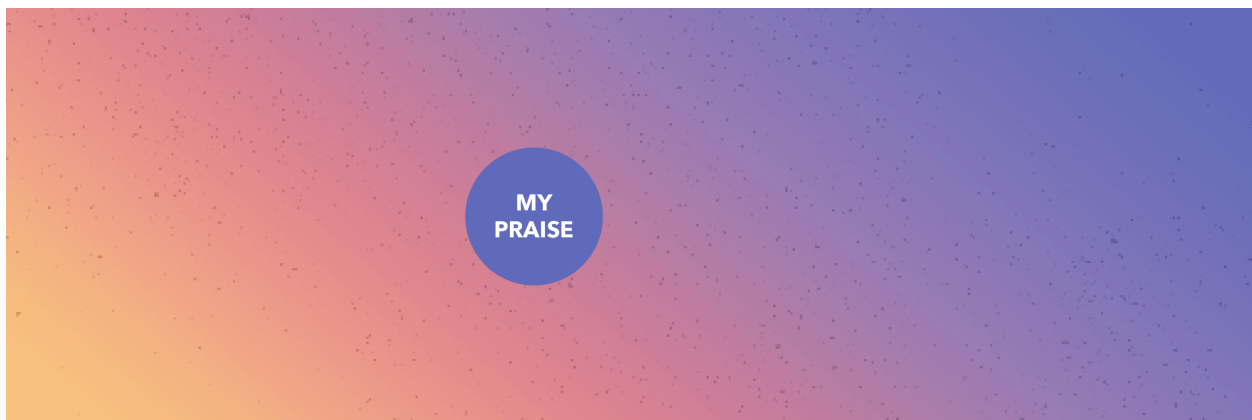
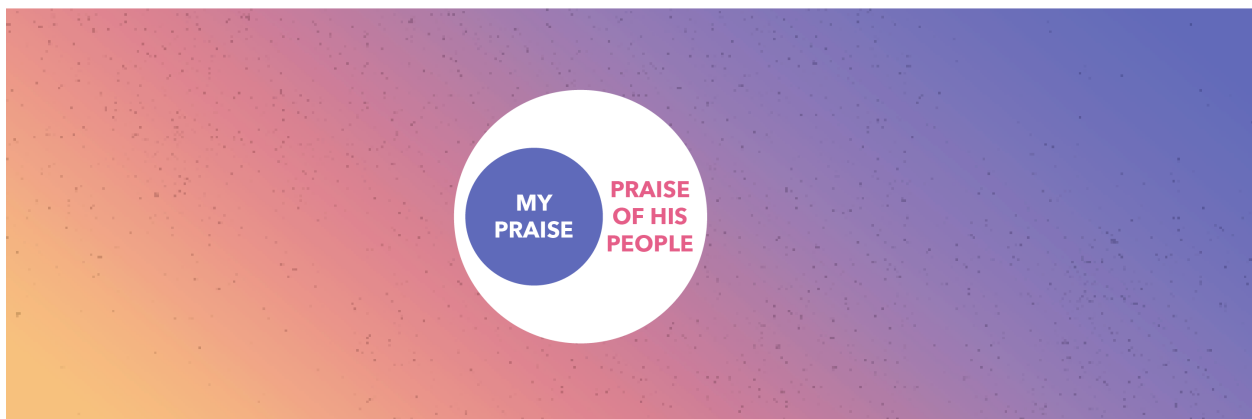


We're looking at Psalm 103 as we continue in our Psalms of Summer this morning. If you haven't already, go ahead and find it in your bible so you can follow along.

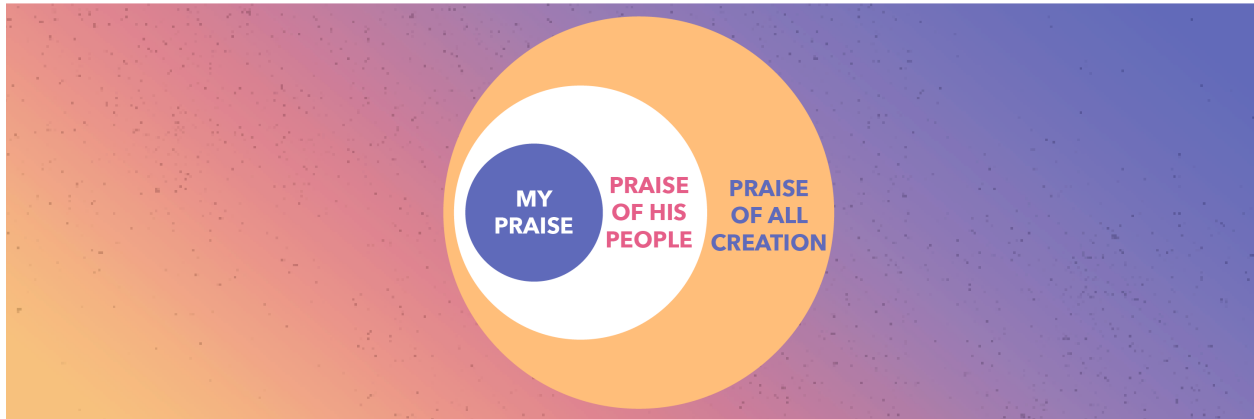
This is a psalm of praise rooted in thanksgiving for all that God *is* and all He's done. It's divided into three sections, like nested circles, with each circle drawing out why God deserves to be worshipped: why He's worthy of praise. The inner circle focuses on David's personal worship of God. The language revolves entirely around '*my praise*' as David would say it.



