

BEAUTIFUL THINGS

Title: Part 4 – “Why You Matter More Than You Think”

Date: September 7, 2025

While everyone here in the house is saying “Hi” to each other I want to say “Hi” if you are joining us online or on our app, thank you for spending some time with us! We think you are a part of our church family so let us know how we can pray for you or serve you—we'd love to walk alongside you in any way that we can.

I've got a question for you today. And just to put all my cards on the table, this is a question I still wrestle with. *{I had a professor in college tell me that if you preach from your weakness you will never run out of material. He's been right for almost 25 years now.}* BUT if I asked you **what would have to happen for you to feel truly valuable?** What would you need to achieve, acquire, or accomplish before you could look in the mirror and say with 100% confidence, “I matter. I'm significant. My life has worth”? What would you say?

Maybe it's finally getting that promotion or some award you've been working and sacrificing for. Maybe it's losing those thirty pounds you've been carrying around calling it your “baby weight,” but it's been 9 years... and you are the father. Maybe it's your kids turning out successful. Maybe it's finally buying a house. Maybe it's getting married, or having a baby, or getting out of debt, or finishing your degree. I don't know what it is for you.

BUT here's what scares me: like I've got answers to that question. Which means **I'm still living like my worth is up for grabs!** That my value is still being determined by what I do instead of who I am. That I am one failure away from worthlessness. Can anyone else relate at all to that?

But what if I told you that your worth was settled long before you ever achieved anything? What if your value was established before you ever performed, before you ever succeeded, before you ever impressed anyone?

That's what we are going to explore today as we continue our collection of messages called “**Beautiful Things.**” I want to preach a message I am calling:

Why You Matter More Than You Think

For six weeks we have been camping out in just one passage of Scripture from Psalm 103. This is one of those passages that is so rich that it is too good to forget. So, we have been reading this out loud with the hopes that by the end we will have this memorized. Your

soul is gonna need these in the days to come! So, let's all read these together out loud. Psalm 103, verses 1 through 5:

¹ Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. ² Praise the Lord, my soul, and ***forget not*** all his **BENEFITS**—³ who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, ⁵ who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

So good! Amen? King David, who wrote this, is directing his soul to remember what we are so prone to forget. That there are **some things** we desperately need that **only come from the hand of God**.

The problem though is that most of us, Christian, skeptic, don't know what you are, most of us are looking for these things we desperately need in unreliable, temporary, or completely out of our control places. AND when those things get threatened or taken away, we panic. We despair. We think our lives are over!

It's what Benson Boone captured in his song "Beautiful Things" that was everywhere? He says, "Please stay. I want you; I need you, oh, God. Don't take these beautiful things that I've got." That song topped charts in 19 countries because it captures something we all feel—gratitude for the good things mixed with fear of losing them.

Because we're all looking for beautiful things in our lives. ***BUT again***, we're looking in all the wrong places AND it doesn't work. It has never worked. There are some things that only come from God.

That's what King David discovered! He discovered six beautiful things that are different. They can't be taken away! They don't fluctuate with the markets! They don't depend on your performance or other people's behavior! They survive every storm, outlast every crisis, and satisfy every longing.

Things like **FORGIVENESS**. That was week one. Not partial, not conditional, but complete forgiveness that transforms your broken things into beautiful things.

Then things like **HEALING** for all your diseases—not just treating symptoms, but restoring every part of your life to its original design of wholeness.

AND then last week, **REDEMPTION** from the pit—where God qualifies as your kinsman redeemer, willing and able to rescue you from whatever circumstances have trapped you.

If you missed any of this you can get caught up on our app or website, but today we're talking about the fourth benefit that David lists, it addresses one of the deepest human needs: the desperate desire to know that you matter, that you have value, that your life has significance. Let's look at Psalm 103 once again. David says in the second half of verse 4, God is the One:

⁴ who redeems your life from the pit and CROWNS you with *love* and *compassion*.

SO, back to my opening question. What would have to happen for you to feel truly valuable? Another way you could ask this question is what defines you? Right? This is really an identity question. Is it a title? Is it your job? Your relationship status? Some achievement? Your problems? Where do you get your identity, your sense of self-worth?

