
Thanksgiving 2020
Praise and Thankfulness to Our God Frees Our Heart
Psalm 103

Take your Bibles this morning and your outlines if you printed them, turn with me to Psalm 103.

As we come to the Thanksgiving celebration this year, we know for most it will be a strained time, a unique time. For a lot of families, they will not be traveling to see their loved ones. That is the case with my family. Each family group is settling in for their own Thanksgiving celebrations.

There are some who have experienced a loss over the last year and their celebrations will not be the same this Thanksgiving and all their Thanksgivings in the future. Everyone has been affected in some way or another over this last year and this is carrying into what is supposed to be a great time of family and friends.

Let's think for a moment about the beginning of the Thanksgiving celebration. Thanksgiving has its roots back to the time of the first Pilgrims. The early Pilgrims had many difficult days, loss of family and friends in settling this new land. Governor Bradford of Massachusetts made this first Thanksgiving proclamation three years after the Pilgrims settled at Plymouth.

I left it in the old English. Read it with me or listen to it as I read.

"Inasmuch as the Great Father has given us this year an abundant harvest of Indian corn, wheat, peas, beans, squashes, and garden vegetables, and has made the forest to abound with game and the sea with fish and clams, and inasmuch as He has protected us from the ravages of the savages, has spared us from pestilence and disease, has granted us freedom to worship God according to the dictates of our own conscience. Now I, your magistrate, do proclaim that all ye Pilgrims, with your wives and ye little ones, do gather at

ye meeting house, on ye hill, between the hours of nine and twelve in the daytime, on Thursday, November 29th, in the year of our Lord One Thousand Six Hundred and Twenty-Three, and the third year since ye Pilgrims landed on ye Pilgrim Rock, there to listen to ye pastor and render thanksgiving to ye Almighty God for all His blessings."

The early Pilgrims recognized the health they had and the harvest they experienced came from God. They were thankful, even through many losses, they were thankful and they did not hide the fact they were thankful for their Almighty God who brought them through.

The basis for true thanksgiving is a close relationship with the living God isn't it? As we get to know God better, we will find that our gratitude grows. He alone can give us an attitude of gratitude.

So we come to our God and His word this morning to be reminded and encouraged this special Thanksgiving year.

If you are familiar with the Psalms you know it is a book of praise and worship. It is a book that I think we should spend time in every day or at least every week. I believe it is important because in the world we live in we need reminders to celebrate the goodness of our God.

Michal ran to do some shopping in Greeley and in the few stores she went into she said it was if everyone was zombies. There were a few people who, as far as she could tell, had smiles on their faces but for the most part, their eyes were down and they were wanting to get in and get out without minimal actions with others. The joy they would normally experience at this time of the year was not there.

This is not going to change this year is it? Not only throughout the Thanksgiving holiday but also the Christmas holidays things are going to be different, a little bit mor strained.

It is the praise of our God that will make the difference in our hearts and help us not to be all gloom and doom but to be a ray of sunshine in our families lives and in the lives around us.

Now I know, for me and probably for most of you, entering into praise needs to be forced sometimes. It takes some intentional effort to get into the Psalms, to get into praise music, to get into that place where your heart can be ministered to and praise truly flows out of your heart. Again, time in the Psalms will do this.

Look with me at how David starts this Psalm.

Psalm 103:1, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name.”

I think David begins this Psalm with a plea more than a heartfelt praise. It is almost like he is telling his soul, his heart that praise God is what he needs to do. He is telling his soul how important and how good this is.

When David says, bless the Lord I am reminded of our study in Matthew. If you have been following this teaching in Matthew you know we are in what is called the Beattitudes. The first part of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus shares with us how blessed we will be if we enter into to certain behaviors and attitudes. But here we see David turning this around where his focus is not on himself but on the Lord. He wants to bless the Lord with praises of who He is and what He has done for the people He loves.

Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, “Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

You might remember reading in Acts 16 when Paul and Silas were put into prison and had their feet and hands put in stocks. Look what occurred.

Acts 16:25-26, “But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God and the prisoners were listening to them; and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were unfastened.”

Talk about jail house rock! God responded to their prayer and praise.

On this Sunday before Thanksgiving I believe prison doors will still shake open and chains will be loosened where there is praise and prayer.

I don’t know what might be holding you prisoner or what has you in chains but I do know **God opens prison doors and chains will be loosed where there is praise and prayer from the heart.**

This is David’s cry in the Psalms. Let me be in prayer and let me praise, bless the Lord with all my soul.

And in verse 2 of Psalm 103 David reminds of how and why we go into praise.

