

Like a father

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[0 : 00] Will you turn with me now to the psalm that we read, Psalm 103. And I would like to look for a few moments at verse number 13. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. Psalm 103 is a psalm of praise to the Lord. It's a psalm that was written by David, a song of praise.

And it's slightly different from other psalms, in that David is not really harassed by enemies or by private guilt. We know that a lot of the psalms that David composed, he composed them, he was almost forced to compose them, by things that happened when he was being harassed by his enemies, or when he had his own sins brought home to him.

But here we find that it is a song of praise that seems to burst out of him. And although the personal note is there at the beginning, where he rouses himself up to praise the Lord, David is really speaking for us all.

David is composing not really a private song, but rather a song that he wanted the whole choirs of Israel to sing. And it's quite likely that he did, because David himself was the founder of the great choirs of Israel.

[1 : 29] We learn that from 1 Chronicles 15, verse 16. But we see that it was often a particular incident that made David compose a psalm.

Like Psalm 51, after his sin with Bathsheba, he saw that his sin was against God. And he was appalled at his own insincerity, at what he had done.

And it's Psalm 51 was wrung out of him, because of what he saw. Against thee, thee only have I sinned, in thy sight done this ill. He saw the personal aspect of it, and that his business was with God.

And that it was that he had sinned against God, and he was so appalled of himself, that this psalm was wrung out of a broken heart. But here in this psalm, he stirs himself up to praise God for the multitudes of mercy that pour down upon him.

He sees the merciful way that God has dealt with him all his life, and has dealt with other people, has dealt with mankind, and he is forcing his soul, as it were, to recognize this, and to sing the praises to the Lord.

[2 : 34] And these mercies are unfailingly upon us as well. But we tend to forget them. We tend to accept them as our right.

We just receive them. And because they're there every day, we think that, well, they're part of nature, they're part of something. Not realizing that these are gifts from God's own storehouse of grace.

And that they are not ours by rights at all. They come to us because God is merciful. Not for any reason, apart from that. Apart from that God is merciful. That he loves us.

And that he throws mercies down upon us. David recognizes and sings of three particular gifts in this psalm. First of all, he recognizes, probably the greatest gift of them all, he recognizes the forgiveness of sin.

He sees that there is no gift greater than that. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities. And you'll notice that it comes from God. It isn't that we deserve it.

[3 : 33] It is absolutely undeserved. And yet, from God comes this glorious gift of forgiveness of sin. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.

Not just a sort of a scanty scraping of a little forgiveness that might cover some. But who forgiveth all thine iniquities. Covering everything that has ever been done by mankind.

There is enough forgiveness there. If only mankind would help themselves to the great store of grace. And then the second gift he sees. He talks about being healed from a disease. And he recognizes what a blessing it is to recover from illness. And we yourselves see it after we recover. But oh how soon we forget. The glorious gift of healing that comes upon us when we are not well.

And suddenly we are well again. And maybe for a wee while we are grateful. But give us a few months of perfect health and strength. And that gift of healing again fades into the background. [4 : 37] And we think it's natural and normal for us to walk about as healthy human beings. And then he talks about the gift of redemption. David here knows that God, he recognized that God brought him back from destruction.

He knows that he was on his way to destruction. Because that's what redemption means. That he brought him back. He brought him back from destruction. He brought him back from the calamities of this life. As well as from the pit of hell.

And isn't it lovely how we say that it is not grudgingly that God did it. But adorned with a crown of love and tender mercy. He brings the sinner back from the very jaws of hell.

And instead of sort of giving him a row and giving him a dressing gown. What he does is he crowns him with a crown of love and tender mercy. And then we see the fourth gift.

The gift of the fullness of life. The way that God satisfies his children's needs with food. Food that renews their strength. That means spiritual food as well as the daily bread.

[5 : 44] So that they're able to go on for a great number of years. And he compares this to the eagle. To the kiss of the eagle whose life goes on unabated for a great many years.

Renewed is thy youth. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary.

They shall walk and not faint. The prophet Isaiah says. And the blessings that David sees coming personally to himself.

He also recognises that the children of Israel have enjoyed it. The children of Israel as a nation. As God's chosen people. They have enjoyed those blessings as well. And he goes back to the days of Moses.

When the children of Israel were in bondage. When they were oppressed as slaves in Egypt. But God showed his righteousness. His righteousness there. Meaning his faithfulness to the covenant made with Abraham.