Because we live in a culture that's obsessed with identity! Identity is everything today. We view almost everything through the lens of identity. Political views, consumer choices, career decisions, relationship preferences, lifestyle choices—everything gets filtered through "who am I?" and "does this align with my authentic self?"

AND unlike previous generations who had more defined roles (you were a farmer's son, you became a farmer), we now have virtually unlimited identity choices. You can identify as anything—from career identity to gender identity to lifestyle identity to political identity to even what species we identify as. AND ironically, having infinite identity options has led to more confusion, not less. More choices just equals more anxiety about making the "right" choice. Maybe you have felt that tension or confusion.

My point today though is we've gotten identity completely backwards. We think identity comes from what we do, what we have, what we achieve, what we feel, or what others think about us. AND when those things are threatened or taken away, we feel like we're nothing.

Listen to how people talk about themselves: "I'm just a mom." "I'm just a teacher." "I'm just a student." "I'm just a middle manager." "I'm just retired." "I'm nobody special." "I'm not that important." "I don't really matter." OR we go in the opposite direction and try to build our identity on our achievements: "I'm an awarded business owner." "I'm a fraternity member." "I live in so and so neighborhood." "I'm an influencer." "I've got 5,000 followers." "I'm somebody people respect." "Look at me, look at me, look at me..."

BUT here's the problem with both approaches: they're both built on sand. Your job can be eliminated. Your relationships can end. Your achievements will be forgotten. Other people's opinions can change. You could fail and crash and burn. AND **when those things shift, your entire sense of self crumbles.**

According to recent studies:

- 76% of Gen Z and 73% of millennials report struggling with identity and purpose.
- Anxiety about self-worth is at an all-time high.
- We have an entire generation that doesn't know who they are or why they matter.

Because when identity becomes your primary focus, you're constantly asking, "Who am I?" instead of "Whose am I?" You're building your sense of self on shifting cultural preferences. **BUT** here's what David discovered that can revolutionize your understanding of yourself: **your true identity doesn't come from what you do—it comes from what God does.**

You're not defined by your performance—you're defined by His love! You're not valuable because of your achievements—you're valuable because of His choice!

David says God "**crowns you with love and compassion.**" That's not just a nice metaphor. That's a declaration of your royal status in God's kingdom! Here's what I mean, if you are taking notes today, write this down:

You're royalty (whether you feel like it or not).

Touch your neighbor and tell them, "You're royalty!"

Each week we have been digging deeper into the specific words David uses in Psalm 103. David was a poet and chose his words carefully. AND in verse 4 the Hebrew word David uses for "crowns" is {Ah-Tar} atar (עֲטָר). This isn't just a word for a blessing or honor. This is the specific word used for placing a crown on someone's head—making them royalty!

See in the Old Testament when a king was crowned in ancient Israel, it wasn't because he earned the position through his accomplishments. He was crowned because he was chosen by God. In other words, the crown wasn't a reward for performance—it was a declaration of identity!

SO, when David says God "crowns you with love and compassion," he's saying that God has made you royalty in His kingdom. Not because you earned it, but because He chose you. Not because you qualified for it, but because He placed it on your head.

BUT here's what's revolutionary about this crown: it's made of love and compassion, not gold and jewels. Your royal status isn't based on power or wealth or achievement. It's based on God's **UNFAILING LOVE** for you.

See, the word for "love" here is {Has-said} **HESED**, which is covenant love, loyal love, unfailing love. Hesed is one of the most beautiful and important concepts in the Hebrew Bible, but it's often misunderstood. In fact, it appears over 200 times in the Old Testament and is often translated as "steadfast love," "loving-kindness," or "unfailing love."

BUT those English translations don't capture the full richness. Hesed is covenant-based love—love that flows from a binding commitment or relationship, not from emotions or circumstances.

In ancient Israel, when two parties made a covenant, they were binding themselves together with an unbreakable commitment. Think of it like the strongest possible marriage vows, but even more binding. Hesed is a love that honors that covenant NO MATTER what happens.

- Human love often says: "I love you because you're lovable, attractive, successful, etc."
- Conditional love says: "I love you if you meet my expectations."
- Emotional love says: "I love you when I feel like it." BUT...
- Hesed love says: "I love you because I have bound myself to you in an unbreakable bond, PERIOD."

