

THANKSGIVING: PSALM 103
REV. DR. KIM ENGELMANN
WEST VALLEY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

THANKSGIVING AS AN INSIDE OUT REALITY

I am wearing my jacket inside out this morning, so that you remember that Psalm 103 that ____ just read is an inside out psalm.

Psalm 103 is an inside out psalm.

The gratitude and thanksgiving expressed here comes from the inside of David...out to us.

This psalm is an over-flowing song of joy that from deep within him like a well springing up and bubbling over explodes joyfully onto the page... He is filled with gratitude and praise....there is nothing here that is forced or put on.

You can hear the passion in his voice, the joy, the gratitude in this first line...

Bless the Lord O my soul...and all that is within me...bless his holy name..

All that is within me. That's gratitude. You can't force it.

Psalm 103 is genuine..the real deal. A psalm/song of thanksgiving from the heart.

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" said Jesus. And David's heart is full of gratitude..

As we think about gratitude today and thanksgiving I want you to think about your life for a minute as a picture, a piece of art that God has given you as a gift. **(IMAGE)**

It is something he has handed you, and he has asked you to buy the frame...He has asked you to display this gift of living for him with all your heart, soul and mind to the world.

I would suggest that the best frame we can put around this gift of life, freely given to us, is **the frame of gratitude**

People who are grateful live longer, forgive better, have more friends, stay healthier and are more likely to succeed than those who grumble their way along...

But this gratitude, this praise of God, cannot just be a superficial thank you for stuff we have. Its got to stem from a relationship with God; that we are so taken with our Creator that we do an inside out...

Its an inside out *all that is within me* expression of utter praise...as David expresses it here...

All that is within me says "I can't contain it...its bubbling over...this sense of thanksgiving for who you are O Lord."

My gratitude to you O God is overwhelming and ALL THAT IS WITHIN ME erupts in constant praise...for your goodness, your love, your blessing

The orthodox Jew back in the OT was supposed to give thanks to God 100 times a day. 100 times a day! That means, if you live for 24 hours in each day you will be thanking God four times an hour, every hour, even when you are asleep.

Why did God make the Jews say thank you 100 times every day? I mean why do this? I think it is because **God wants gratitude, praise and thanksgiving to form the frame of our lives. Gratitude is meant to be the thing that holds everything together for the Christian - , and allows what we live to be displayed with joy!** Gratitude is a form of joy.

So I can't get up here and tell you to be grateful if you are not as much as I can't get up here and tell you to be full when you are hungry.

Gratitude is an attitude – its and attitude of the heart. It **stems from a sense of abundance. It stems from a sense of being cared for and loved. It stems from a sense of security, and peace.**

Gratitude comes from having experienced undeserved grace.

David was definitely one of those.

THANKSGIVING FOR WHO GOD IS

Now notice what David is grateful for here...it isn't material blessings...

David is filled with gratitude in psalm 103 for who God is....not for what he has

I don't know what you do at Thanksgiving time but.....

Often when we all go around the table at Thanksgiving we say, what we're thankful for...its often something like...my new iphone...my friends and family...my house and my new job... And there is something to be said for being grateful for all that, But then I get to thinking, are we grateful that God has blessed us more than the other person down the street, who doesn't have an iphone Or who can't afford a house? Or those who may feel isolated at this time of year...Sometimes it sounds to me like I am grateful that God has blessed me more than he has other people; therefore I am grateful... that I am not this guy or gal over here...

What I love about this psalm is that **Psalm 103 talks about a benefits package that includes everyone.**

Everyone can know this God...

David sings from his heart about being thankful for who God is...and because of who he is... because of the nature of God....the benefits package that comes with connecting to God is **AMAZING**

And David in his inside out prayer here in Psalm 103 says....**FORGET NOT** what this universal benefits package that is available to everyone when you sign on the dotted line to be a part of God's family is...

I am sure many of you have cards and policies and memberships that have certain benefits. I forget the benefits that come with many of the policies I hold.

So for instance with AAA, I found out I got free towing which came in so handy when my car was stalled.

I happened to read again in the manual and remember that I actually could get my car to the garage I wanted it to go to.

Its one of the benefits of being in AAA....and I had forgotten.

It made life so much easier when I remembered I had free towing...I was thrilled!

THANKSGIVING FOR THE BENEFITS PLAN

.... What are the benefits of knowing this God...of being connected to him? Well he is the kind of God who...

Forgives ALL your iniquity...it's his nature! You can know him! What a God! He delights to forgive us...

not just some of our not so bad sins...but notice...all of them....forgiven ...

God shows us this centuries later in Jesus...

but David knew it here and he is inside out grateful...

David probably wrote this psalm later in his life and David did a whole lot early on that needed forgiveness including adultery and murder. I think maybe that's why he put forgives ALL your sins. He was so grateful that even the worst of the worst could be forgiven...by this God who was bigger than his sins. And he knew he had received undeserved grace.

Heals all your diseases...in this life or in the next one What a God! Always moves us toward healing...this is his nature.

You cut yourself, your body just automatically repairs itself. God created us that way because God always moves us toward healing and wholeness.

And David is inside out grateful for this.

Biblical scholars think from some of the language used here, that David himself has just recovered himself from a serious illness...and gratitude just spills out of him for who God is – the healer

Redeems your life from the pit...God's nature is to redeem. how many of you have a story like that? I know a lot of you do. *I was at my lowest ebb and I found out that when I couldn't anymore, God could.* God constantly pulls us up and out when we can't climb out on our own

And I always think...you God...care about me?