[6 : 45] Remember he had made a covenant with Abraham. And he didn't forget the covenant. Even when the children of Israel were down in Egypt. He remembered the covenant. And because of his own righteousness. Because of the way that he kept his side of the bargain.

He brought mercy to bear upon the children of Israel. And brought them safely out of Egypt. And his justice. He talks about his justice. That is his fairness.

In helping those who had been wronged. You see again his fairness coming out. They didn't have any sort of claim upon him. It came from himself. Because he was fair. He was just. And he didn't want to see anybody being wronged.

And he delivered them. He led them out of slavery. Into a land of milk and honey. He wasn't even prepared to take them out of slavery. And say well I brought you out. You get on with it now. He brought them out of slavery.

And took them into a land of milk and honey. And then we read that he made his ways known to Moses. In his method of dealing with men.

[7 : 45] Now that's very interesting. It's not that he showed us the path that we should go on. That's included in it as well. But to make his ways known to Moses. It means that he showed how consistently he deals with mankind.

So that we as ordinary human beings know exactly how God will react to certain situations. He wants us to feel. He wants us to feel. Sort of to trust him. Knowing that he's not a capricious God. Who will sort of fly off the handle. Or do something that has never been done before. He wants us to know exactly how he will react to certain given situations. How he will react to sin for example. His reaction to sin is forever consistent. He cannot stand it. He hits it. He loathes it. It draws out all his wrath upon it. And that's consistent. So nobody can say I didn't know.

We know the way of the Lord. And we also know of his reaction to obedience. When you obey the Lord. Then he draws near you with blessings.

[8 : 52] He sees that you're trying to do your best. And he draws near you with blessings. And we know that this is not a capricious and moody God. But a God who is merciful and gracious. Slow to anger.

Plenty is in mercy. And he's consistently that all the time. So that by making his ways known to Moses. He makes his ways known to every single one of us.

So we know exactly where we stand with the Lord. And we find that when Moses there. When David quotes there.

That God is merciful and gracious. Slow to anger. Plenty is in mercy. He's really quoting from what God himself said. In the way that God revealed himself to Moses on Mount Sinai. Remember he said. And the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed.

The Lord. The Lord God. Merciful and gracious. Long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth. This is God revealing his own character to mankind.

[9 : 51] This is where we find what God is. This is God declaring himself to us. Revealing his inmost being to us. That's what he's doing there.

The Lord. The Lord God. Merciful and gracious. Long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth. All the children of Israel could truly agree with all that.

As could David. And as can every single one of the Lord's people here just now. He hasn't dealt with us as we deserve.

He doesn't remain angry with us. He doesn't hold a grudge. He doesn't go in a huff with us. Freely, freely he forgives.

That's what he does. Freely he forgives. There is nothing attractive in us. But freely, freely he forgives. He is plentiful in mercy. He is love. And David compares this love to the distance between earth and heaven.

[10 : 56] Which to our puny mind is immeasurable. Is incalculable. But David warns, there's a warning here as well.

That this so great love can only be a comfort. Can only be claimed by those who fear the Lord. It's not for everybody. That love is the comfort for those who give God his rightful place in their lives. Those who have God as number one in their hearts. Those who respect him. Those who love him. No matter how much they think their love falls far short of what it ought to be.

No matter if they weep tears that they cannot love him more. No matter if they cry because their love is hard. And they don't really, they can't really see it.

If their inclination is to love the Lord. Then they can find comfort in the fact. That God reveals himself to us as a God who is miserable and gracious.

[12 : 05] Long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth. But David warns. Please note that David warns. That all of these tremendous gifts are only for those who fear the Lord.

David wants to make sure that people who are careless about sin. People who are careless about God. People who are thinking that God is love and that everything is alright.

That they are able to go on in any way they lack. And because God is love that everything is alright. David wants to make sure that they do not make a pillow of that. He wants them to be sure that they cannot rest upon this love.

When it is not for them. If they do not fear the Lord. If they do not have him in his proper place. And give him his proper respect. So David has compared this love.

To the distance between heaven and earth. Which is immeasurable. In Calculum. And he goes on to a second comparison. And he says as far as east is from the west. So far he removed our transgressions from us.

[13 : 12] Remember it is his love that removed our transgressions from us. And he says as far as east is from the west. And again the distance he chooses there is immeasurable.

Because the distance between east and west is immeasurable. You can measure the distance between north and south. You go north. And you will reach the end of north.

