

Book	Psalms – Study 3
Topic	Praying the Gospel
Reference	Psalms 103
Date	10 October 2018
Speaker	Dr. Peter Ng

We will actually see the gospel itself in this psalm, but we approach it in a different way. We approach it in a way that we are trying to take bits of it and basically savour it, so it actually changes the way we feel.

STRUCTURE OF THE PSALM

- A. We are to bless the Lord by remembering His mercies v 1-5
- B. We are to bless the Lord by remembering his covenantal love v 6-18
- C. We are to bless the Lord with all of creation v 19-22

A. WE ARE TO BLESS THE LORD BY REMEMBERING HIS MERCIES (V 1-5)

Psalms 103:1-5 (ESV) Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, 3 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.

So, the first thing that this psalm starts off, it is a psalm of blessing. So, what do you understand by blessing? The only way you understand blessing God and the difference between that is blessing yourself. When God blesses you, it gives you joy and fulfillment. If God blesses you then we understand because he is much greater than us. God is okay, he can bless us because he is everything and we are nothing.

How do we bless God? What do you have that he needs?

There is an idea called aseity of God. It means God doesn't need anything. God is sufficient in and of himself. To say God needs anything, would therefore diminish his sovereignty. If God goes into depression if you don't pray today, then it is a very needy God. God also could be leverage into doing certain things. Now that's a common idea that God needs your prayers, God needs your praises, but if you are dealing with an Almighty Sovereign God who needs nothing from you then you have got a big problem. How do you actually bless that sort of being, who actually has everything?

Blessing God has three steps:

- We need to identify the things that He most desires and glorifies Him. There is a difference between desire and need. There are a lot of things that you have that you need but there are other things that you desire that doesn't diminish you.
- We need to long for His joy and glory, which means if we are looking at God, we want to look at God in such a way that what does it that makes him happy, what is it that he desires, what puts a smile on his face as it were.
- To give Him these things that accord with His joy and glory. Many of us has received hand drawn birthday cards from our kids, which are horrible, but we treasure them. When we worship God, it is all like that horrible drawing.

God blesses *us* by bringing us joy and deep fulfilment. We bless God by giving him, enjoying him and rejoicing in him. So basically, God is actually blessed when we find joy, when we enjoy god for who He is, because God is our creator. We are created enjoy our creator, to give him glory as it were. How his heart is tied to our poetry efforts, is actually a mystery. We don't understand. A God who is totally fulfilled with himself and yet gets a kickout of you worshipping Him is an absolute mystery. That is something that we cannot explain.

'Bless the Lord' means you forgot not his benefits. His benefits are forgiveness of sins, redemption of life, satisfaction with good things so that our youth is renewed like the eagle. When you give a present to someone, the value of the gift reflects us, the strength of your friendship, dedication of your love. When we actually worship God, you cannot play around with the price tag. When we play around with the price tag, which means I am the subject of the worship.

The whole problem with our worship is that it cannot revolve around us:

- My degree of contrition
- My degree of earnestness
- My taste in music
- My attention to sermon
- How I feel after the service...feel good not guilty or bad
- My satisfaction

If all those things are important to you, which means you become the subject of the worship. Now when we actually give a gift to God, worship is defined by what he deserves. So, if you actually worship him, these are the limits of our experience, I worship God because he made me handsome or beautiful, he made me tall, he made me live in USJ5, best suburb in the whole KL, but that's the limits of your horizon. That's all you can worship God for. All of us has differing limits and if our worship is based on what we feel and what we circumscribe then we become very limited and God really doesn't get what he deserves. Our worship should be based on what He is, because the real God is much bigger than our combined experiences

and our horizons. So, when you actually give the gift, the gift is about him, not about you. Because if it is about you, it is works righteousness.

When we are blessing God, we are blessing God for all the things that He has given us, because all the things that you actually have, actually worth nothing. So therefore, when you look at the things that he has given us, this is Hebrew Parallelism, the first line and the second line mean the same thing.

Why do we bless God?

