

## OUR FATHER...

*Psalm 103*

June 18, 2023

**INTRO.:** Happy Father's Day! As we gather this morning, I realize that this day means different things for different people. Some here have or had a wonderful father who taught you so much about life. There was no doubt that he loves you and you love and respect him. Others find this day difficult because of a strained relationship or no relationship with your father. To have someone talk about God as their heavenly Father is a struggle. As I was thinking, reading, and praying about this message I was drawn to Psalm 103 as a description of God's character and why we can, should, and must praise Him. As I think about this day I ask this question, "What is the best thing I can do for my wife, children, and grandchildren?" I believe it is to have a growing relationship with God, getting to know Him better and by the power of the Holy Spirit, living in obedience to God's Word. I am convinced that this morning, I need to talk about who God is and how that changes how you and I live, making a difference in all our relationships. As we read Psalm 103 together, I want you to be thinking about what this tells you about God and what difference that makes.

**Psalm 103** Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits— who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children— with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts. The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. Praise the LORD, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the LORD, O my soul.

J.I. Packer, in his book, *Knowing God*, says this: "What makes life worthwhile is having a big enough objective, something that catches our imagination and lays hold of our allegiance; and this the Christian has in a way that no other person has. For what higher, more exalted, and more compelling goal can there be than to know God?"

I hope that we walk away this morning with a deeper, fuller, and life-changing knowledge of who God is and who we are in relationship to Him. What do we see about God in the Psalm we just read? We, of course, could spend eternity talking about the greatness and limitlessness of Almighty God, but I am going to look at 5 characteristics. We are called to praise God and forget not all His benefits. As we share this morning, this is a call to worship and obedience as well. Any study of theology should have as its goal, not information alone, but transformation. So, we see in this Psalm, He is forgiving, He is compassionate, He is merciful, He is loving, and He is sovereign.

### **HE IS FORGIVING**

Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits— who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases

How many of our sins does God forgive?

*"who forgives all your sins:" (v. 3a)* He forgives all our sins. When we look back at the garden of Eden, we see that sin caused a separation from God. All the Old Testament points to the only solution for this separation; the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm going to talk about that some more in a few minutes. I want to take some time looking at the next phrase which is misunderstood by many.

*"who heals all your diseases:" (v. 3b)* some take this to mean that if you truly believe God will heal you of any sickness, illness, or disease you may have. If this were true nobody would die and we know one of the consequences of sin, from the Garden of Eden, is death. It is true that Jesus is the Great Physician, and God is the ultimate healer which is why we go to Him in prayer. What is our most tragic disease? It is the disease of sin for which God provides the only healing.

David tells us next how helpless we are in getting out of the consequences of sin, how hopeless we are in using our own efforts to restore the relationship with God.

*“who redeems your life from the pit:” (v. 4a)* this is a pit that you and I cannot possibly escape in our own efforts. Nobody here can earn God’s forgiveness and David isn’t saying that God will just turn His head and grant forgiveness to everyone. He is not speaking of universalism, that everyone is automatically a child of God. Every person born in sin and is a sinner, and as such, is in need of God’s redemption.

Everyone likes John 3:16 but the next two verses go with it as well.

**John 3:16–18** “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. **18** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.

**Romans 5:8** But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

**Romans 8:1** Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

**Hebrews 9:22** In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Without God’s forgiveness we are hopelessly lost! We could stop right here and spend the remainder of our time in worship for God’s forgiveness and redemption. Have you personally experienced His forgiveness? I may have told all of you that we have a new granddaughter, and she is absolutely beautiful, as are all of our grandchildren. If you don’t believe me I can show you some pictures. It’s where Brenda has been since the middle of the week: being mimmy to Emberly Rebecca. As far as salvation and forgiveness of sins, God does not have any grandchildren, only children. Each person needs to come to a personal relationship with God through Christ to have forgiveness of sins. Where are you when it comes to this?

Look at the extent of God’s forgiveness later on in this Psalm.

*“as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”*

I also firmly believe that we can only truly forgive others when we have experienced God’s forgiveness. This is a relationship changer for if God has forgiven me of all my sins (including those I have yet to commit), how can I hold something against someone else? After sinning, have you ever told God, in confessing that sin, that you’ll never do it again? And then you do it?!! Does God still forgive?

**Ephesians 4:32** Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

### **HE IS COMPASSIONATE**

*“who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion”*

There is no place in our lives where God’s compassion doesn’t show itself.

Daniel Estes: “To be crowned implies great honor and status, and the Lord’s faithful love and compassion have become the psalmist’s crowning glory in life.”

As God passed in front of Moses:

**Exodus 34:6** And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,

How deep is God’s compassion? David illustrates it by comparing it to a father’s compassion on his children.

**Psalm 103:13-14** As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.

God knows our every weakness and He knows the brevity of our lives for He created us. That compassion is given to those who know Him and here, it says, those who fear Him. That is, those who recognize Him as God and revere that name. This fear results in a changed life. In His compassion, God also disciplines His children when they wander from Him.

**Hebrews 12:5–6** And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, **6** because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.”

Not only are we dust but our life here on earth is brief compared to eternity.

**Psalms 103:15-16** As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.

During this brief life, we are reminded over and over again of God’s great compassion toward us in all our frailty and weakness. This is not our home and God is preparing His children for their future home with Him.