You will reach the north pole and then you will start going south. But go east and you will go east forever more. You cannot measure it. You go east forever if you head east. So we find that there is no measurable distance between east and west.

As there is between north and south. But David's third comparison there in our text. Is probably the most effective of all. Because it comes so close to the heart.

Of each one of us. Like as a father pitieth his children. So the Lord pitieth them that fear him. That's something you see that almost all mankind can understand and appreciate.

[14:14] But notice again, again David says, warns that only those who fear the Lord dare hope to share in his mercy. Again he brings this in. Those who don't know the Lord.

Those who don't give God his rightful place. Those who sit with the gospel going over their heads. And couldn't care less about it. Then you cannot bank on it. That God is a God of love. Because that love is not for you.

That's what David and David seems to be. Seems to be on edge. In case people go away with the wrong idea. And say God is a God of love. Everything is alright. We can live our own lives. David twice he's warned about this.

But we find that David was aware. And he can't hide it. Despite his concern about those who do not know the Lord.

He is aware of the wonderful compassion and tenderness of the love which God shows to his people. The tenderness and the love and the compassion which God showed his people up to his own time.

[15:16] And remember David lived quite a long time ago. And we can see how he understands the love and the mercy of God in the history that has gone before with the children of Israel from the beginning.

And we can see the love and the compassion and the tenderness that poured down upon himself. So that we can easily see how he is moved to express a song of praise to the Lord.

And remember that this was before Christ came. This was before Christ came into the world. This was before Calvary. This was before the resurrection.

So if David could sing of the goodness of God's mercy. Then surely our view of his love and mercy is so much clearer.

For we have the life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have Bethlehem. We have Calvary. We have the thirty years of where he walked this earth.

[16:22] Teaching and preaching. Healing people. Curing the blind and making the lame see. Making the blind see and curing the lame. He's done all that and we've seen it and it's recorded for us.

So surely what we know should move us to a peak of awe and reverence. Of confidence and comfort that is even beyond what this psalm says.

You see Jesus came into this world for sinners. There is nobody that can say that Jesus was above me.

That Jesus didn't come for me. He came for sinners. He didn't come to call the righteous. If he came to call the righteous then we would all have a legitimate grouse.

We would all have a legitimate reason for not laying hold upon Jesus. If he came to call the righteous. But he himself. I didn't come to call the righteous. I came for you when I came for me.

[17:28] That's what he says. He brought it down to each one of us. So that we can't wriggle out of it. He didn't move in a circle of nobility.

He didn't seek the company of the high born or of royalty. He didn't move in an intellectual highly educated group of rabbis or philosophers. What did he do? He chose fishermen and tax collectors. The most clear representatives of the poor and the despised. Of that day. They were the absolute representatives of the poor and of the despised.

And not only did he choose them. To minister to them. But he chose them to be his close friends. He made them his own personal close friends.

Oh they were honest and sincere people. They were ignorant. They were ignorant. And they were slow to learn. And we can see yourselves.

[18:38] In the apostles that the Lord Jesus chose. Yet he never spoke down to them. He never treated them with anything resembling contempt.

He treated them as equals. He was often saddened and amazed at their dullness. But he remained patient and considerate to them.

To the very end. Having loved them. He loved them to the end. They were always treated by the Lord Jesus Christ.

As friends. And as brethren. Like as a father pitieth his children. So the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

They misunderstood his purpose. Remember the village of Samaria. When Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. And the Samaritans in the village denied him access. Before he was going to Jerusalem.

[19 : 41] And they had a quarrel with the Jews. And anyone who was going to Jerusalem. They didn't want to know him in this village of Samaria. It's something like the Arab countries today. If you've got an Israeli stamp on your passport.

They won't let you in. It was something the same that happened here in this Samaritan village. Where, where are you going? You're going to Jerusalem. Well we don't want to know you. It doesn't matter if you're the savior of all mankind. You're not coming into this village.

And they turned them away. And James and John. John in particular. Who was the disciple that was the very epitome of love. And that's what he's famous for.

He was the disciple of love. And yet James and John came up all indignant to Jesus. And said, give us permission to call down fire from heaven. To destroy this village. To consume it.

To consume the village. Not just the few people who turn them away. But every man, woman and child in it. Oh how they misunderstood the Lord Jesus Christ.

[20 : 39] Jesus the friend of sinners. Jesus the friend of sinners. Giving permission to call down fire from heaven. To destroy a village. No, no.

