of His dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul. God, may the words of my mouth, the meditations of all of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight.

You are our rock. We give you thanks, in Jesus' name. Amen. Maybe it feels a little odd to you to think about blessing God.

You may not talk that way. It's not like saying, bless His heart. It's not like you're doing God a favor, blessing Him. The word for blessing means to speak well of.

[3 : 29] So it's what we would often call praise, right? Here King David calls his soul, the deepest part of his being, to speak well of God.

To give Him thanks for who He is, for what He has done. He says, come on soul, from the depths of my gut. Not merely my lips. Don't let me just talk about it. Let all of me bless the Lord.

And forget not all His benefits. I think David knows how easy it is to forget. To live with God and the benefits of a relationship with Him that we've talked about.

But we can live with those not at the forefront of our minds. Yes. I mean, you may know them, but do they anchor you when storms come? Do they guide you when you make decisions?

Do they motivate you when you consider priorities? David knows sometimes they don't. And so he starts listing them, doesn't he? Singing them. As we walk through briefly, make your own Thanksgiving list.

[4 : 33] God bless you when you're in the world. That means my childhood selfishness and my worst exploits as a college student.

Forgiven. God, I'm so thankful. Even this weekend. My impatience with my kids. My self-importance and self-reliance.

My careless words. My carefully targeted darts. All forgiven. Even the things I haven't imagined doing yet. The things I'm going to forget and neglect in the future.

Forgiven by Jesus on the cross. He's faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

To cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Who heals all your diseases. The words mean physical and spiritual. Because the sin we battle is bigger than just our mistakes, isn't it?

[5 : 45] It's evil forces. Broken systems. Active powers. Crouching to attack and devour us, the Bible says. Thank God he is greater than all of those.

Who redeems your life from the pit. Yes, any difficult circumstance where you feel really low like Joseph's pit. But these words seem to be especially brought from the grave into everlasting life.

Oh, y'all. Where would we be without the resurrection? Without that hope? He crowns us royally. He satisfies us permanently with true good.

What glory really is. His steadfast love and mercy. 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. See this, Yahweh not only makes claims about what he's going to be like, but he demonstrates his truthfulness, right? We've seen some of these stories.

[6 : 48] Israel and Egypt. And God shows himself strong. But he's going to keep doing that for us, for many others, because it's who he is, right? That self-description from Exodus 34.

The Lord is merciful and gracious. Slow to anger. Abounding in steadfast love. Beautiful. 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. Listen. Aren't you glad? Aren't you glad that God is, as you start to get anxious and impatient with the holidays coming up, as you get short-tempered and self-focused just when you're supposed to be most focused on God and others, that God is not looking for reasons to be angry.

He's not. God is looking for people to show kindness to. Not just the award winners, but the lost sheep. He's looking for the lowly.

He's looking for the brokenhearted. Isaiah 30, God waits eagerly for what? To be gracious. He exalts himself for what? To show mercy. He's abounding in, bursting with steadfast love.

[8 : 08] Aren't we thankful? Listen to David come back to God's love and our sins one more time. They're so connected. 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. God's boundless, measureless, infinite love. Paul prays we'll begin to comprehend how long and wide and high and deep it is.

And even as we just barely just see the edges of it, we cry, bless the Lord, oh my soul. Because in that infinite love, he takes our sins infinitely far away from us.

Micah says, casts them into the depths of the sea. God has so completely covered you in Christ that he no longer associates you and your sin.

He will never ever associate you with your failure and your shame if you, by faith, are in Christ. But you say, no, pastor, I'm a really big sinner.

[9 : 17] You haven't talked to someone like me. Have you forgotten David is guilty of murder, adultery, lying?

And these are his words. Others may identify you with your past failures. You may still struggle with your shame. But Jesus nailed your failure and your shame to the cross and washed it completely away forever.

With his blood. Thank you, Jesus, for the blood. And as a result of that, we have a father who loves us completely.

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. He sees our weakness.

And when a loving father sees a toddler struggling to walk or to ride a bike or to swim, does the father just laugh? Punish the child?

[10 : 24] Walk away? No, no. He runs to help, to steady the wobbling child, to comfort the wounded biker, to rescue the drowning swimmer, right?

Just so. God knows our weakness. And he's not pushed away by it. He's drawn to it with compassion and steadfast love. Where is he meeting you in your weakness?

Bless the Lord. 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.

This steadfast love didn't just start when you were born and it won't end when you die. Our days are a mere breath, right? But from eternity past, God set his love on you.

[11 : 27] And his love never ends into eternity future. From everlasting to everlasting, from generation to generation, he keeps loving you.

That's our hope, y'all. That's our hope at a funeral for one we loved dearly. That's our hope for ourselves as we age. That's our hope for our kids and our grandkids long after we die that his love doesn't die.

Aren't we thankful? The Lord has established his throne in the heavens and his kingdom rules over all. He's ruling and reigning right now.

Who's in charge? The one who's merciful and gracious and slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Bless the Lord. He says, come on angels. Help us speak well of his name.

Cherubim, seraphim. There can't be enough praise given him. In fact, all of you heavenly hosts are getting together and we still need more help. All of his works. Last thing to notice.

[12 : 29] David is calling everything in God's entire creation to join in praising God. Mountains and beaches and sunsets and stars and plants and animals.

This is no joke. No exaggeration. The Bible says rocks will cry out. Hills will break into singing. And the trees of the fields will clap their hands. If we're even going to get close to giving Yahweh the glory due his name.

That's how great he is. How worthy he is of our thanks. But why does all of creation clap and sing? He hasn't forgiven them anything.

Removed their sins far away. Adopted them into his family. No, no. All of creation and all his heavenly hosts are thanking and praising God for the things on your list.

Because God has forgiven us. They bless him because he's a compassionate father to us.

[13 : 41] They bless him. Angels and cherubs and planets bless God. Because he forgives people like you and me. They bless him because he shows everlasting steadfast love to us.

How much more should we be thankful? On the night he was betrayed. Jesus sat with his disciples to celebrate the Passover meal.

And he took bread. And he broke it and he gave it to them. As I'm ministering in his name. Give this bread to you. He said, take and eat. This is my body given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way after supper he took the cup and said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Drink from it all of you. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. This celebration is sometimes referred to as the Eucharist.

[14 : 47] It's from the Greek word for thanksgiving. Because Jesus gave thanks before breaking the bread. And perhaps more helpfully, because we see here the sacrifice for which we are to give thanks more than for anything else in the world.

We come giving him thanks. If that's the testimony of your heart. That his death brings you life with God. No matter which church of his you're a part of that preaches that good news.

Come and eat with us this morning. And give him thanks for all that he's done for you. If this picture of Jesus' death in your place doesn't make you deeply thankful.

If you don't look to him as your only hope. Then don't come take these elements this morning. We welcome you to come and to observe. Or if you're more comfortable to stay seated and to reflect on Jesus' offer to you of life through his death.

But would you contemplate this as a feast of thanksgiving? Would you if you're here perhaps with a friend or a family member who is partaking? Would you be willing to ask them why it makes them so thankful to participate?

[16 : 06] Kids, that would be a great thing to ask your parents. Mom and dad, why are you thankful that you're coming to celebrate this? They'd love to tell you. Let's pray and we'll come together.

Jesus, we can't say thanks enough. That you would do this for us once. That you would meet us in it now.

That we would not face these difficulties of life on our own. But that we would have a Savior who's present with us. It's our great comfort and hope. And so use common elements for a holy purpose in this moment as we meet with you.

We ask in your name. Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.