

[00:00:00] Speaker A: Welcome to the Hope Church Glasgow Sunday podcast. We pray you encounter God's love afresh today. Find out more about us@hopechurchglasgow.org or find us on Facebook and Instagram. Now, please enjoy this week's podcast.

[00:00:18] Speaker B: I'm going to be speaking this morning from Psalm 103, so you might want to turn that in your Bible, if you have one, and we're going to read it in a short moment. But first of all, I just want us to say a couple of things just to help us get our bearings a little bit.

So firstly, what is a psalm?

Well, the word psalm is actually really another word for song. And so Bible scholars believe that the Psalms have their roots as songs, but actually over time they were developed into the final written form that we have them in now. So although Psalm means song, actually what we have in the book of Psalms in the Bible is probably best understood as a book of poetry.

And poetry certainly can be studied.

But actually, I'd argue that poetry is primarily meant to be experienced. So, you know, reading a poem like one of these Psalms is meant to be an experience. So let's come to the Psalms as we read them, and we're going to do that in a moment with this kind of expectation in mind. It's certainly not primarily just a deposit of information.

You also might notice that it has the heading, it says of David at the top. Now, we don't really know for sure whether this means that David was the original author or whether it might mean something more like, you know, in the style of or in the tradition of David. This isn't overly important for our purposes today, but I'm going to just kind of talk as if it was David who wrote the psalm. So I'll kind of use that kind of language.

But yeah, that's just a point of reference. And the last thing to say, just for getting our bearings, is that one of the things that I'm learning is that the book of Psalms aren't actually just 150 individual poems just kind of randomly put together, but there's actually an intentionality to how that book of poetry has been constructed and put together.

I don't have. I'm going to say loads more about this now, other than to say that we're going to look at Psalm 103, but Psalm 103 and 104 are very much a pair of twinned psalms. And I'll say a little bit more about that later on. But for now, just notice that one of the indicators of that is that both Psalms 103 and 104 start and end with exactly the same line. And we'll talk about that line in a minute. But I think right now would be a great moment to read and experience this psalm together.

So I've actually written it out as five different sections. I was going to try and see if I could encourage five people to come up and help me read this psalm out. In particular, I was going to look at you igniters there at the back to get your attention, if nothing else, for a few moments.

Do you think I could have a few of you to come up and help me? Just to read a short paragraph each?

Can I get five of you, five young people? This is a big ask. I know.

D. Daisy and Hamish, I'm sure you'll come.

Boaz, will you come and read a little. Little section for me? Thank you. Olivia, would you come and be one of mine? That'll be really helpful.

I need corn safra, and you could be one. So I've got three. I'm doing. I'm doing better than I thought I might, actually. That's good. Three out of five. Can I got two more people? Two more people.

This had.

Yeah, yeah. Oh, thank you, Josh. That's great. Well done. Well done.

Hamish, will you be my fifth?

You don't have to. You don't have to, but we will give you a round of applause.

Thank you. Thank you. Okay, great. Okay, take your one, then. Okay, so we're going to read out Psalm 103 with my helpful helpers. Thank you.

[00:04:00] Speaker C: Praise the Lord, O my soul, all in my.

All my inmost being. Praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, my soul and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.

The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel. The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbour his anger forever.

He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

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, as far as he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him, for he knows how we are formed. He remembers that we are dust.

[00:05:11] Speaker D: The life of mortals is like grass. They flourish like a flower of the field.

The wind blows over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more, but from everlasting to everlasting. The Lord's love is with those who fear him and his righteousness with their children's children, with those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.

The Lord has established his throne in heaven and his kingdom rules over all.

Praise the Lord, you His angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants, who do his will. Praise the Lord, all His works, everywhere in his dominion. Praise the Lord. My soul.

[00:06:03] Speaker B: Brilliant. Thanks, guys. You can take your seats.

Okay, so I said to you just now that Psalm 103 and 104 start and end with the same line. So let's have a look at that line for a little moment. It's actually an instruction to ourselves. And okay, in case you've not got a Bible with you, I thought I would write it out for us. And maybe you can all help me by saying this together. Can you say this?

Praise the Lord, you made me.

Now, you might notice that that's not exactly the same words as we just heard read out for us, actually, is it? As a slight change there. So why have I done that? Well, the word that is actually in the Bible, that is often translated as soul in the Psalms, is actually the Hebrew word nephesh, which is a very interesting word, and it's probably better translated in many ways as living being. It's actually the same word, interestingly, that is used right in the first chapter of the Bible in Genesis 1 in the creation story.

