

Psalm 103 – Thanksgiving 2023 – My Heart Is Filled with Thankfulness!

We sang Psalm 103 earlier, but I'd like to read the first 4 verses again, together. They are your words. They are my words. They are our words on this Thanksgiving. (*On the screen.*)

Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, 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.

A handsome and talented young man was tossed into the public eye. He dueled an enemy of his nation and defeated him. It wasn't even close. He became an instant hero. As his popularity grew, so did his list of friends, and so did his list of enemies. They saw him as a threat to their power and influence. Several attempts were made on his life and he even found himself running for his life. Eventually, this young, talented and handsome man became his nation's leader. His enemies disappeared. His reputation, popularity and power grew.

He seemed to have everything: a beautiful wife, a growing family, an adoring nation, a powerful army and loyal friends.

But he had a weakness. His eyes loved to wander. Instead of leading his army on the battlefield, he was walking on the palace roof and looking at things he shouldn't have been looking at. He would have an affair with a married woman and got her pregnant. He tried to cover it up, but nothing worked. So he secretly ordered this woman's husband, a soldier in his army, to be killed. It was really murder, made to look like a casualty of war. He would care for this pregnant widow and eventually married her. Everyone thought, "*What a compassionate and caring leader we have.*"

In time, the consequences of his sins caught up with him. The child he and his new wife were expecting died. Later, one of his sons raped one of his daughters from a different wife. Another son

tried to overthrow him and drive him out of the country by sleeping with his wives. In the end, this son would be driven out and killed.

Were you able to keep up with all the twists and turns and drama? Sounds like a Netflix series, or something on Hulu, Max or Prime, doesn't it? Would you like a man like this to be a leader in your church? This isn't a made for TV movie. It's a true story. It's the story of the man who wrote the words that you and I first sang, then read together, Psalm 103.

Were you able to figure who this was? Here are more clues?

- His father was Jesse.
- As a child, he grew up in Bethlehem.
- As a teen-ager, he took down a 9-foot giant.
- As a shepherd, he wrote Psalm 23.
- As a king, he extended Israel's borders further than anyone.

Yes, this is David, the greatest king of Israel, an ancestor of the Savior. But he wasn't the greatest person, was he? And neither are we. David had a terrible disease. It was terminal. And so do we ... Sin! Sin did a number on David, his marriage, his family, his kingdom. It's done a number on all of us.

- Why do we fly off the handle and say things we regret later?
- Why do we put ourselves and our needs before others?
- Why are we so firmly attached to the things of this world?
- Why do we put so much time, money and effort into things that don't last, that won't last?

King David did the same things. Like David, we haven't loved the Lord and valued his Word above everything else.

There were times when his sins made him physically ill. Do yours? He wrote about what guilt

does to a person in another one of his Psalms: **My bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.**

During the months David tried to ignore his sin with Bathsheba, he was miserable. His guilt was like a vice, squeezing him tighter and tighter. No burden is more draining than trying to cover up guilt.

What changed David? God! God used his prophet to confront his king with the king's sin. David confessed his sin to Nathan. Nathan immediately relayed God's forgiveness. David finally found peace.

David speaks about being the recipient of blessings he had no business receiving from the Lord in our Psalm: **He forgives all your sins. He heals all your diseases. He redeems your life from the pit. He crowns you with love and compassion.** David would have completely agreed with our Thanksgiving theme: ***"My Heart Is Filled with Thankfulness!"***

How was God able to forgive David's sin and remove his guilt after all the things he had done? Only one way that's possible. One of David's descendants would be the perfect King, David could never be. That way David and every sinner would be counted perfect by God.

And, instead of this perfect King passing down punishments from his throne, he stepped away from his throne so that he would be punished instead of David. That way David and every sinner would never have to endure the punishment their sins deserve.

Since no burden is more draining than trying to cover up guilt, there is no greater joy than being forgiven. The guilt is gone. The conscience is at peace with God.

God could tell David through his prophet Nathan that he wouldn't sentence him to hell for his sins. God can tell you the same thing through his called

servants that he won't sentence you to hell for your sins either. God crowned David with his love and compassion. David's life changed and he found plenty of creative ways to write: ***"My Heart Is Filled with Thankfulness,"*** in the Psalms.

When you are guilty and you know that you should be punished and someone steps in and gets you off, you can't thank that person enough. That's what God did for David. That's what the Lord has done for you, for me, for us here at St. Paul's.

Consider all that the Lord has done. He's crowned this church and school with his love and compassion. We're blessed to have opportunities to serve him here, at home and at work. He's changed our lives, and we find creative ways of saying and singing: ***"My Heart Is Filled with Thankfulness."***

Why would God do this? Why would he bless us in the ways he does? It has nothing to do with us. It has everything to do with him. What keeps you going and allows you to serve and praise your God on Thanksgiving Day, on every day?

- It's the Lord, who brings his power and presence into your life.
- It's the Lord, who brings you and your family here so we can hear the good news of Jesus together.
- It's the Lord, who gives you teachers and a preacher who want to share his Word with you.
- It's the Lord, who motivates you to freely give of your time to volunteer, your money to support and your prayers for his work.

"My Heart Is Filled with Thankfulness" why?

Let's read together again the words of Psalm 103.

Praise the LORD, my soul;

all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

Praise the LORD, 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.

These are David's words. These are your words.

These are my words. These are our words and they are true!