

Soul Music

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon 'Soul Music' emphasizes the importance of praising God from the depths of our souls and recognizing His countless blessings in our lives.

Duration: 35:18

Scripture: Psalm 103:1-3, Psalm 103:12, Psalm 103:17

Topics: "Music"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of keeping our minds focused on the Lord amidst the distractions of the world. He acknowledges the troubling events happening around us, such as ISIS and the Gaza situation, but reminds us that God is still in control. The preacher encourages the congregation to bless and praise the Lord with their whole being, not just with empty words. He also emphasizes the need to remember and appreciate the blessings and benefits that God has bestowed upon us.

Transcript

Let's focus in on something that I'm asking God to make real to people of all ages. Of all the 150 Psalms, there are certain Psalms that stand out, like Psalm 23, Psalm 100, Psalm 150, Psalm 34, Psalm 32, because over the years, the centuries, they have become so dear to believers and they transfer into the new covenant, even though they were written under the old covenant, David and the other Psalmists writing in the Old Testament dispensation. Psalm 103 is one of those Psalms, and what's interesting about Psalm 103 is that it never has one request in the entire Psalm.

There's not one, help me, provide, I need you, there's nothing. It's purely, from beginning to end, a celebration of God, a celebration of His goodness, but it starts off, and we're only looking at really two and a half verses, it starts off with lessons for us, though written thousands of years ago, right around 3,000 years ago, it's got things for us today that will really help us. We're going to look at it, because it's such a short passage, from two translations, and I recommend to you who read the Bible and who own more than one translation, when you study the Bible, just don't read it from whatever your translation is, look at it in another, because sometimes the change in the translation, which is very delicate business, translating from the Hebrew, in this case, into the English, is very difficult, and sometimes another translation will help you think down a road which is going to be beneficial.

So let's look at it first from the New American Standard. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits, who pardons all your iniquities.

Let's just stay there for a second. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Notice He's not talking to God there.

He's talking to His soul. Most Psalms are talking to God or talking to people. He's talking to Himself.

The name of this sermon is Soul Music, because this psalm was said to music, and since it was written to His soul, this is before Soul Train ever came on TV, we have soul music going on here. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

Notice the repetition. What's repetition for in the Hebrew language? That's for emphasis. When anything was repeated twice in their poetry, that meant, come on now, you got to remember this.

This is important. And forget none of His benefits, who pardons all your iniquities. Now from the NIV.

Let's look at it. Praise the Lord, my soul. All my inmost being, praise His holy name.

Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all His benefits, who forgives all your sins. This is so interesting, because the psalmist is letting us in on a secret that he found out in his life. The psalm's little subheading in our English Bibles has that it's a psalm of David, but the experts are not so sure that it is a psalm of David.

The text is inspired, but not those little subscriptions there, which tell us where or who it's attributed to. Some were pretty sure with David, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, but others are a little harder to figure out. But the secret we find out from the psalmist is, is that sometimes you have to talk to your soul.

There's another psalm that has that in it. Any of you remember where the psalmist says, oh my soul, why are you cast down? Many times we talk to God, and that's excellent, and many times we talk to people, but sometimes you have to talk to your soul. What does that mean? Your soul is your innermost being, was understood to be the place of the affections, the will, the spiritual connection with God, and now his mind, which is illumined with light from God, he's talking to his soul for whatever he's going through, and he's telling his soul what to do.

He's saying, soul, bless the Lord, praise the Lord. Now in the King James and in our more familiar versions to our ears, it's bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. But bless is a funny word, isn't it, when it is assigned to God.

When God blesses me, I know what that means. That means God shows his love toward us, and he blesses us. If I meet someone, and I say, God bless you, you're visiting here for the first time, what I'm saying is, I'm praying, and I'm hoping that God will show his love, and have some transaction with you, where he will bless you in some way that you need help, so may God bless you.