The son of man has come to save sinners. Not to destroy. But they misunderstood him. And then remember the little children that were being brought by the mother to Jesus.

Because they wanted him to even touch their children. And pat them on the head. The disciples rebuked them and said away. Where will they have grown up? Where will they have people of intellect?

Who can talk and argue and behave themselves. But Jesus intervenes. And Jesus patiently explains to them. Why little children must be brought to him.

Must be allowed to come before him. Because there is the kingdom of heaven. Of such is the kingdom of heaven he says. But it takes time to explain to them.

[21 : 41] Why he wants the little children to be brought to him. And remember how inconsiderate. They were of Jesus. And remember the little faith they had.

Which is shown in the same incident. When he was crossing the Sea of Galilee. In the boat. And there was. Jesus was asleep in the stern of the boat. And there was a tremendous storm. And Jesus had been preaching all day.

And he was tired and weary. And yet. As soon as they became frightened. Because the water was coming up to the gunnels of the boat. They rushed down to him and shook him away. And they accused him.

They didn't apologize for waking him up. They accused him. Do you not care what's going to happen to us? Do you not care that the boat is about to sink? Do you not care that there's a storm on?

But Jesus. Although he was hurt and puzzled. At their behavior. And I don't think we'll realize really. How much he would have been hurt.

[22 : 38] By their lack of consideration. Surely he would have said to himself. Why don't they not think of me? They know I'm a human being. As well as God. Why have they not got a thought to spare for me?

Why do they waken me? But Jesus didn't show any sort of recrimination. He didn't rebuke them. He was hurt and puzzled at their behavior.

But he stilled through the wind. And he calmed the sea. And in the hush that came. He asks wonderingly. Why are you so fearful?

How is it that you have no faith? You see he doesn't give them a row. He's genuinely puzzled. At their slowness to understand.

Their unfeeling unbelief. Didn't arouse any anger in him. It was only a genuine concern. At their slowness to learn about him. About their dullness.

[23 : 37] In accepting him for who he was. But yet the disciples were full of pride. You could almost say.

Unless we were the same ourselves. You could almost say the cheek of them. And yet we can see ourselves in them. Remember the night Jesus was betrayed.

The very night that Jesus was betrayed. At the end of three years of intensive tuition. Jesus warned the disciples. Out of love and mercy for them.

And concern for them. He says to them. All ye shall be offended because of me this night. And he's warning them there. He's telling them.

And instead of saying. Oh well Jesus tells us to be on guard. What do they do? Jesus. He acts as a spokesman. And springs up. And contradicts them. And tells Jesus he's wrong.

[24 : 38] And he says to them. That though everybody else. Would deny him. And would forsake him. That he wouldn't. And not Peter alone.

But we read in the next verse. Likewise also. Said all the disciples. You're wrong Jesus. You're wrong. You cannot be right. See how they misunderstood him.

Then time and time again. We read of the disciples. Joking for position. Remember the mother of James and John.

Asking for a position for her sons. On the right hand and on the left hand. Of Jesus in his kingdom. What a strange mixture.

Of faith and pride. They knew that he was going to a kingdom. They knew he was Lord. They knew he was a king. And yet.

[25 : 35] Their selfish pride. Was still there. And even on the very night. When the Lord's Supper was instituted. The very Lord's Supper that we're going to commemorate tomorrow.

While they were still round the table. There was a strife among them. Which one of them should be accounted the greatest.

Isn't that amazing? They were squabbling round the last supper. Squabbling after which one of them should be accounted the greatest. And remember Peter, James and John in the garden of Gethsemane.

When Jesus took them in. And he told them to sit there and watch and pray. While I go yonder to pray. And he walked thirty paces ahead of them. And three times he came back.

And three times he found them sound asleep. And he didn't rebuke them once. But he said with a tear inducing pathos. What could you not watch one hour?

[26 : 42] Concern about their weakness. Concern about their inability to do the simplest of tasks for him. And remember Peter with the sword.

Starting an unseemly struggle. Cutting off the servant of the high priest's ear. As Jesus was being arrested for the last time. And Jesus calmed them.

And Jesus reached out and touched Marcus's ear. And he literally calmed him down. Because he knew that there couldn't be an unseemly struggle. As the son of man was freely offering himself as a sacrifice.

But see how Peter and the rest of the disciples misunderstood him. And then of course Peter's denial. Peter's denial three times. When he denied the Lord Jesus Christ.

