

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – August 13, 2020

The Lord be with you.

Hey, things are really kind of crazy right now aren't they? And at a time when it feels like so many things are up for grabs, I want to look today at the one constant in this topsy turby world, the one thing that you and I that we can stake our lives on, and that is the character of our heavenly father. That God is unchanging. That God is unwavering. That you can count on God always being there for you.

We see this beautiful reality about God in Psalm 103, that is a Psalm of David. I want to read a brief portion from the Psalm and then I want to focus on a couple of verses. First I read, beginning at Verse 8, The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always accuse nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins. Nor repay us according to our iniquities, for as the Heavens are high above the Earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far He removes our transgressions from us. Now it's the next two verses, verses 13 and 14 that I want to unpack, as a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear Him. For He knows how we were made. He remembers that we are dust.

Now, I don't think I ever begin to understand this verse, until I had children. As a father has compassion for his children. I remember getting up in the middle of the night and going into the nursery and just standing there to watch our little son as he was asleep. I mean, he didn't know that I was there a bit, but I so delighted just in seeing our child. And now, here I am, years later, I so love my boys and I delight in being their dad, and I get a sense of what this verse means, as a father has compassion for his children. I get it.

But you know this verse, it's not just for Dad, because David here is using a word that has to do with Moms, a mom's kind of love for her kids. Because a Hebrew word that is translated compassion, it comes from the Hebrew word for womb. A woman's womb. So the Hebrew word for compassion, it really speaks of a mother's love, it speaks of the maternal longing, a mother's kind of love from the time she first carries a child and her womb she loves that child. So so the Hebrew word denotes a warm, protective, nurturing maternal love that our Father in heaven has for you today. And Jesus paints a picture of this compassionate maternal love and what we commonly call the parable of the Prodigal Son. But it's not really a parable about the prodigal, it's really about the father and his inexplicable crazy kind of love for that no good kid. I mean, his love doesn't make any sense, unless you remember that it is a parable about how God loves you and me. As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear Him. Now, the fear here is not an anxious fear, it's not a craven fear, it's not a cowardly fear, it would be like the fear that I had of not wanting to hurt my dad who had done so much for me. It was the fear of not wanting to disappoint my dad who was such a great dad.

Okay, now the next verse, verse 14. It is critical as it explains the reason for God's compassion for you and me. Here it is. For, here's the reason, for he knows how we were made. He remembers that we are dust. Now, how does God know how we were made? I mean, how does God remember that we are dust? Well, he was there when it happened. David, who was writing this, David knows his

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Bible, and David here is alluding to Genesis, where we read that God formed Adam from what? From the dust of the ground. Just dust. That's all. And then God breathes into the dust, the breath of life, and it says that the dust Adam becomes a living soul. God remembers that we are dust. That's why he has compassion. God knows. He knows that you and I are frail. God knows that the spirit is willing. In the flesh is a weak. God, God knows that we are vulnerable, that we're weak, that we're anxious, that we're confused me, God knows all of that. God knows that a tiny little virus can do us in. God knows the human condition, and that is why according to this psalm, God is gracious and He's merciful. It's why he's ready to forgive. Why, he has compassion, honest. God knows what he's working with. God remembers that we are dust.

You know God is teaching me, and I'm a slow learner, but God is teaching me not to take myself so seriously and to take God a lot more seriously. God is teaching me not to take my failures and my weaknesses so seriously, but to take God's power and grace more seriously. For we are dust, every moment depending on him, breathing his very life into us.

I like what the Apostle Paul does with this over in the Book of Second Corinthians, as Paul says, We are clay pots, we are made out of dirt, but God is breathing his life into us. And in Second Corinthians 12, Paul is complaining about his weakness, he's complaining that he is dust. And then listen to Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9, God said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore Paul says, Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Your heavenly father knows the difficulties you're facing today. He knows your struggles. He knows your weakness. And He has compassion for you, and you can go to him for help.

It might be that there are not a lot of things that you could be certain of in this world, but you can be certain of the father's compassion for you, and that He will help.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler in the pilgrim way.

Thanks for listening. Until next time.

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