

# PSALMS

songs for all of life

## PSALMS: TALKING TO MYSELF

*July 30, 2023*

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### Scripture Reference: Psalm 103

The Psalms of the Bible are a collection of songs from different writers, functioning like a hymnal for the full expression of human emotion. There are psalms of joy and psalms of pain, psalms of anger, and psalms of peace. Join us for our third installment, asking the Psalms to teach us about God's heart, the heart of the scriptures, and the heart inside you and I. Visit [doxa-church.com](http://doxa-church.com) for service times or more details on how we make disciples in the everyday stuff of life.

So today we are in Psalm 103. And I will read verses 1 through 12.

"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 eagle's. 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. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us."

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Hi everybody. My name is Ryan, and if you're like me, like I forget names pretty easily. So my last name is Falls. So my name is Ryan Falls, which is a sentence. So it's just a little trick if you

forget who I am, that maybe will help you. Would you join me in prayer? God, we're not here for ourselves, but in meeting with you and coming to you and listening to your word, Lord, we get great joy, we find life, we find restoration, we find hope. And so today, God, we need you to do what only you can do. So we offer, we offer each of our lives to you right now. And we all come in having had different weeks with different stories. And so I ask for your Holy Spirit to apply these words in a very particular way to each circumstance, to each life, and to help us God, not just to hear the truth, but to be transformed by it. Would you do something inside of us God that would, would work itself out into the daily living that we all embody here on this earth? Thank you for this church. Thank you for this time. Jesus, speak to us now. It's in your name I pray. Amen.

Well, it's a real privilege, it's a real honor to be asked to be here, to be able to switch with Eddie. And I'm excited to hear about how our morning went at Westminster Chapel. And so fun to be with you guys, to be in a church that's like-minded. You know, we're on the same team. And I think that it's great to swap pulpits with other pastors in the city just to give us a picture of the fact that we are one church in Bellevue. Like yeah, we're lots of churches that are individual churches, and God is doing something incredible here, and he is doing something incredible at Westminster. And together God loves our expressions, our outposts of his kingdom. But we're on the same team. We're working for the same mission in the world: to make disciples of Jesus Christ to equip them and to send them out into the world. And that's what we're all about at Westminster, just like you guys are. It's really kind of cool. I said to Donald, we had gotten together as churches for lunch one time, like a year and a half ago, and we had another church there. And I said to Donald, we need to do that again soon, because there's such resonance. You wouldn't know this 'cause you're here and I'm glad you are. But there's such resonance in the way that Westminster thinks about who we are in the city, and I know you guys do too. So it's such fun, such fun to be here with you this morning. If you have a copy of the Bible, I would encourage you just to turn there so you can follow along. Again, we're gonna primarily be in Psalm 103, and we're gonna talk about having a conversation with yourself. How's that sound? Do you ever talk to yourself? And when you do, I wonder what that conversation is like. In most of the literature and lecturing that's out there on self-talk, we're telling ourselves these positive affirmations. So usually, you know, kind of the picture of it is someone is sitting there and they're in their bathroom and they're looking in their mirror and they're talking, you know, you're great. You're gonna win. You can do it. You're strong enough, you are good enough, you're smart enough and doggone it, people like you, you know, and that's what we're doing. And that's why books like *The Power of Positive Thinking* have sold over 20 million copies. My wife Liz, who's here right now, we will often ask each other as we're walking around the house, Hey, what was that? What, what did you just say? And we think that the other is speaking, you know, we're speaking to the other, but really most of the time we're talking just out loud to ourselves. And they're like, no, no, no, no, no, no. I was talking to myself. And so I wanna give you permission that that's actually really normal to do. And you may have those conversations internally. They may be external. Sometimes we're in the car. Anybody have conversations in the car, not only with yourself, but with the other drivers. We are good at this. It's native to who we are. And it's not only important that we understand and embrace that, I just need you to hear that it's normal.

