

A Call to Remembrance

Psalm 103

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Intro. - Psalm 103

I'm titling the message today: **A Call to Remembrance**

I love this time of the year. I especially love Thanksgiving week. What a great time to downshift a little bit and enjoy time with family and friends. We've got so much to look forward to, don't we?! We've got the food of course – the turkey and everything that goes with it. Some of you have your out-laws...I mean in-laws coming in town and you're gearing up for that!

We've got to get ready for Texas A&M vs. Texas. Get to watch the Cowboys continue yet another subpar season – what a great week this is going to be, and then we go right into the Christmas season.

Speaking of Christmas – TONIGHT, we have our annual Christmas Tree Lighting!

You don't want to miss it...it's going to be AWESOME!

- We've got inflatables for the kids...
- We've got tons of food trucks that will be here...
- We've got hot chocolate (may or may not want that!)...
- We've got train rides, live music...

It all starts at 6:00 this evening out on The Lawn. Hope to see you here!

You know there is a significant amount of scripture that calls believers to “remember” – I was sharing this with the Biblical Literacy class several months ago. Throughout scripture, we are commanded to remember...to recall in our minds and reflect on who God is and all he has done in our life.

There is power in remembrance! The “Shema” in Deuteronomy:

Deut. 6:4-9 – “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

God wanted his people to remember the words of the Lord...the Law of the Lord.

It was why he wanted them written down – so that they could see them in their coming and going...it's why he wanted them talked about constantly – when they sit and when they rise. God wanted his people to REMEMBER who he was and what he had spoken to them.

Through the prophet Isaiah, God speaks in: **Isaiah 46:8-9a – “Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me...”**

The Psalmist in: **Psalm 77:11 – “I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old.”**

We could talk about the “stones of remembrance” that Joshua set up at Gilgal as a reminder of God miraculously allowing them to cross over the Jordan or the rainbow that God puts in the sky so the people will remember that God will never send judgment in the form of a flood again! Time after time after time, we are called by God in the scripture to remember!

Remembering was SO important that God warned Israel with judgment should they fail to remember and FORGET who God was and ALL that he had done.

Deut. 8:11-14, 19 – “Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, ¹²lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, ¹³and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, ¹⁴then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery...And if you forget the Lord your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish.”

I'm calling us to remembrance today! The Lord's Supper that we'll take together at the end of this message - what's the point in us taking it?

It's so that we REMEMBER the sacrifice of Jesus...his body broken...his blood poured out. Many of you grew up in churches that have right under the pulpit a piece of furniture that says, “Do this in remembrance of me.”

This Thanksgiving week, I'm calling us to remembrance. It's what David is doing in Psalm 103. He is calling himself...he's calling the people of Israel to remembrance! Let's look at it together:

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

This psalm starts very personally. David says, “Bless the LORD (that's Yahweh – that's the covenant name of God – very specific – “the great I AM” - bless the LORD) O MY soul, and all that is within ME bless his holy name!

Now, I love this because David begins this Psalm (if you look at v. 22 – he ends this psalm) the exact same way – with a call to bless the Lord!

This word “bless” – it’s mentioned 6x in this one chapter – 330 times in the Old Testament. It’s a word that when it’s directed toward God, it means “to kneel” – it’s an act of adoration. When we read this word describing God interacting with man – he “blesses” us, it refers to the “benefits” he affords us – we’ll see some of these blessings...some of these benefits listed out for us in just a moment as we look at the rest of this passage of scripture.

I want you to notice though right out of the gate, David is speaking internally...he is looking within and compelling himself to “bless...adore...worship the Lord”.

If you know anything about David and the psalms that he wrote, you know that they are honest expressions concerning his relationship with the Lord and what he may be facing or feeling at any given time – the psalms are essentially the prayer journal of David where he unpacks his baggage and lays whatever it is he is going through before the Lord.

And sometimes he’s up...sometimes he’s down...it’s one of the many things we love about David and his psalms – it’s that we can identify with not just what he’s writing, but he gives us insight into what he is feeling at a deeply emotional level.

While we don’t know the exact context that caused David to write Psalm 103, something is going on and he knows he needs to coach himself up in this moment.

Perhaps he’s NOT feeling like “blessing” the Lord, but he KNOWS he needs to!