We bless God to give Him things that make Him happy, things that make him happy is not the Terminator movie ticket, it is actually what he has done. So, you thank God who forgives all your sin and who heals you of all your diseases. The diseases in the psalm doesn't make it physical disease. The parallelism talks about sin and diseases, so therefore the diseases must mean sin. It is the same thing. So, it is disease of sin as it were. So therefore, you can't take this verse and say that it is a guarantee healing. So you thank God for his deliverance of your sin, of which disease may be a manifestation of it but it is talking about deliverance from sin.

*who redeems your life from the pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy*

Redeems your life from pit means salvation. The pit is hell. So, there is resurrection and there is a future. God's love and mercy will bring you to be with him in heaven. When you are in Heaven in Revelation 22, there is no sun because God will be there, and He will provide the light of which will be your fellowship and your satisfaction.

*5 who satisfies you with good,
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

This good will be physical as well as spiritual. He forgave your sin, he justified you, you are now the son of God. It doesn't mean that you are going to fly like an eagle, it is pictorial language. It is like when you get something good, you get excited and you are jumping up and down as it were. So, your spirits are lifted up, soaring as it were like an eagle. So, this is how you actually meditate on this as you are actually blessing the Lord for all the things that he has given you as it were. It is more than mental recall. The word there says, bless the Lord, forget not. Forget not means, it is a negative way of saying remember. So, memory is more than mental recall. We celebrate Merdeka on 31st August and the next day we wallop each other and do all sorts of things and say all sorts of other things. True remembrance changes the way you feel, and you live.

Why do we experience fear?

*Isaiah 51:12-13 (ESV) I, I am he who comforts you; who are you that you **are afraid of man** who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass, **13 and have forgotten the Lord, your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, and you fear continually all the day of the wrath of the oppressor, when he sets himself to destroy? And where is the wrath of the oppressor?***

We are sad, we are anxious, we are afraid simply because we have forgotten. So, when you bless the Lord, what happens is that you recall, not only recall you actually meditate on those memories and what happens is that your fear goes away. So, meditation is the way to work through your fears. So, if you got fearful, I am in a bad situation, you got something that you fear from man and then you remember His mercies and you find the reason why you fear, behind every emotion there is a forgetting of God. That's the problem. So therefore, when we actually take the psalms and we take Psalm 103 we start to remember again and again and as we remember it ministers to our heart. That's how you use the psalms.

Why aren't we growing spiritually?

*2 Peter 1:5-9 (ESV) For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, **6** and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, **7** and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. **8** For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** For whoever lacks these qualities is **so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.***

So, if you are not virtuous with knowledge and knowledge with self-control, self-control with steadiness, steadiness with godliness, godliness with brotherly affection. If you are anything less than that, you have forgotten, nearsighted, blind, having forgotten he has cleansed from his former sin. So, a lot of our problems with growing is because we keep forgetting. So therefore, the psalm encourages us to remember. Remembering is actually more than mental recall, it is actually controlling consciousness, having something so central to your consciousness that it controls how you act. That means memory is something that's right inside you that you keep ruminating, bringing it up that it actually controls your actions, changes the way you feel and act. Memories stay with you. One bad memory will stay with you forever, all the good that people do you will always forget that's a fact.

The thing that heals your heart is basically bringing God's memory.

*Deuteronomy 8:11-14 (ESV) 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, **12** lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, **13** and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is*

multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, 14 then 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

Why do we forget?

We forget because we become too rich. It is a fact, if you are doing well you will forget God. When you are suffering, you don't forget God, you cling onto God. That's the another main problem in life.

Deuteronomy 8:17-18 (ESV) Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' 18 You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day

This is a pernicious thing, you don't worship God when you are having it well in your life. Whenever you suffer that's when you cling to God and that's why sometimes God allows these things to come into your life, not because he hates you, because he has to re-orientate you, so that you will not forget who He is. Joshua put the 12 stones when they crossed the River Jordan. They were the memorials to mark what God has done for his life.

