One of the greatest blessings and yet the greatest curses of humanity is the tendency to forget. Over time, our minds tend to erase information. And this can be a good thing. For example, when a boy is betrayed by his best friend at the age of 16, the sting begins to fade as he enters his 20s and 30s and 40s. His mind moves on, and this is healthy. He forgets.

But forgetting is not always advantageous. The Bible is full of warnings about the danger of forgetting about God, or forgetting all the great things He has done for us. For this reason, a National day of Thanksgiving is important for us. We need all the help we can get to become grateful people. We are guilty of taking the blessings of God for granted.

We just assume that certain things will always be there for us to enjoy, and we rarely stop to appreciate the presence of these things in our lives. And God wants His people to cultivate an attitude of gratitude, to be conscious of every good and perfect gift that comes from above.

So, I have some questions:

When is the last time you thanked God for legs that work, or eyes that see, or a child that can read, or a pantry packed with cans of vegetables, or friends who call to see how your day went? How often do we pause and say, “Lord, my paycheck arrived! My flu-like symptoms have disappeared! My pants don’t have a single hole. There is heat coming out of the vents of my house!” We just assume that the blessings of the past will always be present.

Because we have enjoyed certain benefits for so long, have we developed a warped view of the world? Have we developed a sense of entitlement? Does the Lord look down on this church and see a group of people who gripe and complain, or instead, a group of people that celebrate his goodness?

In Psalm 103, David sits down, with his writing utensil in hand, for one main reason: to stir up in his heart, an appreciation for God’s goodness. This psalm seems to be his attempt to kill the spirit of entitlement that lives within him. He wants to be a grateful follower of God, and so he writes this Psalm. We will focus today on the first 5 verses…

Read Psalm 103:1-5.

In the first five verses of this great Psalm, David raises two important Thanksgiving questions. #1, “How should a person praise God?” #2, “Why should a person praise God?”
Let's explore the first one, the question of how.

Key Questions on the Giving of Thanks

How should I praise God?

V.1, David says, “Praise the Lord…all my inmost being…”

In these initial verses, David is trying to wake up and rouse the sleeping spirit of gratefulness. He does not desire to praise the Lord superficially. He wants to praise God with true depth. He says, “with all my inmost being.” That’s like when Jesus said, “Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.” That is a fierce, fully committed worship style.

People ask me, “What is your favorite worship style?” Traditional, Blended, Contemporary? My answer is always the same, “My favorite style is passionate worship—when people give the Lord their greatest offering of praise.

Sometimes we are a little confused about the elements of worship. We think the offering is when the plate is passed and people put in their money. That is one form of offering and Scripture says that we should be cheerful and generous when we give our monetary offerings.

But singing praise is another form of offering. You give God your guts! Worship ought to emanate from the soul. We should worship the Lord from the deep well of our hearts, not the shallow hole of our mouths.

This was God’s indictment against Israel in the Old Testament. He hated their sacred assemblies because, “They worship me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.”

When we worship God and give Him praise offerings, we must do this from the heart. And I’m not talking about jumping up and down and waving hands, either. As if that is the sign of true spirituality. I’m talking about the attitude of coming into this room to give God my very best praise. It’s my offering and I’m serious about my offerings. And for some people, that offering is expressed in a boisterous way; for others it could manifest itself in prayerful reverence. The point is: we must approach God with generous hearts to give him praise. If Jesus is my King, then I should have strong feelings about Him.

In the 1700s, this huge revival broke out like a California wild fire. The Great Awakening broke out the colonies in the Northeast, and a pastor named Jonathan Edwards became the leading defender and interpreter of this revival. There were many critics who said that this sudden Christian pep rally was nothing more than wild fanatics putting too much stock on experience. These outspoken leaders thought the emphasis should be on the mind, not these feelings, or what Edwards would call “affections.”
But Edwards took an unpopular stand to silence the critics. Edwards had a theological conviction here. He said that when a person is genuinely converted, the mind of that person is enlightened, without question. That person can now grasp and comprehend things previously unknown. But true salvation reaches beyond the brain, it flows all the way to the heart, to the seat of the soul. That sacred place where emotions dwell. And if a person is truly saved, they will begin to show outwardly what he calls Religious Affections. When a person can suddenly “taste and see” that the Lord is good, there will most likely be an emotional response. Salvation affects our feelings as well as our thoughts.