Some of you might feel like this today. It’s Thanksgiving week. You know you should be thankful...you know you should have an “attitude of gratitude” and be at church with a worshipful heart, but for some reason, you’re just not feeling it!

- It could be the death of a loved one...this is going to be the first Thanksgiving and Christmas without that person you love sitting at their place at the table – that’s tough...
- Or maybe it’s a situation that’s taking place at work...you and a co-worker are not seeing eye to eye, or maybe your boss is riding you for something that’s really outside of your control - it’s hard to FEEL like worshipping with the kind of pressure you are under at work...
- Or maybe it’s just you are dry spiritually. You’re not walking with the Lord as closely as you once were and if you’re honest, “blessing the Lord” right now feels hypocritical and fake...

? -What do you do in a time like this? Well, if you are a believer, David here gives us a good example. He starts coaching himself up...he starts talking to himself!

Now, all of us know what it is to coach ourselves up!

Illus. Asking Debbie to marry me – Just a few weeks ago, this past Nov. 2, Debbie and I celebrated 23 years of marriage. And I remember having to go over and ask her dad for his hand

of blessing in the marriage. I was so nervous. And what do you think I did? I coached myself up! (You got this!)

Heck, I do it before getting up here to preach! I coach myself up! “Let’s go, I got this...make sure nothing in my teeth...pants are zipped up...stay away from words you can’t pronounce! Let’s go!

We ALL coach ourselves up from time to time and that’s EXACTLY what David is doing here.

He is looking within...he KNOWS he SHOULD bless the Lord. He KNOWS the Lord is worthy of being blessed, and so he attempts to put “jumper cables” on his heart so to speak and starts coaching himself up to a place of worship...

And listen: this was a regular pattern for David – this wasn’t a one-time thing for him.

We see him doing this in: **Psalm 42:5 – “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.”**

We need to learn from David today! From time to time we’re NOT going to FEEL like blessing the Lord - might be outward circumstances causing us to feel this way...it might be a particular mood we are in at the moment...and we’re just not feeling it.

When that’s the case, do what David does and start talking to yourself. Coach yourself up.

D. Martin Lloyd Jones was Pastor of Westminster Chapel in London for 30 years. Listen to what he said about the value of coaching yourself up...talking to yourself!

D. Martin Lloyd Jones – “Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning. You have not originated them but they are talking to you, they bring back the problems of yesterday, etc. Somebody is talking. Who is talking to you? Your self is talking to you. Now this man’s treatment (David in Psalm 42 & 103 and in many other psalms) was this: instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself.”

And what does he say to his self? He says, “Bless the Lord – kneel before him...and in order to get the fire burning he begins to call to remembrance the blessings of the Lord in his life.

Let’s look at them...this is so good!

Psalm 103:2 – “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits...”

Alright, self...here we go! You may not be feeling it...let’s remember some blessings and see if it doesn’t get the juices flowing. And he starts counting his blessings! You remember that old hymn? We sang it EVERY year on thanksgiving weekend!

**“Count your blessings, name them one by one;
Count your blessings, see what God hath done;
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.”**

This is what David does...he coaches himself up and he starts counting his blessings! In this is his first call to remembrance:

1. Remember WHAT God Has Done

David begins looking at his life and he realizes that God has blessed him in tremendous ways...he calls these “benefits”. They are both personal and corporate in nature. We’ll look VERY briefly look at each of them.

Let’s take the personal “benefits” or blessings of the Lord first, and we find these in (v. 3-5).

Psalm 103:3-5 – “who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, ⁴who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, ⁵who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”

So, just look at the verbs in this passage of scripture and you will get an idea of the benefits. We’ll underline them and take them one at a time...we’re calling to remembrance what God has done!

Psalm 103:3a – “who forgives all your iniquity...”

That’s powerful! Can’t just glance over this...it’s the essence of salvation. Sins forgiven!

The word “iniquity” here...it’s translated in the NIV as simply the word, “sin”, but it’s way more than that! It actually refers to not just the sin that is committed, but the consequences of that sin!

Now, this doesn’t mean that the consequences of our sin just go away...we know this isn’t the case! Some could live with the consequences of sin their whole life- what the Bible is teaching here is with God you can be sure there is complete and total forgiveness and that he does NOT count our sin against us!

This is grace...some of you need to take this verse to heart...commit it to memory!