I got that, but what does bless the Lord to our own souls mean? Well, we find out from the NIV and the more modern translations, what it means is praise the Lord, extol the Lord, lift the Lord up, and that word there in the Hebrew has two meanings to it that always stick to it, which is number one, affection toward God, and thanksgiving to God. So what the psalmist is saying, come on, I'll use myself, come on Jim,

bless the Lord, tell him that you love him, show your love for him, and thank him for all that he's done for you. Come on, bless the Lord, not give him something that he needs, because he's God, he doesn't need anything.

No, what the Bible is talking about here is, praise the Lord, extol the Lord. He's worthy of it, is he not? Has he not given us everything we have? Has he not created us? Doesn't he, didn't he speak the world into existence? Doesn't everything hang on his word? The very fact you're breathing today, God has you alive today, one more day, and me too, am I right or wrong? Now that God has us alive today, and has put clothes on our back, and food, and we slept somewhere last night, and let's just think of the physical blessings, isn't God not worthy of that praise? The creator of the universe, the sustainer of all things, so now maybe he's discouraged, maybe he's cast down, maybe he's been distracted by something, so the psalmist is now talking to himself and saying, come on, what's up with you? Praise the Lord, bless the Lord, come on soul, what are you doing? Why are you running here, and there, and everywhere? Get focused on the one you were created for. Bless the Lord, praise him, thank him.

All the wonderful things that happen when we praise the Lord. No one has ever fathomed all of the strength that comes in just blessing the Lord. Do you know that temptations lose their power when you start praising the Lord? Did you know that depression starts to head south when you start praising the Lord? Gloominess, going into a funk, did you know that that is lessened when we just start to focus on God, and say, come on soul, what are you doing? Start praising God, start blessing God, he's worthy of that.

Just think of all the trouble that we can get in because we stop praising the Lord, and you will find this, you can take this to the bank, you'll find this as a law, one of Satan's devices is to try to get us to stop praising the Lord, and blessing the Lord. He will get us focused on our problems, he will get us distracted on what others have done to us, the past, worries about the future, anything but praising the Lord, because he knows that God inhabits the praises of his people, so that when you praise the Lord, and when you and I start to bless the Lord, the Hebrew is, God sits down like a king, and begins to hand out blessings in the midst of the praises of his people. We have made Christianity much too much cerebral, we have made it only an intellectual exercise, I speak, you try to analyze the words, I get done, the minister says amen, then everybody walks out, but how about bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

Some people get excited at football games, basketball games, at festive family gatherings, but my, it's so strange and hard for them to bless the Lord with everything within them.

That brings us to another thought, bless or praise the Lord, oh my soul, so he's talking to his soul, ah, he knows exactly what God wants, God wants your soul, your innermost being to praise him, he doesn't want cheap lip service, remember that verse in the Old Testament, with their mouths they honor me, but their hearts are far from me, they just go through the sacrifices, and they come to the temple, and they do their religious duties, but inside here, no, that's reserved for other things, the people they really love, the things they really pursue, God says I don't want lip service, I don't want you in church on Sunday only, I want your soul to worship me, I want your innermost being to praise me, am I not worthy, and now for us, this was written before God sent his son into the world,

if David was saying to his soul, bless the Lord, oh my soul, what should we be saying to ourselves, come on Jim, why are you down, God gave you his son, isn't he going to help you now, after giving his son when

you didn't even ask for him, he won't help you now, no, praise him now, thank him now for all that he's done, God is into soul music, but I don't mean soul music, I mean soul music, music that comes from the soul, and some of us have grown up around religion, depending on our backgrounds, where it can be two extremes, it can be ultra reserved, formal, where things that God even tells us to do in the Bible, lift your hands, clap your hands, Jesus said the father seeks those who will worship him in spirit and in truth with our innermost being, we find that very hard, no, I didn't

grow up that way, what does it matter how you grew up, what does it matter how I grew up, I want to go by what the Bible says, if God wants me to praise him and lift my hands or clap my hands and get my whole soul into the whole thing, is he not worthy of our praise, come on, let's put our hands together, but praise him with your hand clap, praise him, we praise you God, we praise you, people say no, I'm not of that culture, I didn't grow up that way, but again, go to the Olympics, and see how every country goes nuts when they win, even countries that are supposed to be shy and not so expressive, over when you're in Asia, when you're in Japan, or in Korea, there is a more reserved culture there, but you go to the Olympics and you'll see something different, well of course, because when