Bless the lord, O My soul

My soul refers to the inner being of David. David is preaching to his own heart. So, when you are sad, when you are down, we get down there with the word of God and we actually start to preach to ourselves.

It is like a psychiatrist sitting with a patient. We sit down and that's the word of God and that's your heart and then you take out your heart and you tell all the feelings, your frustrations, your hurts, your doubts, everything you lay all out and when you lay it all out then you take God's word, all his promises, the truth of who you are, what he has done, what he has planned, all the glory he has for you, you take those two things out and you actually verbalize it in the presence of God. That's what meditation is. You work out on your side all the problems that you have, all the feelings that you have, you tell God life sucks and I feel really pissed off with God and you are allowed to tell God that. Then why am I pissed off because of this idol of mine which was threatened.

When you struggle in the presence of God, your life starts to change. A lot of times in the church we will teach you the doctrine then you go home, and you work it out in the presence of word of God and in the presence of God in prayer then things will start to change. We can apply love to change our selves. Love is like the fire that changes us.

B. WE ARE TO BLESS THE LORD BY REMEMBERING HIS COVENANTAL LOVE

The nature of God is God's justice and God's mercy.

Psalms 103:6-7 (ESV) 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.

The thing that is precious about God is actually His justice, we need it and we need to rejoice in it.

Exodus 34:6-7 (ESV) The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, **7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty**, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

So, you actually have a picture of a God who is absolutely righteous and not a single sin he is going to let go. You cannot live in an unjust world. So, justice is beautiful.

Definition of justice: Justice as the 'maintenance of legal, social, or moral principles by the exercise of authority or power'.

Justice in the world's eyes is actually conflict. Here it says, *"Justice is not an object to have, but a difficult journey to undertake."*

Plato says, justice is not object to have but a difficult journey to undertake, which means justice in human society is a difficult thing, it is actually a journey. James Madison says,

"Ambition must be made to counteract ambition."

So, justice consists of a balancing act among contrary powers that are more or less equal in strength.

Alexander Hamilton says,

'needs economic diversity and a variety of competing interests, parties and religions in order to achieve this justice

That means justice is difficult. As far as society is concerned, justice comes through conflict. Justice is quite elusive. In this world, justice has become the one with the bigger stick. God works righteousness and justice for all. Our dilemma is that one day justice might reach us. So therefore, we actually want to look at the mercy of

God. You have got on one hand, justice and on the other hand we have got the mercy of God and here is how he describes it very beautiful.

Psalms 103:8-10 (ESV) 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.

Infinite dimension

Psalms 103:11-12 (ESV) 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.

That means his love and his forgiveness is actually an infinite dimension. Not only that

Tenderness of a Father

Psalms 103:13 (ESV) As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.

So on one hand is forgiveness and infinite, on the other hand he treats us like his children. There is a tenderness in God

Creator who knows our frailty

Psalms 103:14-16 (ESV) For he knows our frame he remembers that we are dust. 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.

He loves us, he has mercy to us just like a creator who knows we are made of but dust. So here we have the mercy of God which David brings up, but then we have a conflict.

David says

He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities

Moses says,

but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

There are two sides and you have got a conflict between David and a conflict between Moses. How do you resolve this conflict?

This is how you resolve it.

Psalms 103:17-18 (ESV) 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 to do his commandments.

So therefore, we actually have the covenant. The covenant with Israel. The covenant of God is never broken. You may sin, you may break the covenant, but God never breaks his covenant. So therefore, God doesn't treat you according to what your sins deserve. It is the covenant that keeps you, that's how you resolve the problem between God's mercy and God's justice. Covenant relies on completely righteous and just God, because if you break the promise you get judgment, if you keep the promise you get reward. If God is a kind of God who is not righteous and close one eye, you are finished. The righteousness of God is although a beautiful thing and is also a frightening thing.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 (ESV) 26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I **will put my Spirit within you**, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

What about our past sins? How does he remove our transgressions if he is totally just?

Isaiah 53:6 (ESV) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

That's the only way that justice of God and the mercy of God can coalesce and make sense. That's the only way this psalm can be written. God actually punished Jesus and forgot him.