This is crucial to understand because most of us have experienced conditional love: Parents whose love seemed tied to our grades or behavior. Friends who were only there when we were fun to be around. Romantic relationships based on what we could provide.

BUT hesed love says: "Your bad days don't change my commitment. Your failures don't alter my love. Your worst moments don't affect my loyalty. You have nothing to prove. I'm not going anywhere."

This was radical in the ancient world (and still is today). The gods were typically seen as fickle, needing to be appeased, loving you only when you pleased them. But the God of Israel demonstrated hesed—unshakeable commitment that doesn't fluctuate based on human performance.

That's why being "crowned with hesed" is so powerful—your royal status is secured by God's unbreakable commitment, not your ability to earn it.

THEN David says we are also crowned with compassion. The word for "compassion" is {Rock Haam} **RACHAM** (רַחֵם)—which is womb love, the kind of love a mother has for the child she carried. It's tender, protective, nurturing love that never gives up on you. It's

the kind of love that sees your potential when you can only see your problems, that believes in your future when you're stuck in your past, that cherishes you even when you can't stand yourself.

Put it all together and you have been crowned with unbreakable commitment and tender affection. That's your identity! That's who you are! That's why you matter!

Think about what this means practically. In earthly kingdoms, there's a massive difference between subjects and royalty. Subjects bow; royalty are bowed to. Subjects serve; royalty are served. Subjects worry about their status; royalty rest in their position. Subjects have to earn their place; royalty inherit their place.

AND here's what blows my mind: God didn't make you a subject in His kingdom. He didn't make you a servant. He didn't even make you a friend. He made you royalty! He put a crown on your head and said, "This is who you are. This is your identity. This is your worth."

When Queen Elizabeth died, her crown passed to someone else. When earthly kings lose battles, they lose their kingdoms. When leaders fail morally, they forfeit their positions. BUT your crown can never be transferred because no one else can be you! It can never be lost because God's love never fails! It can never be forfeited because it was never based on your worthiness in the first place!

When you allow this to truly sink in it changes everything:

- When you know you're crowned, you stop begging for approval.
- When you know you're royalty, you stop settling for scraps.
- When you know your worth is established by God, you stop letting other people determine your value...

It also means:

- You stop checking your bank account to see if you matter.
- You stop counting likes on social media to measure your significance.
- You stop comparing yourself to others to determine your worth.
- You stop performing for people who can't give you what you already have.
- You start walking differently because crowned heads don't hang low!
- You start talking differently because royalty doesn't beg or grovel!
- You start choosing differently because you know you deserve better than whatever cheap substitute the world is offering!

AND:

- You stop allowing treatment that doesn't match your identity!
- You stop staying in relationships that make you feel worthless!
- You stop working for a boss that crushes your spirit!
- You stop believing lies about yourself when the King of Kings has declared your worth!

That's your identity. That's who you are. That's why you matter. Not because of what you've done, but because of Whose you are. Not because you earned it, but because He gave it. You're royalty (whether you feel like it or not).

Number 2:

This crown can't be taken away.

Again, this is the good news, the game changer. Your boss can fire you, but God can't "uncrown" you. Your spouse can leave you, but God's love can't be withdrawn. Your friends on social media can reject you, but God's compassion can't be cancelled.

Isaiah 54:10 says:

¹⁰ "For the mountains may move and the hills disappear, but even then my faithful love for you will remain. My covenant of blessing will never be broken," says the Lord, who has mercy on you.

This is what scholars call an "argument from the greater to the lesser." God uses the most stable things in creation (mountains and hills) to make His point about something even more stable (His love). Mountains can move, hills can be removed, but God's love for you is more stable than the foundation of the earth itself!

Notice God identifies Himself as "the Lord, who has mercy on you." The Hebrew word for mercy here in English is *racham*, sound familiar? It's the same womb-love that David uses in Psalm 103. God is emphasizing that His covenant of blessing flows from His maternal-like, tender affection.

God is saying:

- Your job might disappear, but My love won't!
- Your health might fail, but My covenant won't!
- Your relationships might end, but My commitment won't!

- The culture might shift, but My character won't!