you're into something, you express it, sure cultures vary, listen, if God says bless the Lord, oh my soul, he wants me to praise him, how many want to bless him with your whole soul, and with everything within you, with everything within you, he gave us his son, and now I'm going to hold back on how I praise him, you're going to hold back because you're reserved after he gave his son to die on a cross for us, the psalmist teaches us something by saying it's the soul that God is after, the other extreme, of course, is praise that's merely stirred up emotion, and not your soul, your spirit, you can, through music, and through certain kind of leading, get people emotionally worked up, but they're really not worshipping with their spirits, they're not really making contact with a holy God,

bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name, you can live in sin, and live in disobedience, and get worked up emotionally, but the worship that God is looking for is that sincerity of heart, and that totality of everything within us, my strength, my soul, my emotions, my voice, everything, God, you are worthy of my highest praise, of every praise is due our God, every praise is due our God, so the psalmist now, we're overhearing him talk to his soul, and he's saying to his soul, come on now, bless the Lord, oh my soul, praise him, come on, what are you doing, praise him, wouldn't that be such a good thing for some of us to do this week, when you find yourself getting distracted by the news, my goodness, you turn on the news today, you want to turn it off in

five minutes, you got ISIS there, doing these horrific things in the Middle East, you got the Gaza situation, you got all these things happening everywhere around us, and if you just get inundated by that, and not keep your mind focused on the Lord, you can feel yourself going down, and down, and down, and that's the time to say, come on, what's wrong with you, Jim, oh my soul, praise the Lord, he doesn't change, he still sits on the throne, nothing's going to happen in this world, unless God says yes to it, come on, can we say amen to that, nothing is going to happen, unless God says yes to it, this is such an interesting psalm, he's not talking to God, he's not talking to other people, he's talking to his own soul, and he says, all that is within me, bless his holy name, so kids, young

people, adults, why do that only on Sundays, where would you find that in the Bible, but aren't we, many of us already conditioned, I can't wait to get to church on Sunday, so I can praise the Lord, where would you find that in the Bible, how many are happy you can praise them in the subway, you can praise them in a shower, you can praise them when you're dressing, you can praise them walking in the street, you can

praise them at lunchtime, in bed at night, David says, I just lift my heart to you and I praise you, isn't God worthy of our praise 24-7, come on, let's put our hands together, otherwise, we become like those traditional Israelites, who said, I go to the temple and I do my duty, and then I go home, end of story, and God said, no, that's how you drift away from me, I want you to

be open to me 24-7, I want your praises and your hallelujahs, and I'm telling you, you got to talk to your soul about that, you got to remind yourself, come on now, what are you doing today, have you praised God today, I wonder how many of you praised God yesterday, I wonder how many of you stopped, whether you did it silently, because people are around, or whether you took a walk, or whether you got somewhere and you just started to praise God, not ask Him for what you need, that's not what David is saying here, the Psalmist is saying, bless the Lord, praise Him, extol Him, lift Him up, celebrate Him, remember everything He's done for you, why are you focusing on your problems, why do we focus on our problems, not on our blessings, why is the glass always half empty with so many of us,

everything is what I don't have, oh, I'm going through, well, how about all the blessings, how about everything He's done for us, come on, can we say amen to that, then He gives us two last little lessons here for us today, listen kids, because this is for all of us, for you, and for your moms and dads, and all the adults here, and people watching on the webcast, forget not all of His benefits, now the Hebrew construction of that is like this, not in aggregate, don't forget everything He's done, no, it means this, don't forget even one of them, count them all one by one, forget not His benefits, one of the reasons we stop praising God, and aren't full of blessing Him every day, and why we don't fulfill Psalm 103 is because we forget so quickly, most of the Bible really is a reminder, why

is there so much repetition in the Bible, because you forget, and I forget, Peter writes in one place, I write these things to you, I know you know them, but I'm writing them to remind you, and it's good for me to remind you, Paul says similar things in some of his letters, Paul and Peter are two apostles in the New Testament, who were followers of Jesus, and wrote letters to churches, they said I'm reminding you, because you know what happens, is we forget, we forget, 10 years ago, 5 years ago, 5 months ago, we were in between a rock and a hard place, God brought us through, we were ready to do who knows what, run away, we couldn't take it, God came through, and then 3 months later, we can't even remember what He did for us, oh come on, that's true, even if you don't say amen, it's true,

it's happened to me, it's happened to you, we move on to problem number 985, the next problem, and now the Bible is warning us, don't forget any of His benefits, ungratefulness when it comes to God is a horrible thing, it must be, because we know how horrible it is, how we get hurt, when we see people who get blessings from their parents, and they don't even thank their parents, or you go to help someone, and they have an entitlement mentality, they don't know how to say thank you, everything is do them, everything is do them, that is very prevalent in our country now, you don't find people really grateful, and it's very irking when you see it, forget for yourself, but when you see people help another person, and they're not even grateful, they don't even say thank you, they don't even

appreciate it, they can turn their backs on that same person who helped them within 30 days, and when you see it, it's just so grievous, like what in the world, don't you even have common decency to be thankful, at least be thankful, no, no, I moaned, you don't know what I've been through, oh, let that go for a little while, just be thankful, you know why it's quiet right here now, because we've all been guilty of that, we've all been guilty of that, we're very good at taking, we're not so good at giving thanks, we're very good at help me, help me, I need you, but very slow to say, you know what, I really want to thank you, well, how

do you think God feels, He gives, He gives, He gives, and we don't have the decency sometimes to even have a thankful spirit, that's why the Bible says, in

everything, give thanks, be thankful, the Bible says in Romans 1, that the original world, the creation, how mankind went away from God in mass, was before they had idols, before they made idols, before they gave themselves over to degraded sex, before they did all those things, it's all listed there, the first turning point, the fulcrum, is this, and they were not thankful, they wouldn't thank God, that's the beginning of all kinds of problems, because when you and I are thanking God, that means we're focused on God, and to be focused on God is 80% of the victory, how many say amen, just to be focused on God, and not everything around us, so to be thankful, and be praising God, that means I'm thinking about God, then when I thank Him, that draws His presence, and His spirit begins to

strengthen me, so the enemy tries to make us ungrateful, because he knows to be thankful to God, is going to bring us closer to the Lord, and He wants to draw us away, so He gives us a complaining, murmuring spirit, no matter what anyone does, it's not enough, everybody has a grudge, and an edge, and a little angle of woe is me, and the Bible here is telling us, don't forget even one of His benefits, don't forget one of His benefits, just think, if I were to give the microphone to one of you, and say start from your early consciousness, when you were three, four, five years old, whatever you can remember, and now start thanking God, and mentioning all the things, did He give you parents who took care of you, or did they let you die, they didn't let you die, you're here today, they must

have fed you, I'm looking at you, you're alive, you went to school, you got through school, praise God for that, how many want to thank God that we're just out of school, just for that little blessing, oh, for some of us, that's a big blessing, send somebody to tell us about Jesus, saved us from accidents that took someone else's life, some of us would be dead today, come on, am I telling the truth, some of us could be dead today, if it wasn't for God, and we don't even think about those things, we don't sit in a chair, and ponder His blessings, we sit in a chair, and worry about this thing, and that thing, well, how about praising God, don't forget any of His benefits, I want to say this to those of you who God has blessed, before they went into the promised land, Moses was the one who,

for those of you who don't know your Bibles that well, he was the leader who took the Israelites who were in slavery in Egypt, he brought them out, and for 40 years, they wandered around, because of their unbelief in the wilderness, and then they were going to head now into the promised land, which is now present day Israel, and twice in the book of Deuteronomy, which is his last two sermons, Moses says this, now look, I'm giving you last instructions that the Lord has given me, but here's, I'm going to repeat this twice for emphasis, when you go into the land, and God helps you to conquer all your enemies, and you start planting, and sowing, and reaping, and you build your houses, and you start eating the fruit of the land, which is good stuff, make sure, amid all those blessings, you

don't forget the one who brought you there, he says it twice, because sometimes, material blessings become a curse, because they make you forget God, how many times we've all been through that, and how many times have I seen it as a pastor, a couple gets married, they don't even have two nickels to rub together, they're seeking the Lord, they're active in the church, they want to just do for Jesus, do for Jesus, and then God blesses them, and the blessings, instead of making them more thankful, and more available, no, the blessings draw them away, now they're worried about this thing, and that thing, Jesus said, beware of the cares of this life, these blessings become, instead of you own the car, the car owns you, instead of you having a job, the job has you, and now, you've lost out

vertically with God, you're no longer praising him, you're no longer happy and free, you're all worried, and gnarly, and dry in your soul, bless the Lord, oh my soul, and don't forget any of his benefits, all the things he's done for us, we can't let his blessings overwhelm us, it's happened many times, when I hear you singing and praising God, you don't know what it means to me, and that's people visit, write me emails, and they're so blessed by you blessing the Lord, but I made a vow to God, I stood here when this was just a shell, and these side boxes hadn't even been, we had to recreate these, because they had been all torn down, this theater, for those of you visiting, had been turned into a quad, it seated 4,100 seats, when it was originally built in 1917, a year before World War I

ended, and they had two theaters up there, and two theaters down here, and now they pulled all that apart, and now they were working on it, but there were no seats in yet, but it was just taking form, and I'm not a construction type guy, I'm not a visionary, I can't see things spatially, and I came in the building here one day, they made me put a hard hat on, and I stood right here, and I looked up, and I saw that balcony, and I pictured it like that it would be like today, filled with people, and I just stood here, and my wife and I began in a little building on Atlantic Avenue, with less than 15 people, and the first offering we took was \$85, so as I sat here, and I thought all that God had brought us through, and I thought, oh wow, look at this building, look at the architecture that

they made in 1917, just look how beautiful this building is, it was a theater, and we just restored it to the way it was, and I looked at all of it, and I saw you in my mind's eye, and I said God, you've given us this beautiful building, but what good is it if we don't praise you, what good is anything, what good are these seats, or the carpet, what good are the lights, what good is anything if we're not making this a house of praise, and worship, and prayer, because what happens is churches start out many times like people do, without two nickels to rub together, and then they get blessed with some people, and then the next thing you know, it's all about them, their church, their name, their vision, their brand, you hear more about their church name than you hear about Jesus, and I stood

right there, and I said, I wept like a child, and I said God, please help us, that this building, when it's filled, it'll be filled with people praising you, lifting their hands, and I could see you, I could see you before there were seats here, I saw people of all different colors with their hands up, praising God, and making noise, and I pictured a choir over here, and I said God, please don't let us forget you in your blessings, the blessing can become a curse, you get the better job, and instead of praising God more, you praise him less, that's crazy, and yet we do it, so I just want to charge all of you, and those of you watching here, bless the Lord, tell your soul, bless the Lord, praise him, and don't forget any of his benefits, everything you have comes from him, do I get an

amen, everything you have, no, no, no, no, pastor, pastor, I went to college, no, God helped you to go to college, no, I got this job, God gave you the job, no, I got this open door, this break, no, God gave you that break, everything comes from God, and when we forget that, we start drifting away, and then as he talks about all of God's benefits, he gives us for the first one, which is the best one, and we could talk about it until tonight, and still not touching it, he says soul, please, bless the Lord, would you please praise him, because he has forgiven you all your iniquity, he has forgiven you all your sins, how many sins are represented in this room, and they're all gone, there's an interesting thing about that word that he uses there, who forgives all your sins, or pardons all

your iniquity, to us, pardon means this, you did a crime, you got convicted, and then somebody says, you don't have to serve the 10 years, you don't have to serve the 20 years, you're pardoned, that's the least to