But in this Psalm, David is not telling us, the Psalmist is not telling us, you know, stand in front of your mirror, have your daily affirmations. What he's actually trying to teach us as he models it in his own life, is a self-talk that doesn't look to David, but looks to God as the source of his hopes. We see why you should talk to yourself in this Psalm. We see what you should say to yourself, and then we see how we might expand the conversation. So let's just talk about why we should talk to ourselves. Verse 2 of Psalm 103. Look at it. It says,

"Bless the Lord, O my soul."

So again, he's talking to himself.

"And forget not all his benefits."

We live in a world of sound bites, of short video clips of reels on Instagram. And so our attention spans are shrinking more and more and more and more. When I first got into ministry, sermons were like 45 minutes. I once had a friend tell me that he preached for an hour and 15 minutes. And I was like, how did everybody not get up and leave? And now it's like 28 minutes is about the time that social scientists say you have with a group of people to hold their attention. And even then you've gotta work really, really hard because we are people who get distracted and who forget what we're doing even in the moment. So typical day for you in your life, you are looking on your phone, you're scrolling through your Insta feed, you see something and it reminds you, oh my goodness, I didn't reply to that text message. So you get on your text and you start replying to the text message of the person who you know you have to get back to. And then as you're doing that, you remember, oh, oh no, I have that email I didn't respond to. And then you go to your email and you start writing an email to the person that you didn't respond to, which is time critical. And then as you're writing that, you remember, I didn't pay my utility bill. So then you go to pay your utility bill, and in the middle of paying your utility bill, you think, I think I have an appointment right now. I'm not really sure. And you look at your calendar only to realize that you've stood somebody up for coffee. Anybody ever do that like normally in the course of their week? No, just me. Okay, good. We live in a world where we're so distracted. We're so distracted. We're so busy. We have a constant flood of sensory overload coming at us all the time. But this isn't just about the culture that we live in. Humans have always been prone to be distracted. To forget as followers of God, his activity in our lives rather quickly. And without even realizing it, we find ourselves then looking to something or someone else apart from God because we forget. We forget. We forget. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

Now, as David writes this Psalm you may not have picked this up, but it's pretty clear that he's alluding to something that God says to Moses in Exodus 34:6 and 7. And God says to Moses, the Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in *Hesed* or steadfast love. This is the kind of God he is. And it comes on the heels of the people of God forgetting who he was. They had just been delivered from slavery in Egypt. If you've heard the story, if you haven't, God calls Moses to be his prophet. And the children of Israel have been enslaved in

Egypt for 400 years. So imagine every day of your life for 400 years. All the people know as a culture collectively is slavery, right? Oppression. They don't get to make their own choices. They are, they're not free. They do whatever Pharaoh, the leader of Egypt, decrees that they should do, which is usually build stuff for him. And so they've been that way for 400 years. A long, long, long time. And God comes through this man, Moses, this weak man who can't really speak and through a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, God does these miracles over and over and over and over again, culminating in the Passover as God leads them out and then leads them through the waters of the Red Sea as he splits the waters, as they're being pursued by their oppressors. And he saves them. And Moses is leading the people, and they go to the mountain. And one of the things that happens at this point in Exodus in chapter 32 is that Moses is on top of the mountain. Now, these things, they're in recent memory. They've watched God deliver them in miraculous ways. So that's in their recent memory. Moses goes on the mountain and the people, he's up there for a little while and they say to Aaron, his brother, where's Moses? Where's this man Moses? It seems like he's gone. So we would really like for you to help us invent a new God. And so Aaron's like, okay, sure, give me all your gold, which anytime a religious leader or a spiritual leader says that to you, it's a bad sign. So they give Aaron all of their gold. Aaron takes the gold, melts it all down, and makes a golden calf out of it, which was one of the idols that they would've worshiped in Egypt. They go crazy. They get into this pagan revelry, it says in the scripture, God wants to judge them. Moses intercedes. And God does a great work of grace among the people, even though they rebelled. Praise the Lord. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. See, we're we're not that different from Israel. If you've been a follower of Jesus for any amount of time, and if you haven't, you need to hear this. Jesus does miraculous work in your life and in your story. He saves you, he redeems you. He loves you. He shows up in a very clear way when you become a Christian. And he reveals to you who he is and who he wants you to be, and his design for flourishing for you and invites you into relationship. And if you've been following Jesus for any amount of time, it's pretty easy to find yourself even after all that God has done in your life, in places like Israel was in Exodus 32. You forget, I forget. And so why do we need to talk to ourselves? Because we forget who God is and what he's done. So what do we say? And I wanna double click here and spend a lot of time, particularly on one aspect of this, but on all of this, and this is gonna kind of be the meat of the rest of our time together. What do we say? Well, David says this, starting in verse 3 of Psalm 103.