And it's used to describe, not humans, as you might think, but actually it's used to describe the animals. So when the animals are created, they are nepheshes, if that's a possible thing to say.

So when we see that word soul in the Psalms, it's often that word nephesh. And so I think I personally find it a bit confusing because I often think when I hear the word soul, I think about maybe the spiritual part of me, or at least the invisible part of me, my feelings and emotions and that kind of thing.

And in many ways, actually, that word nefesh is, if anything, it's more the animal part of me, you know?

But perhaps a better way to think about it is it's a holistic Word, it's kind of, it's talking about all of me. It's talking about a living being that I am.

So that is the version that we're going to be using this morning. So every time guys, I hold this up, I want you to help me out by reading that. Is that okay? So that will at least keep you awake as I talk. That's my theory anyway. Okay. So let's see how this works out.

Okay, so really, in short, what I want to share this morning is very simple.

I want to encourage us to be people who frequently and intentionally stir ourselves to worship, to appreciation and adoration of our loving Father. Or we could say to stir ourselves to praise the Lord.

Great, well done.

So apparently this is something that doesn't just automatically happen. It requires some intentionality. Otherwise why would we need to tell ourselves to do it?

But notice here, the implication is quite interesting, isn't it? Because the implication is that we can control ourselves.

Now maybe that sounds silly, but actually for many of us it's probably easier said than done, right? But the Bible does tell us that the spirit of God within us is a spirit of power, love and self control.

That's in second Timothy. And so as we cooperate with the spirit within us, actually we can speak to ourselves, we can control ourselves and even give ourselves instructions.

Now the culture that we live in, I think often tends to celebrate the opposite. What we could kind of think of as this free and lazy and self centered spirit that kind of says to us, you know, just do whatever's easiest, do what's convenient, just do what's comfortable, look after yourself.

But I want to say the spirit of God in us is actually radically different to that.

Sometimes my children are woken up in the morning with a sound, something like this.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is the sound of me having a cold shower.

The reason that I like to take a cold shower most mornings is actually primarily as a way of reminding myself that I control this living being.

I have the ability to make choices that aren't necessarily just the most comfortable or convenient choice. So I find this to be a powerful thing. So most mornings I have this rhythm in my life where I cut across the grain of what's just comfortable. And I learn in this embodied way that I actually control this living being.

Now I don't always get this right, but I just want to kind of lift up this value for being self controlled this morning. It's so, so powerful. It's something to be eagerly desired, it's something to be celebrated and something to be cultivated in our lives.

Okay, get back to this opening line.

So don't worry, it'll only take us, I think, about five hours to get all the way through the psalm at this pace.

Okay, let's just remind ourselves, what's the first line of psalm?

Okay, thank you. So we've already seen that this requires intentionality, and therefore it requires self control. But let's just ask ourselves for a moment, what does it actually even mean to praise the Lord? Is it all just about singing worship songs? Which is great, by the way.

But, you know, I feel like, as I've been thinking about this, like, the call of this psalm seems to be that we are to be people who are regularly, like frequently, multiple times a day, like, directing ourselves to be people who are praising the Lord. And maybe that doesn't always look like singing our favorite worship song. Maybe it's just something as simple as taking a few seconds. Maybe we're sitting on the bus on the way to school.

Maybe we're in an office that's kind of stressing us out. We're at home with a child.

And we just take those few seconds and we simply breathe and whisper, you know, I love you, God.

I so appreciate your love.

So grateful that you're so much bigger than my problems.

Something like that is what I think it can often look like to praise the Lord, something that nobody will ever see apart from yourself and God.

That's a precious thing.

You know, A few years ago, I took a moment to ask a few people who were all older Christians than myself, but people who were all kind of very much still alive with faith and passion for God. And I asked them, you know, what's been important to you to keep your faith alive? It wasn't an extensive survey by any means, but one of the things that stuck with me was actually the importance that people placed on their personal time of worshiping something that was in the

choir in the secret place that wasn't seen. You know, I believe actually that choosing intentionally those moments to praise God is actually one of the most powerful things we can do for our spiritual health.

I was going to tell a joke about a well, but it was about this guy who walked into a well, but it wasn't really very funny. It was just because.

It was just because he couldn't see that well. That was all. But anyway, the reason I was going to tell a joke about a well was because it reminded me of the moment that.

That Jesus was at the well with the woman in John's Gospel.

And it tells us There Jesus says to her there, said to the woman there that the Father God is searching for people who will worship him.

