

## **Thanksgiving - Be a factory of gratitude (Kevin White, October 8, 2023). Psalm 103**

Good morning. My name is Kevin and I'm your friendly neighbourhood youth pastor here at Cornerstone. Happy Thanksgiving!

For some of us, this Thanksgiving marks a time where we have a lot to be thankful for. Time off work, food, family and a different rhythm than usual. For others, we are in the middle of something and we don't know how it's going to turn out. We may be struggling with our health, some family dynamics or stress from school or work. Wherever we are today my prayer is that the Lord would have a word for all us, so that we can leave here thankful. Can we just stop for a moment, take a deep breath so that we can be fully present in this moment together?

We're going to look at Psalm 103

David wrote this Psalm as a celebration of God and his compassion and love for us. For today we'll mostly focus on vs 1-4.

**Let all that I am praise the LORD; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name. Let all that I am praise the LORD; may I never forget the good things he does for me. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies.**

We don't become more thankful because we have more stuff - it comes from more awareness of God's presence and his goodness.

The latin for "good things" is where we get our word benefits from - it's from the latin word bene - which means good.

Today we're going to talk about how to become a factory of good - producer of blessings. We'll talk about the journey of gratitude - from beneficiary to benefactor

I'm thankful for the book, "Soul Keeping" by John Ortberg which is the main inspiration for this message.

Ortberg writes that in order to be grateful, you have to see and accept a gift that you think is good. So what is this gift that is so good?

We start by being beneficiaries.

Psalm 103 vs. 3-4 talks about how he forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies.

The image here is of someone falling into a deadly pit and not being able to get out. That's what happens when you sin against a holy God. Sin is when we do things we aren't supposed to -

like be mean to someone at school, or cheat on a test, or look at something on the internet we're not supposed to, or lie or anything that goes against what God wants us to do. Sometimes we sin by not doing things we are supposed to do - like when you see kids bullying someone at school but even though you don't do anything - that's just it - you don't do anything - you don't say hey man, that's not nice or you don't tell a teacher or anything. Or maybe people at school cut corners like use Ai or share assignments - or at work stuff is going on and you know it's wrong but you're scared to say anything. Or maybe you have lots of stuff you know you should share with people who don't have a lot of stuff - like clothes or money or whatever - but you don't. Or maybe God has been speaking to you about reaching out to someone - but you don't get around to it - the point is - we all sin.

So imagine we're all stuck in this pit and we can't get out. But then God sends Jesus to come and pull us out of the pit - only, when he reaches his hand to pull us up, we grab his hand, pull him in, and then step on him to get out of the pit.

And then Jesus is stuck in the pit.

Not too cool right?

We get out and Jesus is in our place. If he stayed there, that would be a terrible end to the story.

But because Jesus died on the cross and then 3 days later came back to life, that totally changes everything.

That's the greatest fact in the history of history. There is victory in Jesus.

We're redeemed from death and given a crown

So that's why we're grateful. That's why we bless the Lord. That's why we benefit. It's the best gift ever and that's why we respond with gratitude.

God's love never quits. He never stops pursuing us. Even though he's a holy God. We don't get what we deserve. Even though we're fragile, God's love is rock solid.

There's a story in Mark 14 about a woman who goes to a house Jesus is at. It's a guy named Simon.

The woman brings a jar of expensive perfume, breaks the jar and pours the perfume on Jesus' head.

Some of the people complain and say that the perfume could have been sold for a year's wages and the money given to the poor.

Jesus says that she did the right thing.

I share this story because there was something about Jesus and her experience of him that changed her life. For me, the key thing in that story is that she broke the jar. The jar would have been expensive and so would the perfume. The fact that she broke it meant she's not going back. Now that she met Jesus, she is going to follow him. She's not going to live the way she was living before.

Is there something in your life that you need to break in order to follow Jesus?

She's grateful. She's blessing the Lord with her whole life - may we praise the Lord with all we have.

She's the beneficiary of God's love through Jesus and now she's turning around and being a factory of blessing - as benefactor.

Benefactor has the word 'bene' which we said before means good and then factor is where we get factory from. So it means a little factory that produces good.

The thing I want you to take home today is that we are to **be a factory of gratitude.**

**Be a factory of gratitude.**

We should be producing good. Producing thanks. Producing blessings. For the Lord and for each other.

Before we become a benefactor, we have to be a beneficiary.

Before we can produce good, we have to receive good.

We just talked about receiving the goodness of God through Jesus.

What gets in the way of that?

If you're like me, sometimes you feel entitled. The more you think you're entitled, the less you are grateful.