"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, and who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed."

Now, all of these things that David is talking about, these benefits that we need to remind ourselves of, they're not, you know, they're not inclusive of all of the benefits of knowing God. Okay? This is not an exhaustive list, but all of these have to do with us, but they're not based on our activity. It's not like David says, who forgives all your iniquity if, who heals all your diseases when, who redeems your life from the pit as you. None of it's dependent on you or me. See, these all come out of the heart, the character, the nature of God. He just invites us to trust

them. And I've broken them down into six phrases that we can learn to say to ourselves. And so if you're taking notes, I would encourage you to write this down and then we'll go through these in successive order.

First, I am forgiven. Second, he is my healer. God is my healer. Third, he redeems my story. Fourth, I am deeply loved. Fifth, he is a giver. And then sixth, he is bringing the world to rights.

So we're gonna again double-click here on I am forgiven. And I know, I know, I know, okay, okay. Hey, listen, Ryan, I've been to church. I get forgiveness. Thank you. But that's kind of like we, can we talk about something like deeper? Can you tell me some theological word, you know, really challenge me from the scriptures? I am forgiven. Thanks, Ryan. I already know that. And maybe if you're not from a church background, you read the passage with me and David said, he forgives all my iniquity. And you're like, iniquity. What is that? Because most of you aren't, aren't using that word like at the water cooler at work or like when you're at school hanging out with your friends, when you mess up, you're like, look, dude, sorry for my iniquity on that project there. Didn't mean to mess you up, but what, what is that? It's immorality, it's sin. And sometimes we don't talk about sin enough because it's so stigmatizing, especially in our world. But, but what is sin? Sin is turning our back on God, hiding from him. And the result of that is a broken relationship. We feel shame, but more people in our world resonate with the word shame than they do sin. And sin would say that I made a mistake and shame says that I am a mistake. But shame is a response to sin because we feel like we're wrong. And that's because we're alienated from God and all that he has for us. So first, David basically says that forgiveness is his basic need, his biggest need. And I don't think that that this is out of order. I think these are in a specific order as he's writing this Psalm, there's no accidents in the scripture. And so why is it his biggest need? Why? Well, we wouldn't need forgiveness if there was just an undo button in life. Don't you ever wish that? You know you say to something out loud to someone that you wish you could take back and you say, I didn't mean that. I wish I could take it back. But the truth of the matter is, can you? No, you can't. Can I, when I say stupid things and Liz is here, don't talk to her about all the stupid things I say, but I say a lot of stupid things. I wish many of them I could take back, but I can't. We don't get to go back in time in our lives and edit out the parts of our life that we regret that aren't what we wish they would be. Where we blew it at a moment of, of weakness or temptation or both. We don't get to. And so we need forgiveness because there is no edit on our lives. There's no undo button for all the things that we've blown. And a lot of this Psalm is dedicated to documenting just how much we need this forgiveness and what it is. Later in the Psalm, David says that the Lord is "merciful and he's gracious, he's slow to anger and he's abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. And God does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For just as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him. And as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us." Now, this is a mind-bending reality. I want you to take forgiveness and let's actually wrestle with how difficult this is because we hear it and it sounds good, but do you know how costly forgiveness actually is? To forgive is always, always, always costly. It's not easy. It's not as though God could just say, you know what? I hit the forgive button and I did it. Something had to be done. There was a price to be paid in order for

