



FROM THE PASTOR

Psalm 103:1-12 Of David.

- ¹ Praise the LORD, 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.
- ⁶ The LORD works righteousness
and justice for all the oppressed.
- ⁷ He made known his ways to Moses,
his deeds to the people of Israel:
- ⁸ The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
- ⁹ He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
- ¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
- ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
- ¹² as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Our psalm for responsive reading this Sunday is Psalm 103. Actually it is only about half of Psalm 103. It is divided for congregational use because of its length. The second half of the psalm is certainly worth reading as well. In fact, I plan to use the second half of this psalm as the basis of next week's meditation.

The first two verses make the theme of this psalm crystal clear. It is a song of praise; a song of blessing. It is a song of praise coming from the very core of being of the writer and expressing the very core of being of the singer.

"Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name."

David defines the words, "my soul," as "all my inmost being." That's a pretty good definition. I am both body and soul. Both are partly out in the open for others to see. Both are partly concealed and kept secret from others. When you look at me you see an exterior, but it is an exterior I choose to present. When I smile, you have no idea how many of my teeth are original and how many are

replacements. When you look at me you also get glimpses into my interior, but again it is an interior I choose to present. Through my words and actions you get insight as to my inmost being but you really don't know how much is my true persona and how much I choose to portray.

Jesus knows. Jesus knows our true bodies. Jesus knows our true souls. The Lord,

"who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion,"

is the one to whom "all hearts are open and from whom no secrets are hid." There is no point in trying to hide anything from the Lord! Yet the one who knows us most intimately, body and soul, is the one who forgives us and sustains us.



It is true that God's law accuses us. We know we can never achieve reconciliation to God through the law. In Christ, that law is not eternal.

"The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities."

The Grace of our Lord, Jesus is eternal. In love, God removes our sins from us for Jesus' sake. How far away from us does God take our sins?

***"For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us."***

Our God, who knows our souls better than we know our own, who knows every little corner where every little sin is hidden takes our sins as far away from us as the heavens are above the earth or as far as the east is from the west. Perhaps the heavens stretch infinitely from the surface of the earth. Science cannot tell us how far the universe stretches or what if anything is at its edge. Even on our own little planet Earth, the west goes infinitely from the east. Think about it. If you were to fly a plane due north eventually you would cross the North Pole and begin heading south. But if you were to fly a plane due east it would never cross a point at which it began to fly east. That's how far God's grace takes our sin away from us. I like to picture it as the distance from the cross to the empty tomb! The first half of Psalm 103 paints a picture of the greatness of God's love. In the second half, we will talk about the praise that God's love deserves both from our lips and our lives.

In Christ's service,
Pastor Brian Shirey



Post Scripts:

- † Our lessons for this Sunday, September 13, the 15th Sunday after Pentecost, are:
First Reading: Genesis 50:15-21
Psalm 103:1-12
Second Reading: Romans 14: 1-12
Gospel: Matthew 18: 21-35

- † Everyone is taking small, careful steps toward normalcy in this time of pandemic. Well, almost everybody. We see pictures of the younger, partying crowd paying no attention to the crisis. We are nowhere close to any consensus on what school should look like for our youth. To save us from the effects of this pandemic, we are hoping for and working toward a vaccine that many people (even high profile people) are already saying that they will not take. In the midst of this uncertainty, our Governor is asking the state legislature to legalize the recreational use of marijuana. I don't know how you feel about this issue. Personally, I see no good coming from such a move. But it is not my purpose to debate that issue in this forum. I do, however, seriously question the governor's timing! Surely a decision of such importance can wait until a calmer and saner time to be considered. Our present moment calls for patience and care, precious little of which I see in the world around us. That is why I very much appreciate the patience and steadfastness that all of you at St. Luke's have shown in this difficult time. There is much more at stake here than simply how we "do" church. At stake is how we endure. And our endurance is exactly the witness the world needs to see from us at this present moment. Keep it up!