Sermon **Notes**

Sunday, 28 September 2026

Bless the LORD, O My Soul

Psalm 103:1–5, ESV

Jesus quoted Isaiah in a line most of us already know.

"This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."
Matthew 15:8–9

The worship was empty because the heart was far from him, and the heart was far because men had made their own rules authoritative. That word lands on other groups and their traditions. It also lands closer to home. A Bible chapter read only to get the reading done. A mealtime prayer with the mind already on the list. An appointment at church when the heart would rather be somewhere else. Hymn words sung with the meaning switched off. The Lord's Supper taken while tomorrow's work sits in the pew. A sermon applied to everyone in the room except the one hearing it. David wrote Psalm 103 so his own soul would not worship like that.

A Note to the Soul

Psalms address different hearers. Some speak to God. Some speak to Israel. Psalm 103 speaks to David. He is talking to himself. He is writing a reminder, a sticky note on his own soul: do not forget, do not drift into empty praise.

"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, 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 eagle's." Psalm 103:1–5

Three questions sit in those verses. What does it mean to bless the Lord? Why must we? How must we, if it is to be real?

What It Means to Bless the Lord

It does not mean we add something God lacks. When God blesses us, we have what we did not have. When we have finished the most wholehearted hour of praise, God is not larger, richer, or more glorious than when we began. He already owns everything. Blessing the Lord means praising him: admiring and acknowledging him from a deep awareness and appreciation of who he is and what he does.

That requires knowing there is a God, knowing what kind of God he is, and counting that a good thing. It also requires time and effort. Praise is not a mood we try to keep running in the background. "Pray without ceasing" is not a prayerful attitude we cannot define. It is prayer. Worship is an act. We admire and acknowledge two things: who God is, and what God does.

We do that in the same ways we honor people we love. We sing. Parents make up songs with a child's name in them. Some people sing to the one they love. Others, who cannot do that with a straight face, have still found a way to put love into music. We talk to him the way we talk to a person we are glad for: I love you. I am glad you are here. Thank you. We talk about him, because love talks. And the body gets involved, the way it does when someone we have missed walks in, or when something good happens and the hands come together. God is a person. Praise uses the whole person.

Why We Bless Him

David blesses the Lord for who he is, and then for what he does. Verse 1 stands apart from the list of gifts.

"Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!"
Psalm 103:1

A name that means something still moves us when the person is not in the room. Names of saints we have loved still make a congregation smile. Other names still tighten the chest. The name stands for the person. When God told Moses his name, he was telling Moses who he is.

"God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.'" Exodus 3:14

Eternal. Unchangeable. Holy. Perfect. Bless his holy name means praise him for himself, even if the benefits in verses 2 through 5 were never listed. A marriage in which the only sentences are requests is already in trouble. God is not a vending wall. He is worthy before he gives.

Verses 2 through 5 then name the benefits, two by two.

He pardons all your iniquity and heals all your diseases. A doctor can take a tumor and leave the wreckage. When God forgives, he does not leave the guilt, the shame, and the damage sitting on the chair. He removes them.

He redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with steadfast love and mercy. He does not hoist you out of the hole and leave you on the rim in rags. He takes the lowest place and sets a crown on it. We like to say we would be content as the janitor who just squeaks in. Scripture will not let us talk that small. We are a royal priesthood. We have been raised up and seated with Christ. We are fellow heirs. What the Son receives, the family receives. He will not make street-sweepers of the people he has seated with him.

He satisfies your years with good and renews your youth like the eagle's. Which years? All of them. The outer person declines. The inner person does not have to.

"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day." 2 Corinthians 4:16

The saints some of us still name, the ones whose bodies finally slowed them down, were not spiritually used up. While strength lasted they kept going. Age is not a permission slip to quit. He renews.

How David Blesses the Lord

"Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me." He is doing two things. He is reminding himself. He is committing all of himself.

We need the reminder because we ask, receive, and do not thank. We need it because we take credit.

"What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" 1 Corinthians 4:7

Whatever looks like strength this morning is grace. There is nothing in us that makes us better than the person who is not handling life well. We need the reminder because we take ordinary gifts for granted until they stop. Then we pray. Then we swear we will never forget. Then we forget. We need the reminder because we stare at the gifts and lose the Giver, because life is

loud, because trouble fills the frame, because too many of us have one worship day and six other "off" days.

Then he commits the whole self. "All that is within me" is not a mood. It is a decision to bring everything he has. Doing an act of worship is not the same as worship. A machine can write a glowing prayer. A machine can sing a hymn if you feed it the lyrics. There is no worship in either one. Demons bowed and called Jesus the Son of God. The devil quoted Scripture. People who do not believe still throw his name around. None of that is worship. So, David refuses to let praise run on a grocery list, a lunch plan, or the work sitting in the next pew. He will not go through the motions with a blank mind, a dull heart, or a thin habit. When he worships, he brings all that is within him, wherever he is.

Worship Happens on Purpose

True worship does not happen by showing up. It does not happen by performing five acts. It does not happen by accident or without thought. It happens when a person regularly reflects on who God is and what God does, then, like David, reminds the soul out loud and with the body, and recommits to full engagement: Saturday night, Sunday morning, Wednesday, the singing, the Bible at home, the prayer at the table. Write the sticky note like David does in Psalm 103. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

That life begins with the Son. No one worships the Father apart from him. If you are not a Christian, this church would be glad to talk about what that means and to help you come. If you are a Christian and you know the life has gone thin, that is not a reason to hide. Come.

This Week

Wednesday night the class on a personal relationship with God finishes in Romans 8. To be ready, read Romans 8.