forgiveness to happen because God has to overcome something massive to forgive, which is his wrath. Again, not another word. We're using a lot around the office, but when we talk about the wrath of God, we have to here, what does it mean? It means that God is angry because of sin. He's not angry, he's not a god of wrath because wrath is a part of his nature. It's not one of his attributes. And sometimes I think people mistake these things when we say that God is the God of wrath, we think that's who God is. But wrath isn't who God is. Wrath is what God does. So God isn't in his nature an angry curmudgeon who's got, you know, like a lightning rod up in heaven waiting for us to mess up so he can, you know, get us with his bolt of lightning and, and fry us in his wrath. God is a God of, wrath is something God does because God is holy and he's just, so he always has to do the right thing. And if he's holy and if he's just, he has to punish sin. And he's angry because sin is a distortion. It's a perversion of what he made you for, of what he made the world for. He's angry because we took the good plan that he had for us and we twisted it and we warped it, and we shaped it ourselves and to the world it may look okay, but when God sees sin, he's heartbroken and he's full of wrath. See, there's no undo button and there's no overcoming God's wrath in an easy manner. And it's not because he is mean, it's because he's loving.

I love the way that theologian Miroslav Volf writes about this. He says this in one of his books, and he's sharing kind of anecdotally from his life as he's talking about the wrath of God and the forgiveness of God. He says, "I used to think that wrath was unworthy of God. Isn't God love? Shouldn't divine love be beyond wrath?" Which is what a lot of people in our world think. "God is love, and God loves every person and he loves every creature. That's exactly why God is wrathful against some of them. My last resistance to the idea of God's wrath was a casualty of the war in the former Yugoslavia, the region from which I come. According to some estimates, 200,000 people were killed and over 3 million displaced. My villages and cities were destroyed. My people shelled day in and day out. Some of them brutalized beyond imagination. And I could not imagine God not being angry. Or think of Rwanda in the last decade of the past century where 800,000 people were hacked to death in a hundred days. How did God react to the carnage? By dotting on the perpetrators in a grand parently fashion, by refusing to condemn the bloodbath, but instead affirming the perpetrator's basic goodness? Wasn't God fiercely angry with them? Though I used to complain about the indecency of the idea of God's wrath, I came to think that I would have to rebel against a God who wasn't wrathful at the sight of all the world's evil. God isn't wrathful in spite of being love. God is wrathful because God is love. Once we accept the appropriateness of God's wrath, condemnation, and judgment, there is no way of keeping it out there reserved for others. We have to bring it home as well." And so we have to understand this for ourselves that we can't undo things and we can't easily overcome God's wrath. He can't just say, you know what, you're off scot free and, and I could spend a lot more time talking about it, but let me cut to the chase for the sake of time. God can forgive you and he can forgive me, the reason that we're here today, because of Christ's work on our behalf. And I wanna read some passages from the New Testament. This is from 2 Corinthians 5. Paul writes,

"God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's

ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. God made him, Jesus, who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him, Jesus, we might become the righteousness of God."

Christ Jesus in my place. He made Jesus to be sin. Jesus bore the wrath of God so that we might be reconciled to him. Paul writes in Romans chapter 3,

"But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, for all who believe. For there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith."