You need to be able to REMEMBER this when Satan, the “accuser of the brethren” comes against you trying to get you to remember all your past sins – THIS is what you listen to...THIS is what you remember – NOT your past sins, but the God because of Christ/in Christ has forgiven ALL your sin.

What a benefit to remember! Look at the next one!

Psalm 103:3 – “who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases...”

Now, I can't stay here long, but this “healing of all diseases” – we have to put some perimeters around this verse. We KNOW that God heals diseases. Any time you have a surgery or take medicine and get better, God is the one operating behind all those things. He CAN move supernaturally and bring physical healing to your life and DOES in SOME cases.

We know he doesn't do this in ALL cases because we have family members and friends that have died because they were not healed...so, what's going on here?

What does he mean he heals ALL or diseases?

Well, I've told you before that you can't build a theology off a single verse – it's why it's important that we have a holistic, systematic way of reading scripture – how does this verse fit within the whole of scripture?

Well, notice (v. 3) is a single verse! “Healing” is coupled with “forgiveness” – forgiveness of sin and healing of disease go hand in hand BECAUSE man's greatest disease is NOT in the physical realm, but in the spiritual.

When forgiveness occurs, we are healed of the greatest disease man has ever had – sin!

When you are saved...when you are forgiven...here's what's beautiful – you are healed of the worst disease ever passed down to mankind.

Physical healing is wonderful – and if God in his sovereignty (v. 19 – something that he is to be worshipped for...blessed for) chooses to physically heal you that's awesome – but physical healing is just a foretaste of a better healing that is possible through a personal relationship with Christ.

If you get physically healed on this side of eternity, but your sins aren't forgiven...you haven't been healed of ALL your diseases.

If you are saved, you WILL be healed of ALL your diseases – whether on this side of eternity or the next!

Somebody say, “BLESS THE LORD”! Look at this next “benefit” – again, personal blessings of the Lord David is calling us to remember!

**Psalm 103:3-4a – “who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,
4 who redeems your life from the pit...”**

The benefit of redemption! David remembers being saved from the “pit”. Some of your Bibles translate this word as “destruction” – it's a metaphor of the grave!

Of course, this looks ahead to the resurrection and the fact that every person who follows Jesus will have victory and be saved from the pit of destruction called the second death (i.e. hell), but

narrowly speaking David can look back and see where God literally, physically saved him from physical death!

- He saved David from the hand of Goliath...
- He saved David from the attacks of lions and bears...
- He saved David from the wrath of Saul...
- He saved David from being killed by Absalom...

David looks back and remembers the faithfulness of God in his life, and is telling himself, “Are you looking for a reason to bless the Lord?” Look at all the times he has saved you.”

What about you? You have these times? I have these times!

Illus. Times I’ve been saved – Swallowing aspirin as a child...sophomore year of high school driving truck off the road, Riley and I in a car wreck! (tell stories)

That’s God’s physical protection...and that’s just the times I’m aware of...I wonder when we get to heaven are we going to see the many times God’s ministering servants, his angels protected us physically in ways we weren’t even aware!

Listen, we’ve got reasons to worship today...to bless the Lord! Without the Lord, we were done, but God in Christ rescued us...he saved us...he REDEEMED us!

Eph. 1:7 – “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace...”

Look at the next benefit!

Psalm 103:3-4 – “who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy...”

God doesn’t just pull us out of the pit...he CROWNS us! He surrounds us and bestows on us his “steadfast love and mercy”. The is the great Hebrew word, “hesed” – it’s the covenant faithfulness of God!

Even when we are not faithful, he is. His steadfast love endures forever...it is continual...constant...and is as consistent as the rising and setting of the sun.

The final personal benefit is found in (v. 5).

Psalm 103:3-5 – “who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, ⁵ who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”

The eagle is a symbol of strength and endurance. The picture here is of an old man who doesn’t have much natural strength left. However, because of his relationship with God – while the outer man wastes away, the inward can be renewed day by day.

One of God's great gifts to his children is "satisfaction". And anyone who walks with God long enough knows that God is a good God...he's not holding out on his children. He satisfies us with "good".

This is a call to remembrance! Remember what God has done in your life – personally. In (v. 6-7) he moves to what I would call corporate benefits or blessings.

These are blessings not just bestowed on David personally, but on all of Israel – all God's people who are in a covenant relationship with him.