The next circle is an extension of the first, a continuation of David's praise, but highlights God's worthiness of praise by His people.



The outermost circle takes David's praise even further: describing how the majestic King of the Universe is worthy of the worship of all creation



God is worthy of my praise, of the praise of His people, and of the praise of all creation. That's the layout of today's text.

Ever talk to yourself?

Before we dive into the text, I need to ask you a question. Do you ever talk to yourself? Maybe it's when you're thinking through a new idea, or coaching yourself through a situation. Sometimes you're talking yourself off the ledge. Other times you talk to yourself as you think through what you want to say in the meeting or when you meet someone for the first time. Ever talk to yourself while looking in the mirror, getting ready for a date? No? Me either.

I'm notorious for talking to myself when I'm trying to figure out a puzzle—whether it's a game or a home repair. That's what we're going to witness this morning: David talking to himself, remembering and rehearsing how fitting it is to praise God with all he's got. Now, take a look at verses 1-5 with me and you'll see what I mean. [READ v1-5]

"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."

Praise from Me (v 1-5)

David's opening is *Bless the LORD* (your bible may say 'Praise the LORD'), O soul of mine. He's telling his soul to praise God. He's telling his innermost parts—heart, soul, mind and strength—to praise God (Deuteronomy 6:5; Luke 10:27). See how he's talking to himself?

David's telling himself to praise the holy name of God. In the Hebrew culture, names often meant things. Names described the person (or place's) attributes, character, or nature. Many of the names you read in the Bible had intentional meaning behind them. Some of you have chosen names for your children because you wanted them to live-into that name. So, when David tells himself to praise God's holy name, he's calling himself to remember who God really is. He's urging himself to notice, in a fresh way, how God's character, nature, God's heart, has been revealed in his own life.

He says don't forget the benefits of being on the receiving end of God's great kindness and then he begins catalog the goodness of God. He's reminding himself why God is worthy of unrestrained praise. And list begins with *forgiveness of all your sin*. Citing forgiveness first in the list is important because it's the banner under which everything else hangs. Nothing else matters if there is no forgiveness. If I'm still dead in my sins and trespasses, then even if I gain the whole world, I still forfeit my soul (Mark 8:36)! Help me really quick: how much of David's sin is forgiven? Most of it? Some of it? ALL of it! Forgiveness is the foundation.

When David says, "forgiveness of all *your* sin," he's speaking to himself. The 'your' is *singular*. It's as though he's looking in a mirror and saying, "God has forgiven all your sin." He's talking to himself, and he does it throughout the psalm.

From there the list of how he has experienced God's goodness in his own life continues. Every healing he's experienced was a God-given gift; that's why he's still alive (not in the pit, the grave). And, instead of wearing the filthy rags of sin, sickness and death, David was wrapped up in, crowned with, God's loving kindness and mercy. It's like he's saying, 'God didn't just let me live, He took it even further by giving me the sweet stuff of life and He's given me the strength to enjoy it. Instead of getting what I deserved, God poured out His blessing on me! This is why you praise, O soul of mine.'

Here's what I want you to hold onto: God is worthy of your (my) praise. He is worthy, which is where the word 'worship' comes from. He is worthy just because of who He is. And when you couple that with your experience of His grace and mercy in your life, then you find yourself in the same place as David: with this irresistible desire to praise. When you've encountered the love and mercy of God, praise is your right response.

Promoting Personal Praise

Since God is worthy of your individual praise, for what can you praise Him? We have to be intentional about this because, like Brian says, 'we leak.' In our busyness with school, sports, friends, family, jobs, raising kids, caring for aging parents, planning for retirement and trying to live each day, we *forget* what God has done. We forget where we came from and what we've been saved from. It's pretty easy to come to church. But coming to church, and *truly worshipping*, takes some remembering. That's why David says, "Forget not all His benefits."