The last time with oaths and swear words. And as he denied them. Jesus looked out and their eyes met. And again there was no recrimination.

[27 : 43] No sterile rebuke. Just a tender pitying look. But oh what a tender pitying look it was. Because it broke the heart of Peter.

Peter had been strong in his own strength. Till he caught the Saviour's eye. And he went out and wept bitterly. And then we find that even after the crucifixion.

After the resurrection. When Jesus had gone through we do not know what. He had met the powers of hell and of death and of the grave. He had met the powers that were trying to wrest authority from him.

He rose from the dead. After defeating and vanquishing all foes. And what was on his mind.

Go tell my disciples and Peter. You see the disciples were on his mind particularly Peter. Because he knew that Peter would be down.

[28 : 46] And that he would need a lift up. He knew that Peter would say I cannot be in class as a disciple anymore. Because I have denied him so often. And yet a special message. He died with Peter and the disciples on his mind.

And he rose up with Peter and the disciples on his mind. Go tell my disciples and Peter a message of love and encouragement. We could go on. Remember Thomas.

No I don't believe unless I see the wounds in his hands. In his side. In his feet. I won't believe. I can't believe. I can't believe. After three years intensive tuition.

With the Lord Jesus Christ. As his own private tutor. Lord Jesus was perfectly holy as a man. And he was God.

He was in this world to seek the good of man. And oh how the stubbornness of the disciples must have grieved him. But he didn't just merely put up with them.

[29 : 51] He didn't just act as if they were a nuisance. He loved them. And they were his friends. So in David's praising of the Lord.

We can see that. If he lived. When we live. That he would have far more reason than ever. For praising the Lord. So as you come tomorrow to his table to obey him.

In remembering his death till he comes. Oh please remember. His gentleness. His love. His patience. And as the evil one gets at you.

As unbelief whispers in your ear. As you're aware of your own slipping. As you're aware of how far off the mark you've come.

Remember how nice he was to the apostles. And he's the same still. Nothing has changed.

[31 : 00] Death and the grave didn't change him. Exhortation hasn't changed him. His character is the same. The exaltation of heaven hasn't removed his tenderness.

Hasn't removed his pity. Hasn't removed his concern. And remember that all this. Is directed towards us. I'm not speaking about a fantasy world that happened years ago.

His tenderness. His love. His pity. Is something that pours down upon us here just now. Oh yes. We're all full of dirt and sin.

But his cloak of love. Covers our sins. And as you come to the table tomorrow.

Please rejoice in the knowledge. That poor and unworthy as you are. You're precious to him. That's why he came.

[32 : 02] He came for you. And oh you doubting frightened sinners. The ones who are afraid of coming to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Can you not see that as a father pitieth his children. So the Lord pitieth them that fear him. To such an extent. To whoever comes to him.

He will in no wise cast out. Why should you delay. Why should you remain doubting and unbelieving. Many before have trusted him and have come. And rejoiced in the knowledge that Jesus is the same.

And like as a father pitieth his children. So the Lord pitieth them that fear him. And amongst all the thousands and the millions that have come. There is room for you. Yet there is room. Amen. Let us pray. Amen. Let us pray. O Lord God. Our hearts are full.

We can only stand back and gaze in awe at the love of God. Lord God. The Lord is the same. The Lord is the same. We can only stand back and gaze in awe at the love of God. And the all. And the shining. The shining. To someone who calmed out upon.

[33 : 00] Heaven shall hold. Yet there is room. A demeanor down. Amen. Let us pray. O Lord God. Our hearts are full.

We can only stand back and gaze in awe at the love and the tenderness of a God who looks sinful man and pities us as a father pitieth his children we know that our knowledge of thee is tainted with our own humanity and yet we praise thy name that with our poor failing eyesight we can see the love of God pour down upon us in the passion of the Lord Jesus and with our frail lips we try to give thee praise but thou knowest that we are weak and that we cannot do anything right but we praise thee that the tenacity of thine own love reaches out to us and holds us fast until we're safely home bless each one of us we pray may we all enjoy coming to the Lord's table tomorrow we pray that those who have any doubts about whether or not they should come that thy known Holy Spirit will speak to them and guide them bless each one of us we pray bless the visitors amongst us we give thee thanks for them take them safely home and bless their time of worship with us and take all the glory to thyself in Christ thank you so much for to to keep the fire my pleasure