

Who is God?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 September 2024

Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, the book of Psalms, Psalm 103, page 502 in the Church Bible.

Book of Psalms, Psalm 103. And we'll read again from the beginning. A Psalm of David. 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. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

Today we are reading and we are reflecting upon this Psalm, Psalm 103. Because over the past couple of weeks, this Psalm, it's been on my mind and in my heart.

And so I wanted us to think about it this morning and also this evening. I was first brought to think about the Psalm when going through our daily reading, Prayer, Praise, and Promises.

[1 : 16] Prayer, Praise, and Promises is the daily reading book by Warren Weersbe that I would highly recommend to you, not only because it's good to be in the habit of reading the Bible, but it's also good to be in the habit of reading through the Psalms.

Because the beautiful thing about the Psalms is that they're personal, they're powerful, and they're also very precious. The Psalms are very precious. In fact, the 16th century French reformer John Calvin, he famously described the book of Psalms as an anatomy of all parts of the soul.

An anatomy of all parts of the soul. And that's because the Psalms are, in many ways, they're songs for the soul. The Psalms are soul music because they speak to the soul.

And the Psalms, as you know, they often relate to the personal circumstances and situations that we all encounter and we all experience in our lives. That's why we were reading and singing this Psalm on Monday night with the MacDonald family at the wake of the late Myrtle Wasp.

Because Psalm 103, it relates to the personal circumstances and situations that we encounter and experience in our lives. And Psalm 103, as we said, it's a soul song.

[2 : 33] Because it's a song that's also so real and so relevant to us. And that's certainly true about this Psalm. Because Psalm 103, it's a song of thanksgiving.

It's a song of thanksgiving in which David, the psalmist, the songwriter, the singer, you could say, he praises the Lord and blesses the name of the Lord for all of his gracious benefits.

But the theme and thrust of this Psalm is that throughout Psalm 103, David is asking two questions. He's asking two questions. Who is God and who are we?

Who is God and who are we? And David, he helpfully splits this song of thanksgiving into two sections in order to ask and answer his two questions.

Because in verses 1 to 11, David is asking and answering the question, who is God? And then in verses 12 to 22, David is asking and answering the question, who are we?

[3 : 32] So who is God? Who are we? And in Psalm 103, David explains that God is gracious. And then he says, David is dust. God is gracious.

David is dust. And so I want us to read and I want us to reflect upon Psalm 103 today by looking at it both this morning and this evening.

This morning, we're looking at verses 1 to 11 and asking and answering David's question, who is God? Then this evening, God willing, we're looking at verses 12 to 22 and asking and answering David's second question, who are we?

Who is God? Who are we? And you know, I want to encourage you. I want to encourage you to come for part two this evening, especially if you're not in the habit of coming to church at night.

Because it's good to get into that habit. It's a habit. Coming to church is a habit. It's a good habit to have. It's something we should be doing. So don't stay away.

[4 : 34] Don't sit at home. Don't just watch online. No, make an effort to come. Make a conscious effort to come to church at night.

Because, and I say it to people so often, if you genuinely want to be saved, then you'll come to church more often. If you genuinely want to grow as a Christian, then you'll come to church more often.

And so this morning, from verses 1 to 11, David is asking and answering the question, who is God? Who is God? And in these verses 1 to 11, David sets before us a declaration about God, a description of God, and a demonstration from God.

He sets before us a declaration about God, a description of God, and a demonstration from God. So first of all, a declaration, a declaration about God.

He says there in verse 1, bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. The question, who is God?

[5 : 44] This question that David is asking and answering in verses 1 to 11, this question, as you know, it's been asked since the beginning of time, and it's still being asked today. Sadly, many who ask this question, they don't actually wait for the answer, but they come up with their own conclusion as to who God is, or who is God.

Because, well, the atheist will say, well, he doesn't exist. The agnostic says, well, we can't be sure if he exists. The philosopher says, well, there's something and not nothing.

The Muslim will say he's Allah. The Jew will say he is Yahweh. The Hindu will say he's one of 33 million other gods. And the Buddhist will say, well, you don't really need God as long as you get that enlightenment you're looking for.

And with all these thoughts and theories which claim that we can't fully know God or satisfy God or even have a relationship with this God, the Christian will always tell you, yes, you can.