Now that word propitiation, can we just say that? I'm gonna say 1, 2, 3, and then let's just all say propitiation, it's fun. Okay? It's really fun. Welcome to church. Aren't you so glad that you came to church today? Or you visited. 1, 2, 3, propitiation? Okay, now that's a big theological term. Why is it in there? Shouldn't it be something more simple that we can all understand? Well, the word is really important. Here's what it means. It means not only did Christ on the cross, he put forth a propitiation by his blood. So not only did he cover your sin or take the place of your sin so that it was transferred to Christ, so there was a transfer. Martin Luther, the theologian calls this the great exchange. Not only was there a transfer to Jesus, but also at the same time, Jesus got the wrath of God, took the wrath of God for you and for me. And God's favor, all of the favor of God was then disposed toward you in that exchange, in that propitiatory work and that sacrificial work by Jesus. And that's why that word matters. That's why it's in there. If you have been raised with Christ, Paul writes in Colossians 3,

"Seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things of earth." Verse three, "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

Now, this stood out to me a lot as I wrote this message for maybe in maybe a new way. Baptism is coming up, okay, Doxa, baptism's coming up in early September. And if you haven't been baptized, can I just, can I just encourage you to? What happens when we're baptized? Well, nothing, it's not, that doesn't save us. Baptism is a, is an external picture of an internal reality that's already come to be in your life because you've been saved, because you're a Christian. But it is a picture of what happens when you become a Christian. And when you become a Christian, Paul says, yes, we are born anew. We're, we become born again or, or made new in Christ. But what happens as we identify with Christ, right? First we identify with his death. So baptism, you go under the water of baptism, identifying with his death, and then you come out of the water of baptism and you, you identify with resurrection life. Jesus was risen from the dead, is risen from the dead. And so that is your hope as well. That's why we don't have to fear death, and we have a hope for all of eternity. But that's kind of something we miss sometimes. We love to focus on the resurrection work, the hope of Easter, the hope of the cross, but also

when we die, when you become a Christian, you die with Christ. Meaning you understand that as your sin died with him on the cross, you are now dead to sin. And you live, you're raised to live a new life. And so when you say to yourself, I am forgiven, you're not just declaring something that's profound. You are, but you're saying a whole lot more than that because most of the narrative that we have around our life is, I'm a mistake. I'll never get this right. How could God possibly love me? And you can sit there and argue with me and say, Ryan, cerebrally, I know this is right, but I know that almost all of us who follow Jesus have moments in our spiritual lives where we just think, there's no way God could love me. I am just never gonna get this right. There's no hope for me. And what you need to learn is to speak the words of grace and life and kindness over your life that God speaks. Because of Jesus, I am forgiven. And that's such a full, and it's such a rich statement, and we're gonna spend an equal amount of time on all the next five.

So I hope you've got to like 2. I'm just kidding. I wanted to spend a little bit of time on that because it's so profoundly rich and it informs the rest. Second, he is my healer. And when the Bible talks about healing, it's not always guaranteeing that that's going to happen in this life. But ultimately God is the healer. Man from our church was having chest pains. He's about my age. So early forties, four or five months ago, started telling people about it. They said, you should go to your doctor. He goes to his primary care physician. He's a thin guy. He appears to be, he's very, looks relatively healthy. And his doctor said, well, you must have acid reflux, so we're gonna put you on this medication. He continues to have this, these issues have pressure in his chest when he works out and at other times. His doctor said, he goes back to the doctor and says, can I get a stress test? His doctor forgets. Then his doctor finally, he reached out to him again, can I get a stress test? Oh yeah, we forgot. He gets a stress test. And at the end of the stress test, things were kind of a little wonky and out of alignment with where they should be, they said, we think maybe you should get a CT scan. He gets a CT scan just about three, four weeks ago. And right after the CT scan, they say, we're gonna need you to come in. We need to put a stent in one of, in your main artery because it's like 90% blocked and we need to fix that. And so they go in and, and they, you know, they can stick things in through your arm and go into your heart. It's amazing. And they realize not only is his main artery block, but all three of his arteries are blocked. And so then now it becomes a much more invasive procedure and they're gonna have to, you know, crack open his chest and take arteries and veins from other parts of his body and do a bypass. And as I went to pray with he and his wife before the surgery, and as I laid hands on him, I was keenly aware that God was probably going to use the means, the common, the means of common grace of medicine to heal him. But ultimately, in these situations, we don't trust just doctors. We trust God. God is the author of life. God is the healer. And that's not just our physical story, but that's our emotional story. The spiritual trauma that we've been through in hardship. God is our healer.