And for this reason, Edwards looked at those revival services and said, “Yes, some of these people at these revival services are putting on a show, but let’s not throw out the baby with the bathwater. Some of them are feeling God for the first time, and it wouldn’t hurt some of you Old Schoolers, you Old Lighters, to feel a little something too! The grace and the goodness of God is powerful; it affects the whole being.

And that is what David is purporting here in Psalm 103:1, How should I worship God?

And now comes question 2:

**Why should I worship God?**

**V.2 says…**

I will not forget all of His benefits, he says. When you go to work with a new company, one of the key questions you want to ask is: what does the benefits package look like? Is there a retirement benefit? Meaning, are you going to take care of my future? What is the health care package? Meaning, are you going to help me pay for unforeseen medical needs? When we are considering a job offer, we do want to know all about the benefits that will come with this relationship.

And here, David, sits down and records the most amazing benefits package that a person could ever receive from a relationship. God takes excellent care of His own. You won’t find a better deal, I can promise you that. When you trust the Lord and put your faith in Him, you become the recipient of some unbelievable things.

Let’s look at them. There are 5…

**Why should I worship God?**

1. **He has forgiven ALL my sins. (v.3a)**

We can praise the Lord for our houses, our heat, and our good health…but what do things matter if we are destined for hell? As Jesus would say, “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world but forfeit his soul?”
David mentions first, the most important benefit of knowing God: forgiveness. Without forgiveness, a person is enslaved to fear. Without forgiveness, death is the most terrifying notion, the inevitable nightmare that awaits us. Without forgiveness, the future is fixed and frightening. Without forgiveness, we are truly are like Ebenezer Scrooge standing before the third ghost, seeing the gloomy grave with our names written there.

But praise be to God, in his mercy, He has provided atonement for our guilt. He has paid the bill with the blood of His Son. Jesus paid it all, All to Him, I owe.

And David captures the idea of a full pardon here when he mentions the sweet release from sin, “I have done so many awful things in my life, he must have thought. I have been greedy, proud, rude, selfish, adulterous, envious, hateful, and cruel…but God has offered me a full pardon. He has set me free from my sins. What a benefit!

This is an 8.5 X 11 sheet of paper. We keep a lot of these at my house because my kids love to draw pictures and write messages. Just the other day, my kindergartener Miles was writing all the names of his friends on a paper just like this. He got to the third name, and he looked at me and said, “Daddy, I messed up.”

And I said, “It’s OK. Here’s a blank sheet. Have a do-over.”

Every single day of your life, you wake up to a blank sheet. How many times have you had to say, “Daddy, I really messed up. I blew that one. I wasted that day. I wounded that relationship. I said the wrong the thing. I mishandled that situation.” But now, because of Jesus Christ, you get a new mercy every morning. What is better than that? What gift could you receive this Christmas that could possibly compete with this one?

That’s why David begins there, with the idea of a clean slate, made possible by a merciful and compassionate God.

Now, you know why Jesus says, “My yoke is easy, my burden is light!” Take my yoke upon you. Jesus’ yoke has no heavy guilt; his yoke is overflowing with grace. Praise God for this.

And for those of us who have been born again, we sing Amazing Grace how sweet that sound.

2. He has healed me more times than I can count. (v.3b)

V.3b…

Now this would be bad theology if it assumed that a person will never die and God will always fix their physical ailments. That simply isn’t true. The rest of the canon of Scripture does not confirm that. In fact, the word says that you and I have an appointment with death and we will keep that appointment. It is appointed unto a man once to die and then to face judgment…Heb. 9:27.
So we cannot assume that because God loves us, we will never get sick and we will never die. But what David is alluding to is good health. He knows that his good health is a grace gift from God. How many times in your life have you been sick and you became well? How many times did your strength fail you, but one week later, you were back on your feet? God raised you up. It’s all those times that we forget to thank the Lord for his faithfulness.

And of course, we must also recognize that when a Christian breathes his last breath on this earth, he enters into a state of complete healing. Every wound, every hurt, every handicap is wiped away. In heaven, there are no hospitals or doctors.

Why do you think Paul began to crave the sight of the heavenly gates? You read the Epistles, and you hear Paul saying, “I have finished the race, I have fought the good fight, I have poured myself out…” and it’s almost time to see my Master face to face—to be free of the pain of this world. Heaven is a place of total healing. It is a place of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual rest.