Yes, you can. Because, my friend, when we open our Bible, which, as you know, is God's inspired, infallible, and inerrant, breathed-out word, we discover that the God of the Bible, he makes himself known.

[6 : 59] And he wants to be known. And he wants you to know him. He wants you to know him. That's why he has revealed himself to all people everywhere, all over the world.

Because the whole of creation, the whole of creation reveals who our creator is. David sang about that in Psalm 19, that the heavens, they declare the glory of God.

The skies proclaim his handiwork. So God has revealed himself to us as our creator. But David also sang in Psalm 139, that the God of the Bible, he has revealed himself as one who knows everything about us.

He's omnipotent, says David. So he's all-powerful. He's omniscient. He's all-knowing. He's omnipresent. He's in all places and at all times. And he's omnibenevolent.

He's all of grace. That's who the God of the Bible is. He's omnibenevolent. He's all of grace. So he's omnipotent. He's omniscient. He's omnipresent. And he's omnibenevolent.

[8 : 05] He's all of grace. This is who the God of the Bible is. He has revealed himself to us. He's made himself known so that we know him. Because he wants us to know him.

He's revealed himself to us in a sovereign way through the creation. He's revealed himself to us in a special way through his word. But you know what's even more amazing?

He has revealed himself to us in a specific way through the person of Jesus Christ. You want to see what God looks like.

Jesus says, if you have seen me, you have seen the Father. And you know, my friend, I can't stress that to you enough. That if you want to know who God is, read your Bible.

Read your Bible. If you want to become a Christian, then read your Bible. If you want to grow as a Christian, then read your Bible. And you know, it sounds so simple.

[9 : 02] Myrtle, that sounds so simple. Because it is simple. We make it complicated. We put up the barriers and surround ourselves with all these walls.

And the sad reality is we fill our lives with so many distractions and so many disruptions that keep us from our Bible. That's why A.W. Tozer said, and it was in this week's notices, Whatever keeps me from my Bible is my enemy, however harmless it may appear to be.

Whatever keeps me from my Bible is my enemy, however harmless it may appear to be. But you know, what we see in Psalm 103 is that when David read his Bible, which was the law, And when he reflected upon who God is, his response was a declaration of praise and thanksgiving.

So when David reads his Bible and reflects upon who God is, his response is praise and thanksgiving. He says, Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me. Bless His holy name. And as you can see, David's song of praise and thanksgiving for who God is. This psalm, it's not only split neatly and separated into two parts.

[10:24] It's also beautifully bookended in verse 1 and then down in verse 22. Where there's this declaration. Verse 1, David says, Bless the Lord, O my soul.

Then right at the end, verse 22, Bless the Lord, O my soul. And with that, David is showing us that when he reads his Bible, when he reflects upon who God is, His response is a declaration of praise and thanksgiving about his God.

Where David worships God, not just with his head or with his heart or even his hands. No, David worships with his whole being. He wants to worship his God with his whole being, his soul.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me. Bless His holy name. So that's what David's like when he reads his Bible and reflects upon what he's reading.

But you know, my friend, when you read your Bible, even as you read your Bible this morning, and as you reflect upon who God is, what's your response?

[11:36] What's your response? Because, you know, I suppose I can ask this question. I've been here long enough. Why are you here this morning? Why are you here this morning?

Is it out of the regular routine? Is it to calm your conscience? The conscience that sometimes bothers you? Is it to tick the box or satisfy the spouse?

Why are you here this morning? Or are you here because, well, like David, you want to worship God with your whole being. You want to bless the Lord with your soul.

You want to echo what David is saying here and say, bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me. Bless His holy name. Why are you here this morning?

And so as David asks and answers the question, who is God? He sets before us a declaration about God. Then secondly, he gives us a description of God.

[12:38] A description of God. Look again at verse one. He says, 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 eagles.

A favorite hymn that was sung at camp this summer was Matt Redmond's rendition of this psalm, Psalm 103.

And as many of our young people will know, it's called 10,000 Reasons. 10,000 Reasons. Maybe you've heard it, maybe you've sung it before, but they often sang it at camp.

And throughout the hymn, David's declaration is repeated because Matt Redmond, he repeats the phrase, bless the Lord, O my soul. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

And like David here in Psalm 103, the hymn describes God with the lyrics. It says, you're rich in love, you're slow to anger, your name is great, and your heart is kind.