God that forgiving and pardoning means, it means all of that, and thank God for it, the wages of sin is death, the soul that sinneth shall surely die, and God through Jesus Christ, if you're here today, and you haven't put your faith in Christ, do not leave this building, until you ask Christ into your life, and put your trust in him, because coming to this church won't help you in the day of judgment, how would this church help you in the day of judgment, how would I help you, I'm just a guy, no, through Jesus Christ, through faith in him, we cannot be punished, because he took

our punishment on the cross, and God cannot punish the same sins twice, so we're free, the Bible talks about free from the penalty of sin, we're pardoned, we don't have to be punished for eternity, we're going to be with Christ for eternity, how many are looking forward to being with Christ for all eternity, that's the hope of the Christian, but that's the surface meaning, very, very important, but what this word implies in the Hebrew language, and in the New Testament too, is that perfect relations are restored, when God forgives you of your sins, somebody can pardon you, but still have resentment against you, you can say, I'm sorry to someone, and they say, okay, I'll let it go, but you know for the rest of your life, there's a wall up there, how many know what I'm talking about,

because a lot of people are, okay, I'll forgive, but I won't ever forgive, not so with God, God says, what sin, as far as the east is from the west, I remove your sin, and your sin just brought a cloud between me, the sun, bright shining sun, and your life, I love you, not less, I love you all the more, I want to bless you and help you, I know, but what I did God, and I did it so many times, what are you talking about, it's all gone, I love you with an everlasting love, mercy is my delight, God delights to show mercy, so forgiveness means more than just removal of the penalty, what it means is that God's saying, come on, let's walk together, because I love you, and many times we don't feel worthy, how many have ever not even felt worthy of God's love, lift your hand, if you've ever gone

there, my God, how could you love me, how could you love such a wretch like me, and that's why David says, soul, you better praise him with everything within you, because he has forgiven you all your iniquity, brothers and sisters, there's not one record of anything we've done wrong, anywhere found in heaven right now, why are you so quiet, how many are happy, there's not one record of one scintilla of one anything that we've ever done, come on, let's praise him, bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me, kids, remember this, adults too, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness, if anyone says he hasn't sinned, he's a liar, the truth is not in him, I write this to you that you don't sin, but if anyone does sin, John

says, we have a lawyer, we have an advocate with the Father, even Christ Jesus, you want to have something to praise the Lord about as we get to sing this song and dismiss the meeting, how about this, right now Jesus is not on a cross, right now Jesus is not walking around on planet earth, he sent the Holy Spirit to represent him, do you know where Jesus is right now, he's seated at the right hand of the Father, and he's praying for us today, and when you and I were sleeping last night, he was praying and making intercession, and when the devil comes in like a flood, God is able to raise up a standard against what the devil wants to do, come on, let's put our hands together, we praise you Lord, we bless you Lord, we magnify you Lord, we magnify you Lord, Lord as we dismiss, help us to be

a people that praise you every day, not just in church, save us from American traditionalism, make us men and women filled with praise 24-7, because you are good 24-7, help us not to forget any of your benefits, help us to remember them, remind us of them, things that happened decades ago, years ago, months ago, hours ago, show us all your goodness so that we can praise you even deeper, don't let your

blessings become a detriment, but help us to praise you more because of your blessings, not less, don't let material things cramp the spirit of praise, and we thank you today from the bottom of our heart, that you are the God who has forgiven us all our iniquity, every wrong thing we've ever done, no matter how many times we did it, where we did it, how we did it, doesn't matter, it is under

the blood of Jesus Christ, we thank you for the blood, that though our sins are scarlet, we're scarlet, they shall be whiter than snow, thank you that we're free and clean, not because of us, but because of Jesus, help us to love him the more for it, and help us to walk not in condemnation, but in praise and worship and adoration and thanksgiving, give us the rest of the day, a day of blessing, a day of your presence, a day of your people being built up, we pray this in Jesus' name, and everybody said amen, turn around and hug three or four people, will you right now?

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