**Nehemiah 9:17** They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them,

**Psalms 86:15** But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

**Psalms 103:8** The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.

**Psalms 145:8** The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.

**Joel 2:13** Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

**Jonah 4:2** He prayed to the LORD, “O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.

### **HE IS MERCIFUL**

Mercy is not getting what we deserve. Are you grateful for God’s mercy? Most people like to say that it is most important that God be fair. We want that in any athletic event in which we or our children compete. As I’m watching that Mets baseball game, which I don’t do very much for obvious reasons, I want that umpire to call balls and strikes the same way for both teams. It’s only fair!! Yet, is that what is best when it comes to our relationship with God? Fairness implies that we get what we deserve.

Look at what David says:

**Psalms 103:9-10** He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

What does God want from His children?

**Micah 6:8** He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

You and I can love and display mercy when we come to know the One who is truly merciful. How many here are thankful that God doesn’t give us what we deserve? Could we spend hours thanking God for His mercy?

Look at what the Apostle Paul has to say about God’s mercy.

**Ephesians 2:3–5** All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. **4** But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **5** made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

The Apostle Peter also speaks of this mercy:

**1 Peter 1:3–4** Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you,

### **HE IS LOVING**

God is the very definition of love!

**Psalms 103:11** For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him

How high are the heavens above the earth? God’s love is immeasurable. This word for love in the Hebrew is “hesed” and refers to His faithful, covenant keeping love. David reminds us that God’s love demands a response from us.

**Psalm 103:17-18** But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children— **18** with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.

The phrase *everlasting to everlasting* emphasizes the eternal nature of God and His love. Many times, in the Old Testament God's promises or covenants with His people demanded a response of obedience on their part. A person who truly comes into relationship with God who loves them infinitely will desire to obey Him. Please understand, we cannot obey Him without His power and strength given through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Obedience does not come naturally!!

We also need to remember that you and I cannot love others the way God wants us to without Him! Love is the mark of a follower of Christ because that is who God is.

**1 John 4:7-8** Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

The first four qualities of God which we have looked at can be seen in some measure through those who have a personal relationship with Him. Certainly, none of us display them to the depth and perfection which God does, but we can and should be a reflection of Him to others. Everyone needs God's forgiveness, compassion, mercy and love. Every one of us who knows Him is called to display these qualities to those around us in increasing measure. That would start in the home, for, who you and I are in the home, is who we truly are! How are you doing? The last quality we will look at:

### **HE IS SOVEREIGN**

**Psalm 103:19-20** The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word.

God has always and will always rule over all. This includes here on earth and in the heavenly realm. You and I can see God in all of creation. I mentioned several weeks ago that Brenda and I have been reading through the book, *Have You Considered, Evidence Beyond a Reasonable Doubt*. In it the authors share how we can see God's hand in so many ways, including creation. One of the devotions this past week had to do with a spider web.

Have you ever thought about a spider web saving a bird? Every year, many birds are killed when they fly into window glass. Either they can't see the glass or they see the reflection of nearby objects. Spider that spin orb webs (spiral wheel-shaped webs) use silk that reflects ultraviolet light. We can't see UV light but many birds and insects can. This serves 2 purposes: 1) attracts insects like a neon sign 2) it warns birds not to fly into it (the spider doesn't want to rebuild the web)

The Arnold Glass Corporation has copied this UV reflecting property by coating their glass with criss-crossing UV reflecting strips. This coating is invisible to humans but not to birds. Birds make every effort to avoid this UV treated glass.

**Romans 1:18-20** The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, **19** since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. **20** For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. Praise the LORD, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the LORD, O my soul. (v. 21-22)

David reminds his readers that God is sovereign over all! This should give us great comfort for nothing will come into our lives without God's control. This doesn't mean that you and I will understand everything, but we can trust that that God will work circumstances for our good and His glory. Some of you are going through some incredibly difficult things. Can I plead with you to turn to God?

**Romans 8:28-29** And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. **29** For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

We only have a snapshot of life, but God has the eternal perspective! Paul says that God works all things together for good. Notice he doesn't say that all things are good. God is not the author of sin. He will use even the most difficult and tragic things in our lives to make us more like Jesus. Are you grateful that God is sovereign? There have been many

circumstances in my life where I have had to rely on the sovereignty of God and trust that He knew what He was doing in my life. Sometimes we need to remember, “There is a God and we’re not Him.”

### **SO WHAT???**

**Jeremiah 9:23–24** This is what the LORD says: “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, **24** but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the LORD.

As I think of Father’s Day this is what comes to mind. We need men who know God and live like it! Maybe you don’t have any children or maybe you’re not married yet, we still need men who know God and live like it! You’re not too young to get to know God. Look around and see where you can make an impact.

\*Am I pursuing God with everything I have?

\*In what ways is my growing knowledge of God affecting how I live?

\*In what ways am I investing in others? This involves TIME!!! (first at home, then the church, and the community)

We need men to go into the North Central Secure Treatment Unit. One of the top reasons for juvenile incarceration is lack of a father figure. See Jim Cunfer or Larue Brion if you are interested in this ministry.

\*Who am I telling about this great and awesome God who is continually changing my life?

J.I. Packer says those who know God:

- Have great energy for God
- Have great thoughts of God
- Show great boldness for God
- Have great contentment in God