

November 24, 2024, Thanksgiving Sunday: Bless the Lord, O My Soul - Psalm 103:1-5

This Thursday, we will celebrate Thanksgiving, a day designated each year for our nation to express gratitude to God. I believe our founding fathers did well in establishing this day to remind us all of the importance of being thankful, especially for the many blessings we have received from God. As God's people, it is fitting that we should focus our thoughts, not only now but often, upon the goodness of God and offer our gratitude to God for who He is and for all He has done for us. Thus, this morning, we will be focusing on the theme of Thanksgiving, a time of profound gratitude, as we explore King David's Psalm 103:1-5 and the story of the grateful leper.

Psalm 103 has been referred to as David's "Hallelujah Chorus." In this passage, David addresses his own soul, reminding himself of all that God has done. He employs a grammatical technique to instruct his soul during this act of praise, which is crucial for understanding the passage correctly.

1. Praise the Lord and Count Your Blessings (vv. 1-2). This section is a prayer focused entirely on praising God. It contains no supplications, requests, petitions, or pleas—only pure, unadulterated praise. David was in awe of God's blessings. While we are not informed about the specific circumstances in which David wrote this Psalm, it is easy to imagine how it came about. **By reflecting on his life and recognizing his blessings instead of dwelling on his burdens,** David became acutely aware of all that God had done for him. He realized how gracious God had been and how unworthy he felt of such blessings. This realization sprang from the depths of his heart, overflowing onto the parchment as he expressed his gratitude to the Lord through this prayer of praise.

David praised the Lord through his song. If you ever struggle with how to praise the Lord, reading this psalm can help. I can envision David, full of emotion and passion, pouring his heart into his praise for God. As an accomplished musician, David sang with deep feeling and conviction, a connection we can all strive for in our worship. This was a joyous expression of praise to the Lord, a connection we can all feel in our own worship.

When David sang these words, they were not dry and stale; they were full of life and energy, an expression of his worship with dancing. A person who dances in worship would not sing a song in a dry or monotonous manner. David sang with joy and a profound desire to let God and all who could hear know just how much he wanted to give praise and glory to Him.

David was genuinely devoted to praising the Lord. It wasn't something he reserved only for the temple during religious ceremonies; it was an integral part of his daily life. He felt immense gratitude to the Lord and couldn't help but express his praise. We should keep this in mind when we consider how we sing our songs of praise.

2. A relationship with God brings wholeness and health (v. 3). David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, recognizes that God forgives our sins. He perceives believers as individuals who have been made whole through their connection with God. In verse 3b, when he states, "Who heals all your diseases," David is not merely speaking of physical healing, which God is certainly capable of providing, but rather of the holistic healing of both body and soul. He speaks to his soul,

reminding it that God can heal all the ailments of the soul, with sin being the primary concern. Does the soul experience diseases? Absolutely. These can include fear, doubt, depression, anger, lust, hatred, jealousy, pride, and greed, among others. The sources of these soul diseases can all be traced back to our fallen nature and the impact of sin. However, God is able to provide permanent healing to the soul.

3. Life in relationship with God is meaningful (vv. 4-5). Look at verse 4. Because He forgives our sins, grants us meaningful relationships, and heals the diseases of our souls, we can see that life is truly meaningful. **This verse can be interpreted as saying, "He keeps your life from going to waste."** Many people spend the years of their lives chasing after things that ultimately do not matter. They invest their time in the pursuit of temporary pleasures and, one day, wake up feeling empty, tired, and questioning the purpose of their existence. In fact, they often feel betrayed because the things they worked hard to acquire did not bring them the satisfaction they desired.

The world does not provide hope for meaningful living. Money, material possessions, power, and status do not fulfill our deeper needs. God offers His people a purpose for living. He gives us meaning and ensures that our lives are not wasted. Our lives can be lived with eternal significance. Lives not lived in Christ are merely shadows of what they have the potential to be. **This is one of the benefits of knowing God: our lives matter;** they are not lived in vain. They carry eternal significance. This is something for which David is praising the Lord.

4. Verse 5 states that God satisfies your desires and provides fulfillment in your old age. The speaker is addressing his soul, expressing that one of the benefits of being among God's people is that, as we grow older, we can look back on our lives without regret. No matter your age or how long you've been on this earth, God will grant you satisfaction.

How about you? Are you in a relationship with God? If you are, praising Him will come naturally to you, just as it did for David. But how can you praise Him? By dedicating your entire life to it. David stated, "I will praise Him with all that is within me." This means honoring God through your attitudes, actions, family, finances, words, work, religion, relationships, voice, vocation, church, children, hobbies, and habits. **I will praise Him not only with my words but also through my deeds.**

When was the last time you paused to reflect on all of God's blessings? Do you truly appreciate these gifts? Are you living a meaningful and fulfilling life? Are there wounds in your soul that need healing?

The grateful leper returned to express his gratitude for the holistic healing of both his body and soul. He did not take anything for granted. Are you like the solitary leper, or are you one of the other nine who did not return to give thanks?

Today is Thanksgiving Sunday! I encourage you to make every day a day of thanksgiving by counting your blessings rather than dwelling on your burdens.

Happy Thanksgiving!