**Psalm 103:6-7 – “The LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.
7 He made known his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.”**

You know sometimes you can find yourselves in a spiritual coma of sorts. You know what I'm talking about? It's where you are distracted spiritually...stagnant in your walk with the Lord...you become apathetic and lethargic.

Illus. Food coma – it's not all unlike the food comas some of us will find ourselves in Thursday. We're going to eat until we can't eat anymore and we find ourselves tuned out of life! We become very lethargic because of the caloric intake!

Well, sometimes, we find ourselves in spiritual comas...and it helps to look like David at personal blessings...and if we can't get going off the personal blessings and benefits of the Lord, then we need to turn to corporate blessings...maybe that'll get you going!

This is what David is doing...he's calling to remembrance how God has moved in the life of the people he loves.

God worked righteousness and justice for his people...they were once enslaved and oppressed and he freed them! He made known his ways to Moses and showed up and showed off time and again to his people, Israel.

We can apply this text to us, Champion Forest. Bless the Lord...don't forget his benefits to you personally – if you are “in Christ” he has forgiven, healed, redeemed, crowned and satisfied you with good – but look here – if you are a member of this church – he has worked corporately in an AMAZING way!

We saw over 1,000 people baptized last year...nearly 100 more just TODAY! He has made known his ways to us! AND he is calling us to MORE in the future. He has been so, so good to us!

Bless his name...remember WHAT God has done, but then, David calls himself to:

2. Remember WHO God is

(v. 8-19) is all about the character and nature of God. This is WHO he is!

Psalm 103:8-10 – “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. ⁹ He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. ¹⁰ He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.”

These verses refer back to (Exodus 34:6-7) when God gives the stone tablets to Moses...he passes by him (like the floats at Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade) – God passes by Moses and describes himself – and THIS is the description. This is God saying THIS is who I am!

“I’m merciful and gracious. I’m slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness. I don’t treat you as your sins deserve!”

What a God - this is WHO he is! The Psalmist continues:

**Psalm 103:11-19 – “For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. (East and West NEVER meet!) ¹³ As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. ¹⁴ For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. (Notice the contrast between God and man – our nature verses his...he’s eternal – we are but dust! AND interesting observation here: for the most part we have been remembering, but now the text says, “God remembers”. And what does he remember? Our weakness...our frailty...no wonder he has such compassion on us!) ¹⁵ As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; ¹⁶ for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. ¹⁷ But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, ¹⁸ to those who keep his covenant and remember (there’s our word again) to do his commandments. ¹⁹ The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.”**

You could just go through this passage and just as we listed out the personal and corporate benefits he bestows on us, we could list out the nature and character of God. He IS:

- Merciful
- Gracious
- Slow to anger
- Abounding in steadfast love
- Forgiving
- Compassionate
- Sovereign

My goodness...Psalm 103 – no wonder it’s inspired more songs and hymns to be written than ANY other psalm! David calls for remembrance...and that remembrance demands a response!

**Psalm 103:20-22 – “Bless the LORD, O you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word! ²¹ Bless the LORD, all
his hosts, his ministers, who do his will! ²² Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his
dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul!”**

A call to remembrance! Remember WHAT God has done and WHO he is...and David knew when we remember these things, it would do something in us...it would prompt something in us...it demands a response.

And here’s what it does:

1. Remembering produces thanksgiving

You count your blessings, and you’ll be a thankful person. When you “remember” WHO God is and WHAT he has done – it’s a perspective changer.

It’d be a good practice to around the table this Thanksgiving and have each person share ONE thing God has done for them this year...watch what happens as you remember together!

2. Remembering fuels worship

“Bless the LORD O my soul...forget not all his benefits” – the call to remembrance is at its heart, a call to worship. Worship problems are memory problems.

Recall the story of the 10 lepers Jesus healed. Only one came back to say “thank you” and bow in worship. He had a good memory! And listen: if your memory is failing you, do what David did and start coaching yourself up!

3. Remembering strengthens faith

When I remember WHO God is and WHAT he has done, I’m strengthened in my faith. I’m encouraged. I know that what he’s done in the past, he can do again. I know that his character and nature doesn’t change.

Let’s always...especially this week be a people that remember! And as we do, we’ll be thankful, we’ll worship and we’ll be strengthened in our faith.

Let’s pray.

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.