



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

Psalm 103 begins with giving praise to the Lord because it is a Psalm of praise and thanksgiving.

The Psalmist gives thanks to God for all the good given by God's mercy, especially for the forgiveness of sin, giving of body and soul, bodily blessings, and deliverance from enemies among many other blessings. To whom should we give thanks other than God alone? The Christian joyfully gives God praise and thanksgiving for all the good bestowed that flows from His grace.

We know our sinful nature is always inclined toward temptation. We struggle with sinful desires because of our own sinful flesh, the sinful world around us and the continual battle waged against us from our enemy the devil. Even in the good that God sends our way, the sinful human nature finds fault desiring more of God's blessings as we are so bold to say God gives us one thing but not another. Or, we are ungrateful for what God does, thinking we know better what we need for our own lives. Forgive us dear Lord for our shallow ungratefulness and give us grateful hearts and minds that look to You alone for our every need.

God has blessed us with much needed rain this spring for which we praise God from whom all blessings flow. He answers prayer in His own way and His own time that we would learn to fear, love and trust in Him above all things. He has forgiven all of our iniquity and has redeemed us from the power of Satan and death. He crowns us with steadfast love and mercy as He continues working mercy for all who are oppressed. Even in our sinful condition, when we stumble and fall, when we fail to do the good He has called us to do or when we do the evil we are not supposed to do, He is the merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Often, we forget He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor does He repay our iniquities with what we deserve. His love is great toward those who love and fear Him and His compassion is beyond our ability to understand. His steadfast love is for us an everlasting fountain of grace as He blesses us in His mercy.

Why does God bless us so graciously even though we are still sinners? God loves us with an everlasting love through Christ who was promised and has now come. The Kingdom of God is from everlasting to everlasting and Christ our Savior is the One who reigns over all things for the good of His Church. God's grace is given through Christ.

Luther writes that He believed Psalm 103 speaks of Christ and points to the Gospel and to the Church which proclaims that Gospel. The grace of God is the basis of salvation through Christ. Therefore, what we need for our salvation is provided by Him in the sending of His Son to redeem and restore our relationship with God the Father. We have no need of anything else because God provides for our every need and especially gives to us salvation in Christ.

Therefore, Psalm 103 is a fitting hymn of praise and thanksgiving for all the benefits promised, delivered and sustained for us through Christ the Savior. In Baptism, God has given Christ to us and the blessings of the cross that He earned for us. In The Lord's Supper, we receive the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation which Christ gives by His work of salvation on the cross. Through His Sacred Word, and His Sacrament, grace, mercy and peace are given and our faith is strengthened as we continue on in this world filled with sin.

Jesus has ascended to heaven, yet He is still with us as He promised in **St. Matthew 28:18-20**. God's almighty power fills heaven and earth as our Savior Jesus rules over all things for the good of His Church that we would continue the Gospel proclamation. The Psalmist acknowledges God's presence through His acts of provision, mercy and grace. All for which we are called to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. The Psalmist ends the Psalm in the same way that He began by praising God for His works done by grace for us. So too, we praise God along with the writer of the Psalms and join him in saying:

“Bless the Lord, all His works, in all places of His dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul!” Psalm 103:22.

In Christ,
Pastor Ahrendt