



### Grain

“Whatever you do, you begin from the premise that you’re human Together.” –Musimbi Kanyoro  
Submitted by Vernita Kennen, Roseville, MN

### Field

- <sup>1</sup>Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.
- <sup>2</sup>Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits—
- <sup>3</sup>who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,
- <sup>4</sup>who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
- <sup>5</sup>who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.
- <sup>6</sup>The LORD works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed.
- <sup>7</sup>He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.
- <sup>8</sup>The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Psalm 103: 1-8

### Thoughts

Someone once told me to read Psalm 103 when I was having trouble forgiving myself. What is it about this Psalm that is so ageless and healing that it embraces ancient stories as well as our own?

Psalm 103 may have been written while the Hebrew people were banished from their homeland or at least close to that exilic part of their history. How easy it must have been to sometimes blame themselves for what their oppressors did to them or to project their pain onto others within their community. We take our flawed selves with us everywhere we go, but layers of stress multiply in people’s lives when they are displaced from their physical homeland, culture, career, family members, or some other portions of their lives that had been home to them. In the case of individuals dealing with minority stress, when they become aware of their oppression they can form wounded communities where they may find tremendous support, but also heightened agitation. I experienced that years ago when working in LGBTQ+ movements in the church and secular world.

Within the turmoil stirred by exile and/or the recent relief from it, the Psalmist enters into dialogue with her or his *nephesh*, which in Hebrew means soul, life, or innermost being. In the midst of injustices imposed upon and created within our communities God vindicates and forgives. Justice is not perfection. Love and forgiveness are not determined by our mistakes tallied on a spreadsheet.

I heard an interpreter of Psalm 103 say that behind each verse of Psalm 103 is a story. What is your story and that of your neighbor who may not be at home? Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy