

Psalm 103:2-5

Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits,
who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
who satisfies you with good
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

“Forget not all his benefits”:

Forgives

Declarative
Renovative

Heals

Redeems

Crowns

Declarative
Renovative

Satisfies

Psalm 103:6-8

The LORD works righteousness and justice
for all who are oppressed.
He made known his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.

The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger
and abounding in steadfast love.

Psalm 103:9-12

He will not always chide,
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 high as the heavens are 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 does he remove
our transgressions from us.

Psalm 103:13-14

As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the LORD shows compassion
to those who fear him.
For he knows our frame;
he remembers that we are dust.

Psalm 103:15-16

As for man, his days are like grass;
he flourishes like a flower of the field;
for the wind passes over it,
and it is gone,
and its place knows it no more.

In my beginning is my end. In succession
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place
Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass.
Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,
Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth
Which is already flesh, fur, and faeces,
Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf...

In that open field
If you do not come too close,
 if you do not come too close,
On a summer midnight, you can hear the music
Of the weak pipe and the little drum
And see them dancing around the bonfire
The association of man and woman...

...Round and round the fire
Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles,
Rustically solemn or in rustic laughter
Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes,
Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth
Mirth of those long since under earth
Nourishing the corn.

~T.S. Eliot, “East Coker”

Psalm 90:4-6

For a thousand years in your sight
are but as yesterday when it is past,
or as, a watch in the night.

You sweep them away as with a flood;
they are like a dream,
like grass that is renewed in the morning:
in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers.

James 4:13-14

Come now, you who say,
“Today or tomorrow we will go
into such and such a town and spend a year there
and trade and make a profit” –
yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring.

What is your life?
For you are a mist that appears for a little time
and then vanishes.

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

~William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

Job 14:1-2

Man who is born of a woman
is few of days and full of trouble.
He comes out like a flower and withers;
he flees like a shadow
and continues not.

Psalm 103:15-16

As for man, his days are like grass;
he flourishes like a flower of the field;
for the wind passes over it,
and it is gone,
and its place knows it no more.

Psalm 103:17-19

But the steadfast love of the LORD
is from everlasting to everlasting
on those who fear him,
and his righteousness to children's children,
to those who keep his covenant
and remember to do his commandments.

The LORD has established his throne
in the heavens,
and his kingdom rules over all.

The only meaning our lives have is a meaning conferred by this everlasting love of God. This is the love that has planted the generations, cultivated and delighted in us, worried over us and worked among us when we were laid low, and that one day comes for us, not as a grim reaper to cut us down but as a faithful husbandman who wants to transplant his trees to a place where their leaves shall never wither – a place, as Revelation says, where their leaves can be for “the healing of the nations.”

These are lives that gain whatever meaning they have in being treasured by God and then in being spent to increase the divine pleasure.

Lives that actually bless God himself.

“Bless the LORD, O my soul.”

~Cornelius Plantinga

John 12:24

Truly, truly, I say to you,
unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies,
it remains alone;
but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

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1 Peter 1:24-25

All flesh is like grass,
and all its glory like the flower of grass.
The grass withers, and the flower falls,
but the word of the Lord
remains forever.

Job 19:25-27

I know that my Redeemer lives,
and that in the end
he will stand upon the earth.

And after my skin has been destroyed,
yet in my flesh I will see God.
I myself will see him with my own eyes –
I, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!

Psalm 103:20-22

Bless the LORD, O you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his word,
obeying the voice of his word!

Bless the LORD, all his hosts,

his ministers, who do his will!

Bless the LORD, all his works,

in all places of his dominion.

Bless the LORD, O my soul!