So, let me prime the pump a little. Just answer this one question: What's God done in your life? Start by making a list of how He's blessed you. If you're a Christ follower, then start your list like David did: forgiveness. If you're hard pressed to think of anything beyond that, then add to your list the fact that you woke up today and that you managed to get yourself here—either by transportation or strong legs. You probably had a cup of coffee or tea, maybe even breakfast or a donut from the cafe. Once you

start listing all the things for which you can be thankful, ways in which He's taken care of you, it'll begin to snowball, and you may have a hard time getting all your thoughts down. That's great! What you'll realize is that your job, your friends, your imperfect family, whatever measure of health you enjoy, the food you eat, the car you drive, your strong mind, your grandkids, and the list goes on and on are all reasons for you to praise God because He is the giver of every good gift (James 1:17), and every blessing you've received is rooted in the grace and mercy of God. God is worthy of your praise. That's the inner circle that I mentioned in the beginning.

Praise from God's People (v 6-18)

The next ring of the circle includes verses 6-18 and focuses on how God is worthy not only of David's praise, but the praise of all God's people. Look at verses 6-8.

[READ 6-8]

"The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.
7He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.⁸ The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."

God on behalf of His people

These verses are reminders of how God has worked on behalf of His people. They're pointing back to Egypt and how God intervened to set His people free. They were oppressed, slaves without a voice in Egypt, and God stepped in and executed His righteousness and justice. In His kindness God gave them Moses. Then He unrolled the ten plagues which led to their release. Verse 8 is a flashback to Exodus 34, when God passed in front of Moses and allowed him to experience some of God's glory in a completely new way. And in the passing-by, God revealed His heart to Moses when He said, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness..." (Exodus 34:6). Despite Israel's sinfulness and rebellion, God loved them. And the same is true for you and me. Despite your sin

and rebellion, God loves you. That doesn't mean that He's okay with it, but He loves you still. Check out the next four verses. [READ 9-12]

"He will not always chide (*accuse*), 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. ¹¹ 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."

God's loving forgiveness

Did you notice the 'not/nor' repetition in verses 9-10? That's what God will *not* do.

That's the definition of mercy: not getting what you deserve. We deserve His accusations and His anger. If we're honest, we deserve whatever punishment He wants to give us. But that's not what He wants to do.

Instead, He wants to pour out His loyal, steadfast love on everyone who fears Him. Pause for a moment with me and let's refresh ourselves on what it means to 'fear the Lord.' Brian brought some great clarity to this in his Proverbs 1 message, back in May. He said, "The fear of the Lord for the Hebrew mind is a tight weave of three key concepts: fear, love, and trust. 'Fear of the Lord' then, is an affectionate reverence, a posture of heart, soul and mind that reveres God in his majesty while loving and trusting God in his goodness." God wants to pour out His loyal love onto those who have an affectionate reverence for Him. Fear of the Lord is affectionate reverence.

The only way to cultivate that is to be in a living, dynamic relationship with Him. You can't fear the Lord if you don't know Him. You can be afraid of Him, but you won't love and trust Him. Do you know Him? Are you in relationship with Him? Have you turned from your sin and turned toward God? Have you received His forgiveness as your own by placing your trust in what Jesus did on the cross? If you've never done that and you want to, just raise your hand. Do you want to trust Jesus as your Savior

today and be on the receiving end of God's love and forgiveness? If that's you, then make this your prayer: "God I want to revere, love and trust you. I turn away from my old, sinful, life and I turn toward you. Today, I place my total trust in Jesus and the work He did on the cross for me. Thank you for forgiving me of all my sin and for loving me so much that you made the way for me to be forgiven and free. Amen."

Now, if you have this living, dynamic relationship with God, listen to what you get to enjoy (v 11-12): a love from God that is so expansive that it fills every possible space completely. That's how much God loves you! How high are the heavens above the earth? That's how big His love is for you! Just because you're His. Does that make your heart beat fast? Does it make you want to praise Him? How far is east from west? He's got you going one direction and your sin in the other. He didn't just forgive you of your sin (which is huge!), He removed it! He took it away and set it off in a direction where you'll never have to look at it again and, more importantly, neither will He.