Kind of just struck me that again, like, I want to be one of those people that when he's searching the face of the earth for people who will worship him, I want to be one of those that he finds, like his radar is going out, so searching for who's going to be the people who will worship me. I'm like, yeah, I want to be one of those people that he finds even if I'm, you know, at that moment in time, as it were, sitting, doing something that doesn't feel particularly spiritual, I want to be ready and available and kind of with a heart to worship him.

You know, there's something about worship which refocuses us outside of ourselves, and that is just so good for us.

As we worship, we're lifting our eyes in gratitude to a point that is outside of ourselves, to God, and little by little that shapes us into being people full of thankfulness and love.

You know, love itself is again, something that is outside of ourselves. It points outside of ourselves.

And friends, this is how we've been designed to thrive.

But, you know, from what I've said so far, this could sound just a bit like taking good medicine. Like that's kind of just for our health. And maybe, you know, there's that phrase, isn't it swallowing a bitter pill, something that tastes horrible, but it's actually good for us.

You know, maybe we just need to set an alarm for ourselves and worship God five times a day. And, well, you know, maybe that might help. Certainly the monks used bells, didn't they? But actually, I think this is quite a different thing. And so to help us get into this, we're just going to skip scan a few of the different things that David has pointed to in this psalm, things that he's kind of, you know, it's part of his strategy, as it were, to stir himself so that he is somebody who is regularly saying, okay, now, I did say that I'll come back very briefly to the kind of contrast and relevance of the pairing of. Of Psalm 103 and 104.

All I'll say is that Psalm 104 is big and expansive. It basically points us to the splendor and majesty of God, and it points us to creation and the beauty of that. And, you know, I think many, for many of us, like, actually, creation is one of the things that stirs us to worship and to praise God, isn't it? And that is wonderful, but actually it's interesting. Psalm 103.3 takes a slightly different approach. It's much more personal and intimate.

So let's have a look at some of the things that David points us to.

First thing I want us to see is that David seems to believe in an experience of the goodness of God. In verse 5, he talks about God being the one who satisfies his desires with good things and renews our youth like an eagle.

Surely that is an experience of the goodness of God.

The psalm also likens God to a father showing compassion to his children. This is a tender portrait of the love of God which gently meets us where we are, and it feels like the hug of a good father.

These are things that I believe we can all experience. And when we want to remind ourselves to worship, to release that whisper of praise from the school toilet, we can actually enter into an experience of the goodness of God simply through embracing words such as these.

Certainly what I found. Like take verse 11, for example. It says, for as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him.

I mean, I can hardly say those words without experiencing something of the goodness of God on my inside.

And so igniters, I dare you. When you next go to the school toilet, I'm not going to describe this in too much intimate detail, don't worry.

But why don't you put that verse to memory? And whenever you go to the toilet, you're like, for as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love for me, and see what impact that has in your life and allow your heart to respond in worship.

So that's all really good. But it does raise a very real question. What about the moments where that felt goodness of God just feels so far away?

Maybe we say the words, but they feel fake.

And there's lots of things we could say about this. But what I've found interesting is that David seems to very much believe in this felt goodness of God, but he also looks to other things as well. So let's see what some of the other things are that he mentions in this psalm. Now, verse eight is a clear quotation almost word for word from the self portrait of God that he provides for us in Exodus, chapter 34, the moment where God passes by Moses on Mount Sinai. And here David reflects this back, saying, the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. It's almost as if David is saying, yes, you are who you say you are.

This isn't necessarily related in any way to how David was feeling at that moment or any sense of God's presence, presence that he might have had.

But it was a choice that he's making to step into God's story and to humble himself to God's definition of himself.

And, you know, Christianity is many things, but one thing it is is an invitation to step into the great story that has been found to be true by millions and across centuries.

This is the great story of our shortcomings, of his great love of rescue, of future hope, and of purpose in this life.

And so the question for us, in many ways, is whether we're willing to humble ourselves and to

step into his great story that has proven itself to be solid ground for countless men and women.

And, you know, the beauty of God's great story is as we embrace it and step into it, it breathes life into us. In fact, precisely the life and energy that we need as fuel in order to say praise to the Lord. You.

Some of you are still awake. That's encouraging. Good. Okay. We're doing well.

And you know, the good thing about this story, one of the good things about this story is that it's not just a fairy tale, is underpinned by concrete events. Verse 7 in this Psalm talks of God making his ways known to Moses. And that may be referring to the provision of ten commandments and other laws, but actually God also made his ways known to Moses in moments such as the splitting of the sea of reeds, that moment when they were trapped with Pharaoh's army hurtling after them, and God makes a way. This was a very tangible thing that God did, perhaps not for David personally, but for his ancestors, for the people that he was a part of. And for us, the central concrete event is Jesus, death and resurrection, that empty tomb which 2,000 years later, there is still no other very good reason or explanation for.