I saw something on instagram about a show with David and Victoria Beckham. In the scene, Victoria is talking about how she grew up working class - David is like be - honest - she's like - I am being honest - he's like - what car did your dad drive you to school in? She reluctantly answers - a Rolls Royce #wowguywow

If we're honest, aren't we like that? It's a lot easier to look at someone else's situation and judge them than to step outside ourselves and look at our own lives realistically isn't it? We want to be hard on others and easy on ourselves.

What gets in the way of us being factories of good is sometimes we feel entitled.

For kids, it's hard for them to compromise - everything that other people have, they feel they should have too. If they have it, why can't I have it? I can't lie, I'm like that too. It's a concept of fairness I can't shake - but life isn't always fair - many times, we're the ones that are blessed more than others - especially living in this neighbourhood, in this day, with all our stuff - but we tend to look at the people who have more than us and compare ourselves to them and not the ones who have less.

I asked a couple of students what they think people their age feel entitled to - they said students feel entitled because they are going through so much stress - they feel like you should be able to make their own decisions and have more control over their own lives - you feel like you want to have parents listen to you and do things for you. Or like show up to class whenever you want and hand in assignments whenever you want.

But when we recognize that the goodness that has come into our lives is not an accident, but actually from God - and that God has good intentions from you - it shifts your perspective.

I got to go downtown with Bethany and some of the youth to serve in outreach to our street friends. It was a beautiful time with many different moments where we experienced God.

On the way back they were talking about how late it was and that they still had homework to do. They were talking about their subjects and their classes and their teachers and stuff. One student started talking about how they saw their homework as worship. I was all ears. They said they saw it as worship because (it was science) it revealed the awesomeness of God. It revealed how intricate the world is, how vast the world is. And yet the creator of all the world is interested in us.

First of all, now you see why I love hanging out with youth so much - they are so inspiring - but secondly, it's true.

The creator of the entire universe is interested in us. In you. In me. That's mind-blowing.

He has good intentions for you. That should cause us to be thankful for his goodness.

Once we receive that goodness we become the beneficiary. Then from there we can become the benefactor.

Be a factory of gratitude.

We produce thanks to God. And then goodness to others.

So let's put this on its feet.

I want us to do a blessing exercise right now. We're going to write a Psalm - together.

If you follow this whole Psalm, you would see that David starts with individual praise (vs. 1-6), national praise (vs. 6-19) and then universal praise (vs. 20-22).

We're going to reverse that. We're going to start by praising God for the universe and all that's in it. Then nationally, and then individually.

We want to bless the Lord by showing love and gratitude for all he is and all he's done and all he's doing.

May I take a commercial break here - before we start?

For some of us today, this is extremely difficult. We are in a season of pain. I'm not asking you to forget what you are going through or pretend it doesn't matter. That's not healthy. I'm suggesting that it's a perspective thing.

Eugene Peterson - who wrote the Message translation Bible, talked about how blessing isn't static - it's dynamic. It's filled with action. And sometimes the blessing of God is like a little seed, which takes time to grow. So small you may miss it. But when you look around - you see blessings all around you. And though it may take time, often, it's developing roots so that you can grow fruit later (LEAP) :) So this is a realignment exercise - to help us to see the blessing in the casual and even in the catastrophic.

Okay back to our regularly scheduled program.

I'm gonna say, "Blessed are you Lord for..." and you're going to shout out something.

We're going to start out with the universe, then the country, then ourselves

Blessing exercise... (go in the crowd)

Blessed are you Lord for... universe  
Blessed are you Lord for... country  
Blessed are you Lord for... individual

Amen.

I challenge you to continue to write this Psalm at home. I also challenge you to send an appreciation note or a phone call or visit to someone today.

**Be a factory of gratitude.**

Thomas Wilder says, **“We can only be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasures.”**

King David said,

**“Let all that I am praise the LORD; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name. Let all that I am praise the LORD; may I never forget the good things he does for me.”**

And now we get to continue to be thankful as we celebrate baptisms.

It's my privilege to baptize three youths today. Nathan and Maxwell who are brothers and William.

Baptism is a public demonstration of the personal decision to follow Jesus. Maybe that's the next step for you today. Maybe as you see the students getting baptized, the Spirit will tug at your heart to get baptized. Or maybe today will be the day you decide to follow Jesus. That you show your gratitude for what Jesus has done by saying from now on, I'm going to live my life for Jesus, not for myself. If that's you, come and talk to me after the service or send me an email at [@kevin@cornerstonechurch.ca](mailto:@kevin@cornerstonechurch.ca)

Bless you.