

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH GOD?

Psalm 103:1-5

To the Psalmist life did not look like a jigsaw puzzle with the center pieces missing. Everything was there, including the important part of the picture, which is God.

To many people today life does look like a jigsaw puzzle which has to be put together without the benefit of the most important piece, which is God. The piece is missing only because people have thrown it away.

We live in an age which is trying to make its own way---without God. We are reaping the seed which was sown in an earlier day. People thought they could get rid of God. They put man in the center of life. Human knowledge and progress, they thought, could take the place of God the Father. Technology and expanding civilization could take the place of God the Son. Advancements in the area of science could replace the Holy Spirit of God. The wind has been sown, and now we are reaping the whirlwind.

In the whirlwind, modern man asks himself the bewildering question, "What about God?" In an age paralyzed with dread because of the power available to man, and civilization in danger of being drained until it is empty to the core, people are asking each other, "What are you going to do with God?"

The answer, of course, is that you are not going to do anything with God. God is not a puppet. He is the actor. He is not being acted upon by people who imagine that His very existence depends upon what they think of Him. God is the actor, constantly acting in the way that seems best to Him, and to Him alone.

In this age, when so many things have gone their way, humanity has a great deal of trouble remembering Who God is and what He is like. People actually think that they can control Him or influence Him by their little pieties. They think they can manipulate Him according to their wills. So they spend their lives in frantic and feverish efforts to get God on their side, misusing His holy name for their own sinful purposes.

It won't work. You can't do anything with God. It is a good thing that you can't do anything with Him. If you could, He would not be God.

All of us had better get used to the fact that God will be God, no matter what. Men may possess the capability of blowing up the world. God, however, is far more powerful than a billion times a billion detonated hydrogen bombs. He will do what He wishes to do, no matter what we may think about Him. He will be God, and none can ever hem Him in or make Him a personal servant.

The Psalmist was too intelligent and observant, and too aware of what it meant to be a man, to be taken in by the foolish idea that God can be moved around by human hands like a piece on a checkerboard. Since God is, and is really God, there is only one way to live with Him. "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

Don't try to put God on the outskirts of life. He is at the center of it, whether you like it or not. You can live your life, of course, way out there on the outskirts, away

from God, and act as if God does not exist. You can live apart from God, if you want to, complaining that life does not make any sense. Life is bound to be senseless, meaningless, and purposeless, if you insist on living out there on the rim of life, pretending that the whole thing does not have any hub. Naturally, when you hit a bump, you will wonder why, and there will not be a satisfactory answer.

Without some point of reference, nobody could get his bearings in this world. No one would ever know what latitude and longitude are. No one would ever be able to find someone lost at sea. There would not be any way of telling anything about time and space. Cut off from God, man can no longer take his bearings.

When the hub has been removed from a wheel, there cannot be any spokes to the rim. Without those spokes it does not make any sense at all to have the rim. That is where a lot of people want to live their lives--out there on a rim of a wheel without any hub or spokes. I am not talking now about crass and blatant atheism, although that is part of the picture in the modern world. I am speaking about people with good intentions who mouth half-truths about God. Most people acknowledge that this universe did not come into existence on its own. They declare that there must be "something" behind the order and rhythm of nature. But God is more than "something." He is not just an idea, born in the mind of man and given some place which man decides that He ought to have. He is God, picking His own time and place, doing what seems to Him good, acting as only He can, and having a heart for the world that is His own great divine heart.

This is the God about Whom the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 103:1-5.

God is good. You can ignore Him, of course, and worry yourself into a bleeding ulcer or crippling and fatal coronary. You can ignore God's promises that He will care for you, and His assurances that He will love you until you draw your last breath. You can ignore these facts, and also the fact that Christ's blood was poured on on the cruel cross at Calvary to blot out all of your misdeeds. You can ignore everything God is and everything that God has done, and you are the one who will be hurt the worst by it.

You can ignore God's will as it is expressed in His Word, living as if your body belongs to you and to you alone---and almost anyone can tell you what will happen. Forget all about good health habits, and you know what will happen. Still, people try to live apart from God and His Word. He has given humanity a code of do's and dont's. A lot of people are convinced that His Word is just a joy-killer. They seem to think that they are on the end of a leash, and that God is always jerking them back from the gay time they want to have. They try to break the leash and to go free. They are free to become the miserable slaves of their own passions and drives. Are you going to try to ignore God's laws, living as you please, thinking, talking, and doing precisely as you please? If you do go ahead with that attempt, you will see what will happen. But don't complain that your life is empty, meaningless, and purposeless. It is bound to be that way when you try to ignore God.