Third, he redeems my story. Now this is big and this takes a lot of work to see. And we're all at, you know, various points on the continuum here as it relates to jumping into and entering into our story. But do you realize how much your story has impacted how you live now? And do you know that God wants to redeem every part of your story, not just ultimately, but in the process of making you more like Christ on this earth? He wants to do it today. Can I encourage you?



One of the best ways you can sit in your story is to go to counseling. And I know some of us are really afraid of counseling, but counseling can be a great, great place that God can, through the social sciences, just like he works through a doctor work in your life and in your heart. I was with my counselor last week and I said to him, I was like, I don't know what I'd do without this time. It is so grounding and healthy for me to be with you every week. And it's been really hard and it's really disruptive, but it took me till my early forties to really start working through and unpacking my own story, but it's making a big difference. And I can't wait to see like 10 years from now what God does in me through it.

Fourth, I am deeply loved. And this seems like sentimentalism, but it's not just sentimentalism. It's not just an emotional love. God is deeply committed to your wellbeing. And you need to hear that regularly. You need to hear that early in the morning and late at night, that there is no one committed to you like God is. In a world of insecurity, this is a place of security. Maybe you're not insecure, but like a year ago, we were having a conversation as a family and our daughter who's 14, she was talking to us and she said, "Are you guys insecure?? And she said, oh, dad, I know you're insecure. And then she said, mom, are you insecure? So it's not just me, it's you, too. We all deal with that and we need to remember how loved we are.

Number five, God is a giver. God is a giver. And there have been many moments in our lives where we want to think the opposite, that God is a taker, but everything you have is from him. Every moment of life, every breath that you breathe, every relationship that he's connected you with. Everything you have, every dollar bill in your bank account, every resource that's been entrusted to you, it is all from God. And he is not a taker. He's not a cosmic taker who's just waiting to spoil your dreams. He loves you. And he's, he's effusive in the way that he gives. He doesn't stop giving.

And then finally, God is bringing the world to rights. And we can read these other things and say, if all these other things are true, how could God not be working for justice in our world? This is who God is. And some of us are really committed to justice. And I just want you to hear that you can never have a heart that's bigger than God's for this world and for things to be made right that are wrong. And one day every right, every wrong will be made right? One day every, He will wipe every tear from the eyes of the oppressed and from you. But God is not asking you to prove to everyone else that they need to get on your agenda. What God is saying is, if you're gonna follow me then and you want to be like Jesus, then yes, work for justice in this world. According to the gospel, according to the rhythms of grace that God has for his people, he is bringing the world to rights. And sometimes we need to say that to ourselves in a world that is going crazy, the world is going crazy kind of right now. Just want you to know that. And so let's not, let's not, let's not amp that up with the rest of the world. Like let's not be adding to that noise, but let's just be humbly working for justice with God. And we're gonna talk about what it looks like at the end of this text. The Psalmist wants to expand the conversation, meaning this isn't just something we say to ourselves, but we say it in community and we're gonna talk about that. I wanna invite you to pray with me right now. Let's pray together.

So God, we wanna thank you that you remind us even through the wisdom and the care of this Psalm, to say things to ourselves that are true. To look to you and speak to our souls and say, God, these are all the things you've done for me, to live in the light of reality, to say kind things to ourselves. When often we don't think kind things about ourselves. To remember who we are in a world that is trying to, we feel like always displace us, where we're caught in the waves and being tossed to and fro, God, you are a steadying influence and grounding for our feet to stand on. So be that today. And as we continue to worship, as you work through song, as you work through communion, God, just remind us of how deeply you love us and what it looks like for you to change and redeem our story. In Jesus name I pray, amen.