[13:51] For all your goodness, I will keep on singing. 10,000 Reasons for my Heart to Find. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

And of course, the point and the purpose of the hymn is that like David, when we read our Bible, when we reflect upon who God is, we actually have 10,000 reasons and more to respond in praise and thanksgiving to God.

We have 10,000 reasons and more to echo with David, bless the Lord, O my soul. And that's why David sings in verse 2, he says, bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

Forget not all his benefits. And of course, David says this because, well, far too often, we forget all his benefits. Far too often, we forget all the blessings that we receive.

Far too often, we just take them. For granted. But you know the word bless, and I've mentioned it many times before. It's a brilliant and it's a beautiful word.

[15:02] It's a word that pictures and portrays to us this great image. And I think it's an image we should have in our mind as we come to this psalm. It's the image of a king standing up from his throne.

And of course, the king is King Jesus. But before the king is his subject, his servant, who has adopted the position and posture of kneeling in submission and surrender to the king.

And so, kneeling before King Jesus, who's the king of kings, the lord of lords, the god of gods, the one who's sovereign in creation and supreme in our salvation, as King Jesus stands up before his throne, unworthy sinners are to kneel in submission and surrender to him.

But as we kneel, this is what the word means, as we kneel, we're to do so with our head bowed and our hand outstretched. And our hand is to be empty. Our head is to be bowed and our hand is to be outstretched.

And our hand is to be outstretched in order to receive from the hand of King Jesus what we do not deserve. Our hand is to be outstretched in order to receive from the hand of King Jesus what we do not deserve.

[16:13] And yet King Jesus, he graciously, lovingly and mercifully gives to us what we do not deserve. He blesses us. That's what the word bless means. He gives to us what we do not deserve because blessing only comes from the hand of King Jesus.

Blessing only comes from the hand of King Jesus. But as you can see here, the beginning of Psalm 103, David says, or David blesses the Lord.

He blesses the Lord. He says, Bless the Lord, O my soul, all that is within me. Bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. David blesses God.

But David blesses God not because he thinks he's king and he has this ability to give to God something that he doesn't deserve. No, David blesses God because he's acknowledging.

He's appreciating. He is adoring who God is. David blesses God in acknowledgement, appreciation, and adoration of who God is because David knows that it's God alone.

[17:23] It is God alone who has graciously, lovingly, and mercifully given to him what he doesn't deserve. God alone.

But you know, in our 21st century context and culture, as you know, it wants to ditch and detach God from everything in life. And the word bless or blessed, it's often misunderstood or even misused.

For example, a simple example, when someone is unwell and they sneeze, you'd almost instinctively say to them, Bless you. But the thing is, you and I can't bless anyone.

We can bless God in acknowledgement, appreciation, and adoration of who God is, but we can't bless anyone because blessing only comes from the hand of King Jesus.

That's why the original phrase, when it didn't detach and remove God, the original phrase when someone sneezed wasn't bless you, but God bless you.

[18:28] God bless you. So the next time someone sneezes, don't say to them, Bless you.

Because you can't bless them. Instead, say, God bless you and remind them that blessing only comes from the hand of King Jesus.

Another misuse or misunderstanding of the word bless or blessing is when people promote or even post on their social media of Facebook or Instagram or Twitter, I don't know much about these things, but they always post hashtag blessed.

Hashtag blessed. But when someone posts that they're hashtag blessed, more often than not, they're not posting and humbly acknowledging God or appreciating God or adoring God for who He is and what He does.

Rather, their posting, as it often is the case, is all about boasting. Their posting is all about boasting because whether their posting is about fun, fitness, finance, friends or family, nothing wrong with any of these things.

But if we're not openly acknowledging that it's God's blessing and that it comes from God alone, then our posting is boasting and boasting is sin.

[19:48] And that's why David sings here in verse 2. He says, Bless the Lord, O my soul. It's from you alone. It comes. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.

Forget not all His benefits because, well, far too often we do forget all the benefits. Far too often we fail to remember all the blessings that we have received from the hand of King Jesus.

Far too often we narrowly focus upon the negative. Do you know how much time we probably waste thinking about the negative rather than thinking about all the blessings.

Far too often we're good at grumbling, masters at moaning, classic at complaining, wonderful at whining, and we're fantastic at finding fault with other people.

My friend, far too often we waste our time focusing upon the bad rather than, like David, seeing the blessings, the blessings that are right in front of us that have come down to us from the hand of

King Jesus.

