

7.30.23 – Pentecost 9

“State of the Pastor”

The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

Psalm 103:1-5, 15-22 (NIV)

Of David.

- ¹ Praise the Lord, my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
- ² Praise the Lord, my soul,
and forget not all his benefits—
- ³ who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,
- ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
- ⁵ who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.
- ¹⁵ The life of mortals is like grass,
they flourish like a flower of the field;
- ¹⁶ the wind blows over it and it is gone,
and its place remembers it no more.
- ¹⁷ But from everlasting to everlasting
the Lord’s love is with those who fear him,
and his righteousness with their children’s children—
- ¹⁸ with those who keep his covenant
and remember to obey his precepts.
- ¹⁹ The Lord has established his throne in heaven,
and his kingdom rules over all.
- ²⁰ Praise the Lord, you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his bidding,
who obey his word.
- ²¹ Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts,
you his servants who do his will.
- ²² Praise the Lord, all his works
everywhere in his dominion.
- Praise the Lord, my soul.

Leader: This is an Important Reminder from God! All: Thanks be to God!

Mark 10:26-27, 46-52 (NIV)

- ²⁶ The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?”
- ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”

Blind Bartimaeus Receives His Sight

- ⁴⁶ Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means “son of

Timaeus”), was sitting by the roadside begging. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

⁴⁸ Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.”

So, they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” ⁵⁰ Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

⁵¹ “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.”

⁵² “Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Leader: These Words of Strong Faith Are of God! All: Thanks be to God!

Please pray with me:

Father God, we praise and bless your holy name. As we re-gather in your house of worship, we are reminded how faithful you are to us, and how strong our faith is in you. We have been together in different ways so far this summer because you protected our fellowship and worship and for that we are grateful. Now let us continue our discipleship journeys together honoring testimonies of how you led each of us and provided for us. May we feel your presence through the word and each other. And may your voice be the one heard today as you speak through mine. Amen.

I’m baaaack! And boy, does it feel good to see you, hug you, and feel the Lord’s presence in this place! I have missed you all. Of course, I worshipped online or with an occasional TV preacher while I was at home recovering, but it’s just not the same, even though I saw some of you last week as I tested my strength by coming to church as a guest. I am so grateful for your leadership initiative to welcome Rev. Dr. Jim Weaver and your flexibility worshipping with New Beginning Missionary Baptist Church! I and the church have expressed our gratitude to Pastor Ed. Can we say that the end of May, June, and July were one big unintentional “Divine Experiment?” So, pat yourselves on the back for sustaining our worship, Bible Study, fellowship, and community service while I was out. Well done everyone! Let’s move on to the Scripture, chosen to be a little autobiographical.

Psalm 103 praises God's mercy, forgiveness of sin, healing of sickness, deliverance from death, and the many benefits of love, compassion, provision, rest, and renewal. The writer, David, found hope in the Lord's relationship with him and his people. During my health crisis, I too found myself leaning on the Lord's many blessings and opportunities to share his love and strength with others (future sermon stories). My two-month surgery and recovery were easier because of this psalm and others like it: Psalm 23, 40, 121, and of course, the Lord's Prayer and the Serenity Prayer were my familiar go-to's when I didn't have my Bible close by or was having a medical test.

I give the doctors, nurses, and staff a lot of credit for my treatment, but I give God all the praise for his healing and restoration. I told him several times that I had a lot more kingdom work to do here on earth and at this location! So far, he agrees! In our psalm, David reminds all creation and all beings to praise God's workmanship and healing mercy. We praise God as we did in our morning hymns as a body of believers, but do you individually praise him for personal renewal, salvation, and your strength every day? As my heart and muscles struggled, I cried out for supernatural strength to endure and heal, while praying for a qualified medical team. Not every supplication gets answered of course, but we must ask and trust that God's plan and will are fulfilled. As Wayne Yawn so capably taught from his own life experiences with you, pastors are human first, so our bodies are temporary and require medical attention and rest like yours do. The psalmist reminds us that our bodies are like grass or flowers that wither and die, yet the Lord's love is everlasting and eternal now and forever if we love him, keep his commandments, and

share the story of Jesus. “Bless the Lord” the writer cries out, and “Praise the Lord for you his servants who do his will.” That means you!

Thank you again for your visits, calls, notes, gifts, and prayers! I will be thanking you often and know that your example will make me a better pastor to you! Some of you may not know that this was my first hospitalization since I was nine years old, and my very first surgery ever! I had no idea! One silver lining is that I have a new and deeper understanding of pastoral care than I did before. The other thing I must share is how peers and fellow ministers came to pray with me and care for me: Katie Harding from NorthStar came right away, Sean Roberds from MACBF (& First Baptist Herndon), Lisa Smith from Convergence, Pastor Ed and his trustee Kary Sanders. I got flowers from Zion Medical, heard from Bryan Jones of NorthStar, the Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry leaders, Sopranessence, the Shepherd Center, Amerikids, and many of my former church ministers, current (Debbie, Aubrey) and former UBC members visited, texted or called (Wayne, Jerry, Mae, Phil). It was uplifting and reassuring to know that God has touched so many through this church and our various ministries.

My last sermon on Mother’s Day had a strong passage, 1 Peter 4:1-11. Peter exhorts his audience, mostly Gentiles around Asia Minor, to maintain a Christlike attitude of **patient endurance, courage, and strong resolve** to do God’s will, no matter the amount of suffering. That instruction was meant for all of us! And certainly, it affected my response in the hospital. For Christ followers, their lives are changed by Him and must live out that transformation. We are blessed and redeemed: saved both physically and spiritually through Jesus Christ our Savior who died

for us on the cross. It seems to me that we just celebrated Easter, so let us remember his agony on the cross and the joy of the resurrection and empty tomb, all for us. Many pastors last year and this left their vocations, frustrated by the pandemic, failing budgets, the economy, stress, or their congregation's apathy. Even now pastors are exhausted; this is the state of the Pastorate in 2023. Now that **your** pastor is refreshed and re-energized from her time off, let us lift up other pastors, leaders, volunteers, and churches for God's renewal and restoration. And medical facility folks are still recovering from the strains of pandemic, longer hours, and insufficient staff. Please pray for all these who are called as "servants who do his will."

The Good News, however, is that He knows us in our weakness yet loves us anyway! So many times, when we are in a crisis, whether it's financial, emotional, or a circumstance of illness or death, we bargain with God to try to figure out how we can be better, stronger, more disciplined, etc. In our second passage, which we will go deeper into next week, Jesus explains that with man, performance does not matter. "Better" is impossible to sustain with man's willpower; only through God can all things be possible. Salvation comes to the humble, the needy, and the undeserving, not to the fittest or healthiest. Do we really know that and agree? In his cries to be healed, Blind Bartimaeus knew that much about this man called Jesus. We will study his story next Sunday as we look a little deeper in August into several healings of Jesus. I hope you'll join us then. It is an honor and pleasure to be back teaching and preaching among you. Amen. //

Will you pray with me? Merciful God, we thank you for our health and fellowship in this place and beyond these walls. Help us to lean more on your love and will, making the best choices in how we live each day and how our lives show others your grace and mercy. Lord, we thank you and praise your healing power. We pray for all pastors, ministers, their families, church leaders, and medical personnel as they try to rest and refresh their bodies and spirits this summer. Keep them safe, strong, and highly motivated to continue serving others in Kingdom work. In your name, we pray, **Amen.**