

Bless The LORD

Psalm 103

How many people this morning own a cell phone?

That is amazing, I remember when virtually no one had cell phones.

Do you remember the first ones that came out?

They were enormous. There was no fitting those things in your pocket and there were very few people who had one.

Sometime in the later 90's and early 2000's they started becoming more common.

In comparison to the early version they became much smaller, some even folded in half, they called them flip phones (those were super cool).

Do you know how most people used those phones? As a phone.

It wasn't long before texting became a thing though and then along came black berries and those were replaced by the smart phone.

Of course, like human beings do with many things, we made talking on the phone dangerous as people started talking on the phone while driving.

To solve that problem someone came up with the idea of Bluetooth. No idea why it's called Bluetooth that seems like a bizarre name for something.

Some of the early versions went over your ear with a microphone extending out.

They were fairly big by today's standards and quite noticeable.

To me it seemed as though for a while they became a bit of a status symbol.

People wore them everywhere all day as if to say to everyone else "I'm super important and need to be reached everywhere I go and look cool doing it."

Personally I don't think they looked very cool, but it did create the appearance of a whole bunch of people talking to themselves.

Where before you could see someone holding a phone to their ear, you just saw people walking around talking to themselves.

People pacing back and forth, waving their arms around, yelling or laughing with no one else around.

Granted it was not all good and some people's cell phone etiquette went downhill like starting a conversation on the phone while talking to someone in person without any warning at all.

Anyone have that happen?

I can't say I was ever huge fan of the trend but one of the things I kind of liked was the fact that it made talking to yourself a bit more mainstream.

I talk to myself on a regular basis, anybody else with me on that.

[Did you know that talking to yourself is Biblical? That's right, talking to yourself is in the Bible. We find it a number of times in Scripture particularly in the Psalms. Our text this morning is an example of this, turn there with me to Psalm 103. In this psalm David speaks to himself. He talks to himself about worship and in so doing teaches us some important lessons about how to worship the Lord. The first lesson is this, that...]

Point #1 – The highest goal of worship is to worship with all that we are. (Verses 1-2)

It is easy to be satisfied with an external display of religion, but we ought to be concerned with much more than that. We ought to delight in the LORD in the deepest places of our hearts.

The beginning of the psalm reminds us of the importance of talking to ourselves.

Listen, to how the Psalm begins (**Verse 1-2a**).

The word translated as 'Praise' here in the NIV is used six times in this Psalm, twice here at the beginning and four times in the last three verses.

The ESV, NAS, NKJ versions all translate the word as "bless".

That is a word that can be a struggle for us to understand in this passage.

When we think of the word "blessing" we normally think of asking God to act with favour towards someone.

It is easy to understand how the God of the universe in all his infinite wisdom and power might bless people, but what in the world does it mean for a human being to "bless" the LORD.

Because that is the case I understand why the NIV decided on the word 'praise'.

It is fairly clear, that David has worship in mind here so praise fits, the word 'blessed' however, indicates worship that God delights in.

David here is giving an emphatic command to himself, to the deepest parts of his being to 'bless the LORD'.

He is talking to himself, probably out loud, with a command to worship God in a way that pleases God with every fibre of his being.

What a glorious thing to say to yourself!

What a reminder that God wants us to be all in when it comes to our devotion to Him.

[Jesus is really clear on this point in a number of places. Remember someone said to Him, "Lord I just need to bury my father, then I will follow you." Jesus said to Him, "Let the dead bury the dead, you follow me. He also says, "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me". Or think of what He says about what is the greatest commandment? He says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."]

Now I know someone is going to say, “That’s impossible!” and you would be right to say it. On account of our many imperfections we are going to come up short here, but it is a mistake to throw up our hands and say, “well that is a good as it gets why bother trying anymore?”

If David thought like that then he would never have written this command to his own soul, to his inmost being.

No one gives a command for something that is already done, you give a command for something you know needs to happen.

When should we give this command to ourselves? Everyday!
Every day we ought to command every fibre of our being to live a life of worship that is pleasing to God.

[Why? Why is that so important for us? Well David does more here than give the command to bless the LORD to himself. He commands his soul to “forget not all his benefits” (Verse 2b). He then proceeds to tell His soul about those benefits and what we see there is what makes the command to “bless the Lord” possible. That is what we see as he continues to speak to himself in verses three through five. We see that...]

Point #2 – Worship is possible because the LORD restores and satisfies all that we are. (Verses 3-5)

Every single one of us experiences brokenness to some degree on account of our sins, but in spite our evil ways God can heal us and we can find rest in Him.

Every time you see the word “your” in verses 3-5 it is important to know that it is in the second person singular.

He is speaking these things to his soul to his inmost being. It is also important to say that these things are only true of someone who is right with God.