[20 : 51] And this is why David is calling us. He's commanding us. And he's saying to us this morning as we were saying to the children just count your blessings. Count your blessings.

That's what he's saying to us all this morning. Count your blessings. Stop moaning about what's in front of you. And start looking up to the God who has given to you more than you could ask or even think.

Count your blessings. I don't know what the hymn writer said. When upon life's billows your tempest tossed, when you're discouraged thinking all is lost, count your many blessings.

Name them, just like we did with the children. Name them one by one. And it'll surprise you what the Lord hath done. That's what David is doing.

He's counting his blessings. He's counting all the blessings that he has graciously and lovingly and mercifully received from the hand of King Jesus. And he's saying, I'm blessed.

[21 : 55] We're blessed beyond measure. And if you're a Christian today, Paul tells you in Ephesians chapter 1, you are blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ.

My friend, this is who God is. And this is who David is singing about in Psalm 103. Because David says that the God of the Bible, he graciously blesses us with gifts that we don't deserve.

That's who he is. That's who this God is. So many people have a misunderstanding of who God really is. But he's a God who graciously blesses us with gifts that none of us, none of us deserve.

This is who he is. And who is he? Verse 3. He's the one who forgives all your iniquities, 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 eagles.

David counts his blessings. And he says that this God, the God we worship, this God who blesses, he forgives, he heals, he redeems, he crowns, he satisfies.

[23 : 05] And he's the only one who does it because blessing only comes from his hand. And David is singing and he's saying to us, he's saying to all of us this morning, you will never, ever find these blessings or benefits anywhere else.

You'll never find them anywhere else because blessing only comes from the hand of King Jesus. Blessing only comes from the hand of King Jesus.

And this is why David goes on to present to us lastly and briefly a demonstration from God. David asks and answers the question, who is God? He sets before us a declaration about God.

Bless the Lord, O my soul. A description of God, a God who is able to do in us and for us more than we ask or think. And then thirdly, a demonstration from God.

A demonstration from God. Look at verse 6. David says, The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.

[24 : 08] The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. So as David reads his Bible and as he reflects upon who God is, his response is one of praise and thanksgiving.

He almost, you could say, as he's reflecting here, he loves the Lord more. The more he reflects upon the Lord, the more he loves Him. Which is why he makes that declaration, Bless the Lord, O my soul.

That's why he gives the description of the God who blesses and forgives and heals and redeems and crowns and satisfies because he's a gracious God who gives to us and gifts to us what we do not deserve.

But then he says, Thirdly, it's all because there has been a demonstration from God. God has demonstrated to us his steadfast love, his covenant love.

He has demonstrated it to us. That's why he's referred to here as the Lord in capital letters.

Because whenever we see the title Lord, it's throughout this psalm, it's in many of the other psalms, it means the one who keeps covenant.

[25 : 21] The one who keeps covenant. The one who makes all his promises and keeps every one of his promises. And David knows that the covenant promises of the Lord, they're precious. That's why he sings to the Lord.

That's why we should sing to the Lord. Far too often, people stand silent in church. But we should sing to the Lord because the Lord has revealed his promises to us and their personal promises.

But he's revealed them even more to us in the person of Jesus Christ. And this is what's amazing. The God of the Bible, the God who wants to be known and wants us to know him, he has revealed

himself in the sovereign way through creation, a special way through his word, and a specific way through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And David sings about this specific revelation because he says that it was revealed and foreshadowed, you could say, at the Exodus to be fulfilled in the future. So he made it known. It says there, verse 7, he made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel. But, you know, this special revelation or this specific revelation, it's not because of who we are.

[26 : 39] It's all been made known because of who God is. Who is God? Verse 8, the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Verse 10, he does not deal with us according to our sins nor repay us according to our iniquities.

And what David is reminding us here is that when we surrender our lives to the Lord, when we live in submission to the Lord, when we bend our knee before King Jesus, the Lord doesn't deal with us according to all our sins and all our shortcomings.

Because the amazing thing about the Lord is it's not an eye for an eye. That's not how the Lord works. No, with the Lord it's grace upon grace upon grace.

Because the Lord's love towards us, as David goes on to say in verse 11, it's immeasurable, inexhaustible, and incomprehensible.

Verse 11, for as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love towards those who fear Him. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love towards those who fear Him.