Psalm 103:2, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits.”

David is saying and praying let me be reminded, let me not forget all of the things God has done for me. That is a needed cry from our heart isn’t it? Help me Lord to remember and to give You praise for all the wonderful things You have done in my life.

David goes on to list all of those things he has experienced from the Lord’s hand. We could spend a couple of hours pondering the rest of

Psalm 103 and I encourage you to do just that but let's think about just a few of God's benefits David has listed here.

Psalm 103:3a, "Who pardons all your iniquities..."

God forgives you, pardons you for all your iniquities, all your sins. You know what sins are. They are any time you have fallen short of the holiness God asks of us to be. We all know those times don't we. We can look back on our lives and see where we have failed, fallen, sinned. We have experienced the misery sin has caused us and others. But guess what?

Benefits of God:

1. God has pardoned all of our sins

God has pardoned all of our iniquities. Not some of them, not some of your guilt, your misery, the mess you may have made. He forgives and forgave them all.

Colossians 2:13b-14, "...He made you alive with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

All those things from your past, present and future have been taken care of. The debt for them was paid at the cross.

But God doesn't just stop with the pardon of our sins. No, He goes further.

Psalm 103:3b, "Who heals all your diseases..."

God not only pardons us but He also heals us. I don't know why, when it comes to physical healing that God chooses that some get healed and

others do not. Somehow His choices fit into His plan for eternity. But I do know that God heals us from soul sickness.

2. God heals us from sicknesses of the soul

There are diseases of the soul which can actually be worse than a physical disease. This is what we are seeing displayed in the world today isn't it? Soul sickness. Hate, greed, jealousy, unforgiveness, immorality and a lot of other forms of sicknesses. These are all be traced back to humanities fallen nature and until this is taken care of, there will be sickness.

But for those who have asked for the forgiveness Jesus offers the following is true.

Isaiah 53:5, “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”

Healed of what? The transgressions, sin of our loves. The cross became an altar where God took away your sins. Where did your sin and how God looks at your sin go? Look down with me at verse 12 of Psalm 103.

Psalm 103:12, “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

It is God's desire to not only remove the penalty of your sin but also to remove any residue of the sin nature from you. This great work is called sanctification, holiness. God's desire is for you to experience a complete purifying work and He does this through His word, through fellowship with other believers, through prayer and sometimes, through some of the hard things He allows us to experience.

God pardons us and He heals us. This is part of what David is talking about when he writes the following in verse 4.

Psalm 103:4a, “Who redeems your life from the pit...”

3. God redeems your life from the pit of everlasting hell and hell on earth

I think there are two pits we have been delivered from. First is the pit of hell. I think it would be good for all us to study what the Bible has to say about the pit of hell. As we come into a deeper understanding of just how deep and ugly the pit of hell truly is, I think we will have a greater appreciation of our deliverance from that pit.

But I also think there is the pit of hell on earth. That again is what God desires to deliver us from, the pit, the mire, the muck we can get stuck in here on earth. I think you would agree that even Christians can get stuck in the mire and muck of earth so much so that it is like a pit, a pit of hell on earth. God through the work of His Son Jesus redeems us from this pit as well as the pit of the everlasting hell.

And the last thing I wanted to touch upon this morning is the second part of verse 4.

Psalm 103:4b, “(God) Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion.”

God pardons us, heals us, redeems us but He also

4. God crowns us with lovingkindness and compassion

Look at verse 14.

Psalm 103:14, “For He Himself knows our frame: He is mindful that we are but dust.”

Sometimes I think God looks down on me and thinks I need to be just like Him. Perfect in all my ways. I wish I was but the reality is I live in a broken world, in a broken body with a broken soul. The healing I need is ongoing and guess what? God knows this and He has patience, goodness and kindness for me.

I am so thank that...

Lamentations 3:22-23, “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.”

O how I need to be reminded of this truth. In the midst of all the heartache, brokenness of my life and the brokenness of the world around me I need to be reminded of the goodness of my God.

I can see why David called out for His heart to bless the Lord with all that is within Him.

In closing I wanted to ask you, what chains are you dealing with this morning.

Fears of the coronavirus?

Fears of your future, the future of the nation and world?

Fear for your family?

What things have you bound up? In a cell?

As we not only dwell upon the all the goodness of our God but we brake out in praise, doors are opened and chains are unfastened.

Let me close with the last two verses of this Psalm of praise.

Psalm 103:21-22, “Bless the Lord, all you His hosts, you who serve Him, doing His will. Bless the Lord all you works of His, in all places of His dominion; Bless the Lord, O my soul!”

Let’s pray