Fueling the fire

If you want fuel for the fire of your praise, create another section on your blessings list and title it, "My History." Make a list of where you've come from. Maybe you grew up with a godly heritage and began to follow Jesus as a kid. Maybe you are the first person in your family to even know God. How did you grow up? What was your life like? What's your journey been like? That's what David was reminding himself, and all of Israel, about in this section. There's a bit of a history lesson that cues up the magnificence of God's amazing love and mercy. When you look at where you were and look at where you are, when you're reminded again of all God has done you can't help but worship!

God's tenderness & unswerving love

Every once in a while, I'll talk with someone who really wants to understand why God would go to such an extent to forgive and free us; why God would withhold His wrath and pour out mercy and grace. In

verses 13-18, David reminds himself of why God has gone done so much for him...

[READ 13-18]

“As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.¹⁴ 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.¹⁷ 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.”

God loves His kids like a father. Jesus taught us to call God Father in the Lord’s Prayer, “Our Father in heaven...” (Matthew 6:9). Earthly dads and moms look at their helpless, little, newborn and can’t help themselves. They’re compelled to do whatever they can to provide and care for that child—and that compulsion doesn’t evaporate just because the kid grew up. That’s the closest we get to understanding God’s unswerving love and tenderness. He knows our weakness and fragility; here today and gone tomorrow. He knows that we won’t make it on our own, so He offers His loyal love to make up for our inherent limitations.¹ It’s as if God is saying, “I’ll take care of everything. Just trust me.”

When you cultivate an affectionate reverence for God, you’ll find yourself on the receiving end of God’s lovingkindness...*forever!* His loyal love toward you will be so good that your kids and grandkids will be blessed by it. How? When your life is marked by an affectionate reverence for God, it’s contagious. Want to have kids that love Jesus? Love Jesus! Want to have grandkids who love Jesus? Love Jesus! Want to have friends that love Jesus? Love Jesus! I know plenty of people do their own thing and some don’t love Jesus even though their parents, grandparents or friends do. But, like we talked about in the Proverbs series, this is a *usually* how it goes, not a guarantee.

¹ Allen, Leslie C. *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 21: Psalms 101-150*. (Word Books, Waco, Texas, 1983), 22.

Because of your affectionate reverence, you're going to be someone who seeks to honor God in all you do. You're going to *want* to be obedient to His leading in your life, to do what He says. When that's how you live, you'll be regularly reminded of God's steadfast love and mercy. This is why David was convinced that God is worthy not only of his praise, but the praise of all His people. [God is worthy of His peoples' praise.] If you're a Christian listening to this right now, that's *you*. You are part of the community of people who have an affectionate reverence for God, and you get to add your voice to the choir and worship the One who loves you immeasurably and has done everything that you might be forgiven and free.

Transition

So, we have this progression or expansion, which begins with David's individual praise, then swells to include the praise of all God's people. But David's not content to stop there. He's not satisfied with that, because the God he worships is worthy of praise from every part of creation. Not just me. Not just my people. All of creation. That's the outermost circle. (slide: all three circles) Take a look at v19-22. [READ v19-22]

"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!"

Praise from All Creation (v 19-22)

God is on His throne in Heaven, ruling with supreme majesty over all creation. He's the one in charge and His steadfast love is what motivated David to praise. The angels, these obedient messengers and mighty warriors, serve at the pleasure of the King of the universe, and David calls on them to join in the praise that begins in his own soul. "Bless the LORD, O you his angels...Bless the LORD, all his hosts." He goes further still,

knowing that God can't be praised too much, and challenges all of creation—everything that God has made, the entirety of the universe—to worship the One who is worthy. God is worthy of my praise. He is worthy of the praise of His people. And He's worthy of the praise of all creation. [God is worthy of all creation's praise.] He deserves nothing less!

And David finishes the same way he began, "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" Throughout the psalm he's eager to praise God and he's urging everyone and everything to join him in worshipping the only One who is worthy, the only One who forgives, and heals, and redeems, and crowns and satisfies. The only One who takes away our sin and loves us so completely that we can't even wrap our minds around it.

David knows that praising God begins with him. After remembering and rehearsing all God has done, he can't help it! That's what the last line is about: the anthem of praise that God deserves begins with a solitary voice² and David intends to be that voice.

Wrap

Friends, God's praise begins with you (me). You have biblical permission to talk to yourself. Remind yourself of all that God is and all He's done for you. Keep adding and referring to your list. Every time you see it, it will move you to worship.

This morning, if you've been forgiven, then it's time for you to praise. The God who made it possible for you to be forgiven and free, and to receive His amazing love for eternity, is worthy of your worship.

² Anderson, Bernhard W., Bishop, Steven. *Out of the Depths: the Psalms speak for us today*. (Westminster, Louisville, 200), 116.