You want to rescue me?

Who am I that you would pull me out of a pit?

Who am I that you would care? You are the God of the universe. You are pulling me out of a pit – often of my own making...

But David is inside out thankful to God because he knows this God for whatever reason specializes in pulling people out of all kinds of pits that they can't get out of on their own.

And of course **this language is shepherd language...David was a shepherd and pulled many sheep out of the pit**...many times...and he sees God as his rescuer doing this for him

Who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good; Everything that truly satisfies us I believe has the nature of God in it.

The heart was made for God, and only God can meet it. Whitfield, and that is so true.

This inside out psalm of Thanksgiving comes from that inner sense of God's presence and being satisfied deep within... David had that ...and then he says

So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. What does that mean?

How is an eagles youth renewed?

Well eagles have certain periods in their life span when they molt. And this is what



David is referring to here. Here is an eagle who is molting. Ever feel like that? Every morning...right...before coffee for me.

When old tattered or too small feathers fall out, the new ones come in; the new black and white feathers have a sheen and a strength that might make you say...that's a new bird!(see image below)

That bird doesn't look old and gray and tattered anymore. That bird looks young again and strong! That bird has a new set of feathers that will take that bird to the heights! It's a wonderful visual image of transformation, isn't it?



This is who God is. Renews your youth like the eagles...
Don't forget your benefits package in God, David says.

Its universal. Everyone can have these things when they are connected to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For us the God of Jesus Christ.

I wish I could walk with you through every verse of this psalm explaining this benefits package – its like a manual explaining with passion and joy all the great things that happen as a result of being connected to this wonderful God ...

THANKSGIVING FOR THE VASTNESS OF THE GOODNESS OF GOD

If you look at the psalm, David uses the whole universe to describe God's steadfast love... He says **"as far as the heavens are above the earth so great is his steadfast love on those who fear him."** **"as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our sins from us."**

So please, do yourself a favor...if you are holding onto guilt from sin today, don't. If you have asked Jesus Christ to forgive you, you are forgiven.

God is not interested in your guilt; God wants your thanksgiving...your praise to him for his goodness – not your naval gazing despair.

That goes nowhere...Praise and thanksgiving pull us up and out of ourselves to look up and recognize with David that God is so good, and he never changes. And his love for us is as vast as the space between heaven and earth...

Its like Einstein's IQ test where they gave him a little rubber mat with a little tractor and a little fence and barn and farm animals, farm house. And they said make a scene. And Einstein must have been about 8 or 9. All the other kids in the class had arranged these items nicely on the mat in some semblance of an order. But Einstein doesn't use the mat at all. He uses the whole room and makes a much larger scene that makes sense there. So he puts the cow on the bookcase, and the farmhouse by the chair on the other side of the room and explains it all in a much larger context. Brilliant!

And David is saying to us through these words...get in touch with how big God is today. His goodness is bigger and better than what you think...bigger than the earth, broader than the horizon, wider than the sky.

And be thankful because you belong to him and you are known by him. Sometimes our God gets too small and we forget how much we have in him. We forget our benefits, and we lose gratitude.

Lets just take a few lines from the rest of this psalm...and you respond... a kind of mini character sketch of God...

Psalm 103:

Leader: The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love!

Response: I am thankful for your goodness, God! Bless the Lord O my soul!

Leader: The LORD's steadfast love is from everlasting to everlasting and his righteousness to children's children

Response: I am thankful for your goodness, God! Bless the Lord O my soul!

Leader: As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.

Response: I am thankful for your goodness God! Bless the Lord O my soul!

So maybe this Thanksgiving when you go around the table to say what your thankful for instead of listing an item...maybe say an attribute of who God is... Try it...

Maybe say, "I am thankful today that God is a forgiving God – and is vast in his love for me. As far as the East is from the West so far have my sins been removed from me."

That's right from psalm 103.

Or maybe say, "I am thankful today that God is a God who is big enough to be specific...and to care...and to pick us up when we are at our lowest – picks us up out of the pit – and that I am one of those people who has experienced that."

Shock all your relatives and friends that might be with you. As you Forget not all his benefits...that come from the vastness of his goodness – who he is...

Thanksgiving & Trust When Things Go Wrong

Now I do want to say that this perspective of who God is, is not always easy to maintain in this world.

When things go wrong, thanksgiving and gratitude are not always the first things on our lips or in our hearts.

That's where we get tripped up. Forget gratitude. Lose hope. Giving into less than what God has for us.

But if when problems come, and detours happen, and my plans get thwarted... I can still keep that frame of gratitude and praise around my life. I can still wake in the morning and declare with assurance, from an inside out place of genuine joy "Bless the Lord O My Soul and all that is within me bless his holy name," I can do that ...If I can remember who God is, in and through it all...and I can dare to hold onto trusting Him and his goodness...believing in that more than what I see around me....cause that never changes...That's what Tom and Lorraine M. daughter and son did.

This story starts out when Lorraines daughter and son-in-law feel a real calling from God to adopt a child from the Ukraine.

I'll let them tell the story, but I want you to know that the only reason that slide is up there is that this couple continued to believe in God's goodness and faithfulness and they were assured of his call on their lives to do this...No matter how many doors were shut in their face, they didn't forget his benefits in this long ordeal...they did not doubt his call on their life.

That's why that picture is there..