[27 : 56] David, he reminds us that no one can calculate the distance between heaven and earth. It's immeasurable, it's inexhaustible, it's incomprehensible. And similarly, no one can calculate the immeasurable, inexhaustible, and incomprehensible love of the Lord towards sinners.

You know, is that not why we teach our children? I don't know how often we do, but the children's hymn, Jesus' love is very wonderful.

Jesus' love is very wonderful. So high you can't get over it, so low you can't get under it, so wide you can't even get around it. It's all wonderful love.

And it's wonderful love because the God of the Bible tells us so clearly he's not willing that any should perish, but that we would come to repentance. The God of the Bible reminds us that he loves us and he's made his love known to us.

He has declared and described and demonstrated his love for us in the person of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And as Jesus said himself, greater love hath no man than this, that a man laid down his life for his friends.

[29 : 14] You are my friends if you do what I command you. And what's the command? You come to him. You confess him as Lord and you follow him as Savior.

So my friend, if you want to know who God is, then read your Bible. Read your Bible. And you know, today we have more access to the Bible than we have ever had.

Hundreds of years ago, people had pages of the Bible. They didn't even have it in their own language. Nowadays, we have so many Bibles in our home. In all different versions, we have it on our phone and our tablet.

We have it on laptops and computers. We have the Bible. So if you want to know who God is, be like David. Read your Bible. Because it's in your Bible that God will reveal himself to you.

And when you come to your Bible every morning or every evening or at any point in any time of the day, ask God to reveal himself to you. Say, Lord, show me yourself.

[30 : 25] Show me who you are. Ask God to reveal himself to you that you'll know him because he wants to be known. That you'll believe in him because he wants you to believe in him.

And that you'll follow this Jesus who came into the world to save sinners. My friend, we have read our Bible this morning.

We've reflected upon who God is in Psalm 103, verses 1 to 11. How are you going to respond? Are you going to respond like David?

Praise, adoration, worship. We've reflected upon who God is. But tonight, we're going to be asking who we are.

Who are we? Come back for part two this evening. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks for revealing thyself to us on the pages of our Bible.

[31 : 39] And help us, we pray, to read our Bible, to see that thou art a God who wants to be known and who has made himself known and he wants us to know him. He wants us to know him

not only in our head but also in our heart that we might worship him with our soul and praise him with all our being and acknowledge that he is a wonderful God who has done in us and for us exceedingly, abundantly, above all, more than we could ask or even think.

Lord, speak to us, we pray. Help us, we ask to, to look for this Jesus who passes by in the gospel. Do us good and we pray. Cleanse us, we plead, for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning. We're going to sing the words of that psalm, Psalm 103, in the Sing Psalms version on page 135.

Psalm 103. Psalm 103. So page 135, if you have the blue psalm book. Psalm 103. Psalm 103. Psalm 103.

Psalm 103. Psalm 103. Psalm 103. Psalm 103. Psalm 103. Psalm 103. Psalm 103. Psalm 103. Psalm 103. Psalm 103. We're singing from the beginning down to the verse Mark 11.

[32 : 57] The verses we were looking at this morning. Praise God, my soul, with all my heart. Let me exalt his holy name. Forget not all his benefits. His praise, my soul, and song proclaim.

The Lord forgives you all your sins and heals your sickness and distress. Your life he rescues from the grave and crowns you in his tenderness. And we're singing on down to verse Mark 11.

And we'll stand to sing, if you're able, to God's praise. Praise God, my soul, with all my heart. Let me exalt his holy name. Forget not all his benefits.

His praise, His praise, my soul, in song proclaim. The Lord forgives you all your sins and heals your sickness and distress.

[34 : 04] Your life he rescues from the grave and crowns you in his tenderness.

And crowns you in his tenderness. He satisfies your deep desires from his unending source of good, so that just like the eagle's drag, your youthful vigor is renewed.

good. The Lord is known for righteous acts and justice to death.

broadened ones, to Moses he made known his ways, his mighty deeds to Israel's sons, his mighty deeds to Israel's sons.

The Lord is merciful and kind, to anger slow and full of grace.

[35 : 36] He will not constantly reprove, or in his anger hide his face.

He does not punish our misdeeds or give our sins their just reward.

How great is love, as high as heaven, towards all those who fear the Lord.

Towards all those who fear the Lord. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

[36 : 43] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.