Matthew 27:45-46 (ESV) ow from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

God forsakes his son because that is the forsaking that we would have actually deserved. So, we've got the gospel, is a perfect mend of God's justice and God's mercy.

How should we apply this when you actually read it and it brings comfort?

We apply it by looking at the new Covenant where God put his Holy spirit in us. On one side, our true state, what we deserve, on one side what we got his mercies and the psalm lays it out for you. On one side, we look at our sins, it is forgiven. On the

other hand, we look at our diseases, we are healed. On the other hand, we look at our eternal hell, we are redeemed from the pit. On the other hand, we look at our evil nature and God gives grace, forgiveness, compassion, loyalty and understanding. On the other hand, we look at our transient life, we are like grass and God gives us eternal love and righteousness that will keep us alive. Now only when you actually take both sides of this thing and you actually meditate on it will it transform you.

All of us like to take one side. If you just take one side, then you actually miss an entire dimension. So, when you actually come to psalms, psalms will teach you how to take this side. Half the psalms are all taking this side and it teach you to lament. The lament your sin. Only when you lament your sin, as your heart realizes the truth state of what we really deserve then only his mercies become brighter and brighter and brighter. So that's what the psalms do. Lament psalms will help you bring the needle this way, worship psalms will bring it the other way, but together, they give you the full experience and emotion of worshipping God.

Our problem is that we can't admit the past, we can't let go the past and neither can we admit the past, so we have to deal with it. So therefore, the gospel helps us deal with it. If you look at Corinthians

2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV) ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Only the righteousness of God can heal us of the past and let us deal and face the past, because we are depending on His righteousness and not on our own. Not only that it will also help us with our present, because He has forgiven us, and we can reconcile and also forgive.

Mark 11:25 (ESV) And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."

As God has forgiven you, you can forgive others. The key to reconciliation and forgiveness is actually given to you by God because God forgives you and you can forgive others. So, you are released from the past, you are delivered from the present and you are empowered for the future. How? If you look at the future

Psalms 103:4-5 (ESV) 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 word crown is very-very significant. He crowns you and this makes a whole lot of difference. From a nobody you become heirs of the kingdom of God. What is our crown? If you look at our crown, the crown is with the steadfast love and mercy. For steadfast love the Hebrew word means it is a love that cannot let you go. That's

your crown. That means you walk around with a crown and the crown is God's covenantal love. That God's love that will never ever let you go. That's the crown.

The trouble in our life is that, we always fighting and rushing for other sorts of crown, made of diamond and gold and all that. The crown that can last is the one that can last through all eternity and when you actually realize that, then your youth will be renewed like an eagle. Paul confirms this,

Romans 8:30 (ESV) And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

The glorify is past tense. Why? Because even though glorification hasn't occurred, Paul describes it as if it has. It is a prophetic future but actually said in the past tense. It is yours. The crown that Jesus puts on your head cannot be taken away.

Romans 8:14-15 (ESV) For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

So, we walk around with the crown of God's loving mercy, we walk around like sons.

C. WE ARE TO BLESS THE LORD WITH ALL OF CREATION

At the end of the psalm, psalmist was taking about God's benefits, God's grace and the wonderful covenant he has given you, last bit is like the quiet ends with big crescendo. It says, the Lord

Psalms 103:19-22 (ESV) The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all. ²⁰ 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!

It is like a choir; every bit of creation will bless God and we are part of that creation. If you look at the creation of God, you see the beauty. That is how beautiful God is. Every single one of us, whether it is a moon flower or a flower that just comes for one day, every single one of us is created by God. Some of us may be like a one-day flower, don't live very long, some of you will live very long. Some of you will shine in moonlight, some of you will shine in sunlight, some of you will shine in adverse circumstances, some of you will only shine in good circumstances. Every single person in this world is absolutely unique and what you have to do is to shine and glorify God. That's what you are created to do, because if you don't do anything beside that you will be unhappy because you are not created for anything else other than to bless the Lord O my soul.