

BLESS THE LORD

September 17, 2017
Lutheran Church of the Cross
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Our text is from Psalm 103:1-2: “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,”

What a difference a single day can make. Whether it was August 13, 2004 for hurricane Charlie or September 10, 2017 for hurricane Irma, a person cannot help but view life a little differently. I remember last Friday and Saturday trying to prioritize my possessions. I had to fill one single backpack with only the most essential things in case of evacuation. I know many of you may have left your homes not knowing if you would see it standing after a category 4 hurricane came through. You simply cannot look at life the same before and after a hurricane. The same holds true for our Scripture readings today. Now that we are one week away from hurricane Irma, our Psalm for today seems to be the appropriate text for the message. It is a Psalm of blessing.

BLESS—DO NOT FORGET!

“...O my soul, and all that is within me...” (Psalm 103:1-2). Hebrew poetry uses repetition to emphasize images and ideas. Verse one calls for blessing and praise to come from our whole being—from our very soul.

Bless—Do Not Forget! Verse two expands this thought and adds that blessing comes from remembering, not forgetting, what God has done. Verses 3-5 proclaim: “He forgives, heals, redeems, crowns, satisfies, renews.”

For King David, it was remembering the forgiveness from his sins of adultery and murder. For David, it was remembering when God restored his kingdom after needing to pretend to be insane in front of his enemies (1 Samuel 21:12-15). Those difficult events in his life lead him to praise and bless the Lord for his mercies.

For us, it is remembering how God has sustained us and restored our health. It is remembering that God kept us safe through the hurricane. It is remembering that when we thought we would not have homes to return to, God gave us a house and food. Many of us have electricity and air conditioning again. All of this leads us to praise and bless the Lord with our entire being.

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO US AS IN THE PAST (vv. 6-14)

Days of Moses.

In verses 6-14, David turned and saw that his story fit into the larger story of God's mercy to his people. The same God who forgave, healed, redeemed, crowned, satisfied, and renewed David in his life was doing the same for his people during the days of Moses. Moses led the people 40 years in the wilderness because of their lack of trust in the Lord, even after rescuing them from Egypt. Time and time again God demonstrated the fact that he is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

Not only did God have mercy on the Israelites, but God has had mercy on us through his Son Jesus Christ. Because of Jesus' work on the cross, God does not deal with us according to our sins. On the cross Christ declared, "It is finished." His work of atonement was complete.

Because of Jesus, God can separate us from our sins as far as the east is from the west. Because of Jesus, our holy and just God can have compassion on us.

FADING LIFE—ETERNAL LOVE (vv.15-18)

In verses 15-18, David moves into a profound and deep assessment of the fleeting nature of our lives. Man flourishes like the grass or flowers, and then the wind passes over it and it is gone. For us who have lived through the events of the past week, we have seen and felt the truth of this assessment. We have seen how winds can sweep through and in a moment wipe out property and life.

In the face of this sobering reality, David boldly declared that the steadfast love of the Lord is everlasting. In fact, God's love is from everlasting to everlasting. In the face of the fleeting nature of life, we have reason to bless God for his never-ending care for us.

PRAISE FROM ALL CREATION

Finally, David calls upon angels and all of creation to bless the Lord. The end of Psalm 103 is an invitation for all created things to join in praise and blessing of the Lord.

Dear friends, a week ago we might not have been able to appreciate Psalm 103 like we can today. But today, we are filled with stories of God's rescue and mercy. We are filled with a new appreciation of the gifts that God has given to us. Today we can join David in blessing the Lord wholeheartedly with all our heart and soul and mind.