God is saying your sense of worth, and identity isn't built on something as fragile as mountains, no your worth and identity is rooted in God's unfailing love and covenant of blessing. Like it literally cannot be shaken, no matter what earthquake hit your life!

This is why the Apostle Paul could say in Romans 8 (v.38-39):

³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul is saying nothing can separate you from the love that defines you. Nothing can remove the crown that God has placed on your head. Nothing can change your royal status in His kingdom.

In 1984 **Vanessa Williams** made history as the first African American Miss America, but less than a year later, she was forced to give up her crown due to a scandal. In one moment, what seemed like the pinnacle of recognition was taken away. AND this is the difference: earthly crowns can be stripped away by circumstances, controversy, or public opinion. But your crown of love and compassion is permanent, eternal, unshakeable.

You don't have to worry about losing God's approval. You don't have to perform to maintain His love. You don't have to achieve to keep His compassion. It's not based on your performance—it's based on His character!

And that leads us to this:

This changes how you see yourself.

When you really understand that you've been crowned with love and compassion, it revolutionizes how you see yourself:

- You stop looking in the mirror and seeing your flaws first and instead you start seeing yourself as God sees you—crowned with love.
- You stop defining yourself by your mistakes and start defining yourself by His mercy.
- You stop measuring your worth by other people's opinions and start measuring it by God's unchanging love.

This is what happened to Gideon in the Old Testament. In Judges 6 when the angel of the Lord appeared to him, Gideon was hiding in a winepress, afraid of the Midianites, convinced he was a nobody from the weakest clan in the smallest tribe. But the angel called him "mighty warrior."

Gideon looked at himself and saw weakness. God looked at him and saw someone crowned with potential. Gideon focused on his circumstances. God focused on his calling.

The same thing happened to Moses. When God called him to lead Israel out of Egypt, Moses said, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" But God didn't answer, "You're somebody special." NO! God said, "I will be with you."

Moses was focused on his identity. God was focused on His presence. Moses felt disqualified by his past. God crowned him with His purpose.

This is what God wants to do with your self-perception. He wants you to stop seeing yourself through the lens of your failures and start seeing yourself through the lens of His love. He wants you to stop being crushed by your circumstances and start being crowned with His compassion.

BUT here's where it gets really beautiful: when you understand that you've been crowned with love and compassion, number 4:

This changes how you treat others.

When you understand that you've been crowned with love and compassion you start seeing others the way God sees them—not as competitors for your approval, but as fellow royalty in God's kingdom. Amen? You stop trying to put others down to build yourself up because you're secure in your own crown. AND you stop being threatened by other people's success because you know your value doesn't depend on comparison. How liberating is this!

1 John 4:19 says: ¹⁹ We love because he **FIRST** loved us.

When you're filled up with God's love, it overflows into love for others. When you're secure in God's compassion, you have compassion to give away.

This is why Jesus could wash His disciples' feet. John 13:3 is a remarkable verse, it says:

³ **JESUS KNEW** that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; **SO** he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.

This is the Last Supper, just before Jesus' crucifixion. Foot washing was the most menial, degrading task in that culture—done by the lowest servant because feet were dirty, smelly, and gross!

Two key phrases here, the first is "Jesus knew." John gives us a window into Jesus' mindset at this moment. This wasn't Jesus hoping or believing—He absolutely knew His identity and status. In fact, He knew three things according to John in this moment:

- Jesus knew He had ultimate authority.
- Jesus knew His origin. He wasn't just a good teacher or prophet, He was sent from the Father with a specific mission. AND...
- Jesus knew His destination. He would return to His place of glory.

BUT here's the stunning part—John connects Jesus' secure identity with His humble service using the word "so." Meaning BECAUSE! Because Jesus knew who He was, He could do what others considered beneath their pay grade. CEOs don't typically clean toilets. Celebrities don't usually wash dishes. The higher you climb, the more services you expect from others. BUT Jesus demonstrates the opposite: **the more secure you are in your identity, the freer you are to serve without feeling diminished.**

When you're secure in your identity (like Jesus), you:

- Don't need to protect your reputation.
- Can serve without feeling degraded.
- Don't worry about appearances.
- AND you also know your service doesn't define your worth.