This is not true of everyone, but if you have believed on Jesus Christ to make right all of your rebellion against a holy God then you can say these things to your soul too.

(Verse 3-4)

Forgiveness, healing, and redemption are all words of restoration.

Something was wrong or broken and God makes it right.

I love the word “all” in these verses. He forgives “all your sins!”

Some would foolishly turn God’s infinite grace into a reason for making our sin a small thing.

I sinned God forgave me, let’s move on.

If you think like that, then you are missing it.

Only those who have an appreciation for the horror of sin can be changed by the magnitude of God’s grace.

He “heals all your diseases”

Remember he is talking to his soul here so it’s likely as a number of commentators suggest that he is talking about more than physical illness.

He also, it says, “redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion.”

David had definitely experienced some of this glorious restoration during his life, but he is also looking beyond life into eternity.

Without this worship would be impossible.

He goes on speaking to his own soul saying this in Verse 5.

That is an amazing thing to have the desires of your soul “satisfied”.

It must be pointed out that he has to be talking about godly desires. There is no way verse one fits with verse five if a person’s soul desires what is opposed to God, second, the word good here totally eliminates the possibility of evil, and third it is impossible to have your soul satisfied without God let alone with ungodly things.

[This is one of arguments for the truth of Christianity that C.S. Lewis put forward. He recognized that human beings are creatures of desire and that for every desire we have there is something to fulfill that desire. Anybody here get hungry? Thankfully food exists to satisfy that hunger. What about thirsty? Thankfully there are things to drink. Lewis also observed, however, that there is something in us that desires something outside of creation. In a negative sense it means that if we get everything this world has to offer there is still a void in us, something that is not satisfied. Lewis’ argument is this, if I get hungry and there is food to satisfy that hunger, then if I desire more than what is present in creation something outside of creation must exist to satisfy that desire. That something according to the Bible is someone, God.]

David says that satisfaction of the soul, renews the soul like an eagle.

I learned from multiple commentaries that eagles shed and regrow their feathers about once a year.

They don’t all fall out at once, but over the course of a year they all get replaced.

That is a great picture for the soul being satisfied in God.

It is everyday having a bit of the old removed and replaced by the new.

You may have a cane, a walker, or even be in a wheelchair.

You may feel worn out in your body, but you can be renewed day by day in your soul.

[That is what makes worship possible. It is the work of God restoring and bringing satisfaction to the depths of who we are that makes us into people who want to worship the LORD with every fibre of our being. David goes on telling us about the benefits of the LORD in verses six through eighteen showing us a third lesson which is that...]

Point #3 – Worship is possible because the LORD is compassionate and faithful. (Verses 6-18)

We are a sorry bunch as human beings and if were not for God's willingness to bear with our weaknesses we would all be lost.

In verses 6-12 David is thinking back on the history of the people of Israel.

They were "oppressed" when they were enslaved in Egypt and God saved them.

He brought them to Mount Sinai and the people fell into the sin of idolatry by worshipping the statue of a calf made of gold.

Right after that incident Moses asks to see the glory of the LORD and God allows him to see some of it.

As the LORD passes by he declares what David says here in **verse 8**.

David applies that in **verses 9-12**.

Why has God set His infinite love upon His people?

Because He is compassionate and gracious.

In setting His love upon those who fear Him, He removes their sin as far as the east is from the west.

That is a beautiful expression meaning it has been completely removed, it can't get any farther away.

Verses 13-16 speak further about God's compassion, describing His compassion for us like a father has upon his children.

It goes on to say He does this because He knows our frailty (**Verses 14-16**).

The fallen state of humanity has made our life spans incredibly small.

In the grand scheme of the universe we are an insignificant spec that is here today and gone tomorrow and it won't be long before we are forgotten.

Just look at your own family tree and go back a few generations, most of us probably know very little if anything about them and the same will be true of us.

It would be a sad meaningless existence if not for verses 17-18, look there.

I love that phrase, "from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear Him."

From forever until forever God's compassion and love are fixed upon His people.

God never becomes bored of loving those He has redeemed.

The Holy Spirit does not tire of making us new.

Jesus never regrets shedding His blood to wash us clean.

He is faithful forever.

[This is one of the reasons why I love it when I hear of a Christian couple that has been happily married for many years. I'm not talking about just enduring life together under the same roof. I'm talking about having a deep and abiding affection for one another. I love it because that is what God designed marriage for. It is a picture of Christ's love for the church. When does Jesus ever stop loving the church? He never does? When does Jesus cease to be faithful to the church? He never does.]

Because that is true we can worship the LORD seeking to satisfy every part of our being with the praise of His Glory.

[David continues to speak about the benefits of the LORD in verse 19. What he says here is both an act of worship declaring what is true about God and it is also another aspect of making worship possible. This is the fourth lesson of our text regarding worship, it is that...]