And then, of course, we have our own stories, don't we? Stories of healing, of provision, reconciliation, breakthrough.

These stories are fuel to stir ourselves with that we might be people who praise the Lord.

And I want to say that sometimes it's really obvious when God's broken into our lives in a miraculous way. But perhaps more often, we actually get to choose how we interpret things. You know, in James, it tells us that every good gift is. Every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Light. If we believe this, then every time we receive a good gift, we can respond with gratitude to God and turn it into worship.

And the last thing I want to just pick out from this psalm, one of David's keys was perspective.

You see, in verses right, really through from 14 to 19, he contrasts humans, who he says are like a blade of grass blown away in the wind in comparison to God, whose steadfast love is for all time and whose throne is in the skies.

You know, I think Mark mentioned the night sky earlier, didn't he? I was speaking to the igniters a few weeks ago about, you know, when I sometimes find myself feeling overwhelmed or anxious, one of the things I like to do is to bring to mind that kind of image in my mind of the night sky.

It helps me to remember perspective, that although my problems might feel big in the moment, actually they're really pretty small. And actually that behind the vastness of the starlit sky is one who holds all things together.

And from there, you know, it's really only a very small step to actually wanting to.

Perspective is powerful, and I think David seemed to know that.

Okay, so I'm actually just going to turn the question around to you for a moment. We've seen here some of the things that David has pointed out that's to stir us to worship.

But I wonder what you would say if that question was put to you, you know, drawing on your own knowledge and experience of God, what stirs you to worship Him?

As I said earlier, I know many of us, including me, are easily inspired by creation, and that's fantastic. But I want to just challenge you. We're going to actually take just a couple of minutes to be quiet and just actually consider this question personally.

I'm going to challenge you just to think of going outside of, you know, the kind of the creation things, you know, the mountains, the rivers, the forests, all wonderful things that God has created that do inspire us. But what is it about God himself that he is to you, that he means to you, that you've experienced of him in a personal way.

So let's just be quiet for a couple of minutes and just think about that. What would you say? What stirs you to worship him?

So as we kind of round this off, I'd love us to kind of just be thinking practically, you know, how can we grow?

You know, I said it's really a very simple thing. This, you know, that we would be people who frequently and intentionally stir ourselves to worship.

How can we grow in that? Like, ask yourself that question. How can I grow in being a person who frequently and intentionally chooses to stir myself to worship God? This is going to look different for each of us. But we all know how life can be full of distractions and that living with intentionality can often feel like going against the grain.

One little thing I'll just kind of. One little practical thing that I'll just leave you with as a thought.

And I'm a fan of something that's called habit stacking. Some of you will know what this is. You know, we all have habits, even if it's just simple things like brushing your teeth or, you know, getting the bus to work or to school, even something as obvious as going to bed. Like, there are things that we do in our daily lives. And the idea of habit stacking is that you take one of these things that is actually an establishment, established habit in your life and you join something else into that moment.

So I've actually done that with my cold showers. I.

Because after. Once my cold showers became an established habit in my life, I kind of thought, oh, okay, I could actually like join something into this habit stack on this. So I have a little particular prayer that I say after, after I. As soon as I start the cold shower and then I turn it warm and then that's a moment to rejoice. So that is like my trigger. That's my trigger for my prayer. But you can do it with anything. So I just encourage you to think, like, are there ways in your life that you could habit stack? You know, maybe you want to be somebody who's. Who's remembering.

Let's use it one last time who's remembering to praise the Lord.

So how can you join that into what. What is already established in your life as a habit? That's a little thoughtful.

So, yeah, I said, is this just taking a bitter pill? Well, hopefully it's not bitter, but it is indeed good medicine for us.

And it does take some deliberate intentionality. It takes some self control, as I talked about, to make it a feature of our lives. But it's also something that does get stirred within us as we take time to remind ourselves of and experience. Experience the abundant goodness of a big God

who catches us up in his great story and makes himself known to us.

[00:28:08] Speaker A: Thank you for listening to this podcast from Hope Church Glasgow. There are loads more to listen to wherever you normally find your podcasts or from our website hopechurchglasgow.org if you'd like to know more about us. We are on Facebook and Instagram. Just search for Hope Church Glasgow. Have a hopeful day.