When you know God has crowned you, you can:

Help the less fortunate without feeling superior. Change your elderly parent's diaper without feeling degraded. Clean up after others without feeling used. You can serve in ways that might seem "beneath" your education / status.

The disciples were probably arguing about who was greatest (Luke 22:24 mentions this), while Jesus—who actually WAS the greatest—was washing their feet. Their insecurity made them competitive. His security made Him a servant.

This is why this matters: **when you know you're crowned, you stop needing to prove your worth through position and start expressing your worth through service.**

- You can afford to be humble.
- You can afford to be vulnerable.
- You can afford to take risks for love.

Alright, I've got two more quick points, and we are done, write this down:

This gives you unshakeable confidence.

When you understand that you've been crowned by the King of the universe, you get the ultimate main character energy—not because you're self-centered, but because you're God-centered! You stop living like you're an extra in someone else's story and start living like you're the beloved child of the most powerful being in the universe! You stop apologizing for taking up space and start stepping into the purposes God has for you!

BUT here's the difference between worldly confidence and Godly confidence:

- *Worldly* confidence is based on believing you're better than others.
- **Godly** confidence is based on believing you're loved by God.
- *Worldly* confidence competes with others.
- **Godly** confidence serves others.
- *Worldly* confidence needs to put others down.
- **Godly** confidence lifts others up.

When you're crowned with love and compassion, you have nothing to prove and nothing to lose. Amen? You can take risks because your security isn't based on the outcome. I'm saying you have the freedom to fail {tell your neighbor you have the freedom to fail} you have the freedom to fail because your worth isn't based on your performance AND that gives you an unshakable confidence!

That's what made David—the author of Psalm 103—so effective as a king. He knew he was chosen by God, not by popular vote. He knew his crown came from heaven, not from human approval. So, he could make hard decisions, take unpopular stands, and lead with courage because his identity was secure.

How many of you would love to have that level of confidence? But here's what we can't miss: being crowned with love and compassion isn't just about how you “feel” about yourself.

Last point today:

This crown comes with responsibility.

When you know you're royalty in God's kingdom, you have the responsibility to start ACTING like it. You start carrying yourself with dignity. You start making decisions that honor your calling. You start treating your body like the temple of the Holy Spirit. You start using your words like someone who represents the King. You stop settling for relationships that don't honor your worth. You stop participating in activities that contradict your identity.

Some of you have been living like peasants when you're actually princes and princesses in God's kingdom! You've been begging for scraps when you're heirs to the throne! You've been accepting crumbs when you're crowned with love and compassion!

- You are not "just" anything!
- You are not nobody!
- You are not worthless!
- You are not forgotten!
- You are not a mistake!
- You are not an accident!

You are chosen by God! You are loved by the Creator of the universe! You are crowned with unfailing love and tender compassion! You are royalty in the kingdom of heaven! You are more valuable than you can imagine!

Stop living beneath your privileges! Stop accepting treatment that doesn't match your identity! Stop believing lies about your worth when God has declared your value!

- You don't have to earn love—you're already crowned with it!
- You don't have to perform for approval—you already have God's compassion!
- You don't have to achieve to matter—you already matter to the One who matters most!

Maybe you came in here today feeling crushed by circumstances, by criticism, comparison, crushed by your own sense of inadequacy. BUT I want you to know that God sees you differently. Where you see failure, He sees potential. Where you see flaws, He sees beauty. Where you see rejection, He sees someone He chose. AND where you see worthlessness, He sees someone worth crowning.

Your identity crisis is over. You have been crowned with love and compassion by the King of Kings, and that changes everything.

SO, I'll leave you with this: start living like the royalty you are.

Stop apologizing for your existence. Stop minimizing your gifts. Stop hiding your light under a bushel. Stop playing small when God has crowned you with His love.

You are not an impostor wearing a borrowed crown. You are not pretending to be something you're not. God Himself has placed this crown of love and compassion on your head, and He doesn't make mistakes.

Tim Keller used to say: "The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope."

Next week, we're going to talk about something that will address the deepest longings of your heart: what it means to be satisfied with good things that can't be bought, sold, or delivered by Amazon.

BUT for today, I want you to walk out of here wearing your crown. I want you to live this week like someone who has been chosen, loved, and honored by the King of the universe. Because that's exactly who you are!

Let's pray together.