You can ignore God's voice. You can drown out His voice with your own voice. You can listen to every other voice and do what they tell you to do. But, if you do, don't complain when you are overcome by the tumult and commotion of an over-busy and completely heartless world.

You can try to hide from God. You may even think that you can get away with it. You can keep your own secret sins, imagining that you are safe. Go ahead, and try to pull the trick of Adam and Eve. Hide behind the bushes as they did after falling away from God. Go ahead, and try to hide behind the trees of your own excuses and pretenses. Go ahead and blame your parents because you were born, or because, as you say, they did not do the right thing by you. Blame God because He made you the way that He did. Go ahead and blame your environment, as if it were responsible for everything that has gone wrong with you. Go ahead and hide behind your tree, completely forgetting about the tree of Christ's cross, where the Son of God died for the sins of the world. God does not hide Himself from the world, and He does not hide Himself from the world, and He does not hide from you. He is there to be seen in all His mercy, love, and forgiveness.

Don't think you can use God just to suit yourself. Do you think of Him as a car-hop, ready to come when you honk the horn? Do you think that you can flash on the lights of your prayers, and God will hurry up to your side saying, "Yes, sir, may I take your order?" Do you think of God as ready for your beck and call, but not close enough to jar you out of your comfortable piety, to change your life, and to put you to work for Him with the real sweat of discipline and sacrifice?

Don't try to create God in your own image. He will not be the kind of God you want Him to be, with the same ideas and notions which you have, and with the same little pride and prejudices that characterize your own life as you try to arrange it tidily without Him. You can't just take Him or leave Him, as it happens to fit your fancy at the moment. He is going to be God, whether you like it that way or not.

What are you going to do with God? The right thing for you to do with Him is to praise Him. Listen to the Psalmist: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; Who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."

The Psalmist set himself to count the benefits he had received from God, but he soon found himself engaged in an impossible task. He found that he could not count the blessings which God had given him. However, if he could not enumerate all of them, he certainly would not forget them. It seems that he took the benefits which he did not want to forget and tied them up in bundles. He might not remember all that was tied up in each bundle, but he could not forget the bundle. He then incorporated those bundles into a song, knowing that a song is one of the easiest things to remember.

There were several reasons why the Psalmist was grateful to God and praised Him, namely, because:

1. He forgiveth.

"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." The forgiveness of sins is one of the greatest wonders of the Christian experience. Sin, iniquity, and transgression are things that man can do in a moment, but can never undo. It is wonderful that we have a God Who can forgive us and remove our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.

2. He healeth.

"Who healeth all thy diseases." Bodily healing is frequently only temporary. God

is the One Who heals our diseases---the disease of sin, perplexity, and sorrow.

3. He redeemeth.

"Who redeemeth thy life from destruction." On the one hand the final outcome of sin is destruction, and on the other hand the culmination of God's action in relation to sin is redemption.

4. He crowneth.

"Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies." His mercies are plentiful. The love that forgives is the love that crowns. God saves from sin and brings us into a glorious heritage and bestows upon us numerous blessings.

5. He satisfieth.

"Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things." He meets the needs of men. As Paul said, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phillipians 4:19). Every need shall be met by His good gifts.

6. He reneweth.

"So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."

The Bible plainly teaches that every child of God should thank and praise Him for the innumerable benefits He bestows upon him. Thanksgiving is a duty. We ought to be thankful to God for life, salvation, the possibilities of usefulness in Christian service, and the assurance of a home in heaven. Thanksgiving is a deed. The most beautiful giving of thanks is expressed in deeds. It is one thing to say that we love God, and quite another to show that we do. Christ praised and thanked the Father for His benefits, but He also always did those things that pleased Him. God also delights to have us show our love and gratitude by our acts. Thanksgiving is a delight. The Bible overflows with praise because there is so much for which to praise the Lord. "My cup runneth over" is the expression of a soul that is filled with delight. Some of God's children never have an overflowing cup. They are like the old colored mammy who was asked if she were thankful. She replied, "I ain't got nothing to complain on." One admires the spirit of the brother who was always praising the Lord. No matter what took place or what experience he passed through, he found something for which to praise the Lord. One day his companions said to him, "John, if you don't stop that business of always praising the Lord, we will put you in a barrel." John answered, "All right, I'll praise the Lord through the bung hole."

Friend, whatever you do, do not forget the benefits of the Lord. He is a good God. He is your heavenly Father. He sent His Son to be the Saviour of the sinners who would believe on Him. He sends the Holy Spirit into your heart to give you strength, peace, joy, and courage. Accept the forgiveness and healing which He offers to you. He will satisfy you with good as long as you live. Forget not all His benefits. Remember Him with praise. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name."