Famous preacher George Whitfield once said:

*How sweet is rest after fatigue! How sweet will heaven be when our journey is ended.* - George Whitefield

David knew that every healing he had ever experienced was a result of the grace of God. And he also knew that the ultimate healing of heaven was his greatest cause of hope.

Are you thankful that Jesus is preparing a place of perfect joy and rest, even as I speak? That is a benefit we should remember today.

**3. He has come to my rescue more than I realize. (v.4a)**

He has redeemed your life from the pit. Now, many commentators speculate that David has just come off a near death experience and that explains his state of mind. That’s very possible. David had lots of near death experiences, beginning with Goliath. After David killed the giant, he faced many giants in his life. King Saul caused him more grief than Goliath ever dreamed of. David spent many years on the run, trying to stay alive.

He is the author of Psalm 23, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” That was David’s life for many years.

David knew he would have been dead by now, if it hadn’t been for God’s protective hand.

Here is one of the beautiful truths about walking with God. He is the Alpha and the Omega of your pilgrimage. Do you understand this? This Christian life is likened to a
**journey or a pilgrimage (trail image)**. We are like pilgrims just passing through this land, on our way to a better land. But God has determined where the trailhead starts. You entered into the world exactly when and where he wanted you to. The trail starts here. And he also determined where the trail ends, the day of your death is fixed. But guess what? His sovereignty doesn’t stop there, he has also determined the path that you will take and he warns you upfront that there will be some unexpected holes (sinkhole image). There will be some very deep pits that you did not see coming and you will fall into them. There are going to be some very low points in this journey.

David found such joy in knowing that the Lord would never leave Him, the Lord would always come to his rescue. No matter how deep the hole, God’s arm would be long enough to reach him there. There was no hold too deep—not even death itself—that the Lord’s strong could not reach.

When you walk with God, you are never out of his reach. What pits has God pulled you out of? Have you forgotten? A troubled childhood, a complete financial collapse, a heartbreaking divorce, the death of dear family member—you can be assured that God will always pull you up from the pit, if you wait on him.

> *Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord. Psalm 27:14*

If you ever find yourself in a hole, you can be assured that help is on the way. What a benefit!

4. **He has crowned me with grace. (v.4b)**

V.4…

In the Hebrew, those words love and compassion convey the sense of loyalty. Just like a prince is crowned, the power is put on his head, so God’s love and grace is fixed on the head of the believer. There is nothing you can do to change your position. You are a child of the King.

In the Old Testament, when you read through it, if you are like me, you begin to get really frustrated with the nation of Israel. No matter what God does for them, they keep cheating on God. So the Lord leads them out of Egypt and they construct a golden cow. And the Lord leads them into the Promised Land and they build pagan temples. The Old Testament is nothing more than a display of the relentless pursuit of God, His determination to pour out grace on an unworthy people.

And in His providence, God has decided to crown His people with his love and once He willed to do it, there is nothing that you and I can do to turn Him away. Like the book of Hosea illustrates, the Lord keeps loving his children even when they fail to love Him in return.
This is called salvation by grace alone. To the Philippians, Paul says, “If He begins a good work in you, He will see it through to completion.” You become one of His projects and He always finishes his projects. What a blessing to know that God will never stop loving me. The crown of His grace is always on my head. As we sing it, “His compassions, they fail not!”

Do you ever feel like nobody understands your pain? God does. And He has great compassion for you.

And finally,

5. **He has made me glad. (v.5)**

V.5…

As we grow older, we grow closer to God. The longer we walk that path, the more time we have to enjoy Him. The more healings we experience, the greater our appreciation for his care. The more pits we fall into, the more faith we have in His hand.

Walking with God will fill up your heart with a sense of deep satisfaction.

When I was a kid, we used to sing this song:

*He has made me glad,*
*He has made me glad,*
*I will rejoice for He has made me glad.*

There is nothing in this world that can make your heart merry, like a fresh realization, a fresh taste of God’s goodness. So enjoy your Turkey, and your cranberry sauce, and the sweet sound of children’s laughter as you gather around a table. But don’t forget, it is God who fills up your life with good things.

V. 5 again..

Do not forget to give Him thanks.