Point #4 – Worship recognizes that the LORD is ruler of all. (Verse 19)

Everything in the universe is both sustained and governed by God and all of us who delight in that, praise His name because of it.

Look at the **first half of verse 19** with me.

The word ‘established’ here is in the perfect tense which means an action has occurred in the past that has an ongoing effect in the present.

No one brought God up to be King Universe.

His rule does not need anyone or anything outside of Himself to make it possible.

He requires no blessing from a greater authority, He established His own throne in heaven.

This event is more than just something that happened in history because His throne will remain in place forever.

That makes it clear that the LORD is the King in heaven for all eternity, but how far does His reign extend? (**Verse 19b**).

It is impossible to escape the power and authority of God’s throne.

That is the necessary result of Who God is.

How many people this morning believe that God’s knows everything?

How many people this morning believe that God is all powerful meaning He can do all that He pleases?

That is Who the Bible says God is and because He possesses those two attributes He by His nature has ultimate authority over absolutely everything everywhere in the universe.

The skeptic will often say, “God can’t exist because of all the evil that happens in the universe. If He existed and was all powerful He would put an end to it now.”

I would say two things in response. First, those who say such things never have an appreciation for their own evil and the grace God is showing them by allowing them to have another breath.

Second, such a statement is not an argument against God’s existence, it is merely an expression of one’s distaste for the rule of God.

In other words people are saying they don't like the way God runs things.

No one can change the fact that God's "kingdom rules over all".

Because we can't change it we can do one of three things, we can remain ignorant of His rule (which is a form of rejection), we can despise it, or we can embrace and love it.

David's declaration here is part of His desire to joyfully worship the Lord with all that he is. This is delight in the rule of God and that is what worship does.

[That brings us to one more lesson about worship. The psalm starts with David's great desire to bless the LORD with the fullness of his humanity, he then goes through a series of reasons for that desire namely all the benefits that God gives, finally in verses 20-22 he repeats the emphatic command that he began the psalm with four more times ending exactly where he began with a command to his own soul. From all that we should take this lesson...]

Point #5 – Worship that blesses God comes from what He has given. (Verse 20-22)

James says, "Every good and perfect gift comes from above" We bring nothing of worth to God that He has not already given to us.

Look with me at the final few verses of this psalm beginning in verse 20 until the end of verse 22.

Just like the Greek word for angel, the Hebrew word for angel has the meaning of messenger and can refer to both heavenly beings as well as earthly servants.

I suspect here he means angels in heaven or all of God's messengers both in heaven and on the earth.

Notice here they are beings of strength, they do the LORD's bidding, and they obey His word.

Let's ask ourselves, from where do they get their strength?

Who is it that has given them the ability to do God's will?

Every time we see heavenly messengers speak to people in the Bible it is clear they are amazing beings, Who made them like that?

God did. What should their response be with all the things God gives them? They are given an emphatic command to "Bless the LORD!"

In verse 21 he is definitely talking about angels in heaven.

God's heavenly host is the armies of heaven.

More than once in the bible we see angels show up with swords strapped on.

They defend God's people, they bring judgement against the armies of the wicked, and prevail in every battle they fight.

Who gave them their power? God did.

Having started with himself, he speaks about Israel, humanity in general, then heavenly beings, and in the first have of verse 22 he gives the emphatic command to bless the LORD to all of God's works everywhere.

What is true of the angels is true of everything.

Other than the commands to worship, the Psalm is talking about all the things God does for everyone and everything in all of creation.

That raises a critical question that this whole Psalm has been pointing us to.

The question is, who makes it possible to bless the LORD?

The LORD does. We don't give a single thing to God that He delights in that He has not given us already.

Augustine commenting on this psalm says, "We do not bless God from what is ours (the only thing that comes from us is evil and sin), we bless God from what He gives."

[We see examples of this in the Bible. One of my favourites happens in heaven in the book of Revelation chapter four. It is a scene of twenty for elders around the throne of God wearing crowns. After the description of God's throne do you know what the elders do? They take off their crowns and lay them before God saying, "**You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.**" (Revelation 4:10). Who gave them the crowns? God did and they give them back in joyful worship.]

It is the same with us.

To bless the LORD, is to worship Him in a way that pleases Him, in a way that He delights in.

We can only do that out of what He has given us.

When God blesses us, He gives to us out of what is His, but when we bless God we simply take what He has given us, namely everything good, and we lay it at His feet to the praise of His eternal glory.

We don't really give God anything in a real sense. It's already His.

God doesn't create us because He needs us. He doesn't need our worship. God delights in worship not because He needs it but because He has made us to enjoy Him.

That is why we have been created and when we by His grace live that out, He is most pleased with us.

David got that and so he ends this psalm with the gloriously emphatic command, "Bless the LORD, O my soul!"