Our scripture this morning comes from Psalm 103:11-18. While you’re finding that, There was a devout Christian cowboy out riding the range and he lost his favorite Bible. Though he looked, he couldn’t find it and he thought for sure that it was gone. About three weeks later, a cow came walking up with it in his mouth. The cowboy couldn't believe his eyes. He took the Bible out of the cow's mouth, raised his eyes heavenward and exclaimed, "Thank you God. It's a miracle!" The cow shook its head and said, "Not really, I found your name written in the cover and googled your address."

**Psalm 103:11-18 For as the heavens are high above the earth, *So* great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; 12As far as the east is from the west, *So* far has He removed our transgressions from us. 13As a father pities *his* children, *So* the Lord pities those who fear Him. 14For He knows our frame; He remembers that we *are* dust. 15*As for* man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. 16For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, And its place remembers it no more. 17But the mercy of the Lord *is* from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children’s children, 18To such as keep His covenant, And to those who remember His commandments to do them.**

In our funny this morning, the miracle the cowboy thought he’d received was nothing compared to when the cow opened its mouth… let alone the fact that the cow had read his name in the front. There are times when we must back up and appreciate the layers of miracles God does in our life – not just the ones that sound good and are obvious, but the ones that take a little pondering. Have you taken the time to ponder the miracles of God in your life?

God loves us. I think we can all agree on that this morning. But when we consider the effort He had to go through to love us… the disrespectful acts He endures from us… the things He has to forgive in us… the lack of self-control He witnesses daily… and the ease with which many of us give up when challenged… the miracle is that He not only loves us, but He loves us in spite of all that He sees.

Some like to get something for nothing. My daddy always told me that life isn’t like that. When you get something, you have to give something. No one can steal their way to success… now some might protest that there are men who have stolen to become rich… Success in life is far more than being rich… Many rich people are not successful… many successful people never grow to be rich. We can’t get something for nothing… it’s that way in this world and it’s that way with God. We have commitments to keep. Notice in verse 11 – God has mercy… on who? To those who fear Him – those who have respect for Him. In verse 13 – the Lord pities – everyone? No, those who fear Him… those who respect Him. Verse 17 – mercy is from everlasting to everlasting for those who fear Him… respect Him… Verse 18 – Our faithfulness and covenant keeping will impact future generations… when we honor and respect Him.

Our God is a God of covenants. A covenant involves both promises and commitments… from both sides. God is a not a something for nothing God. Throughout the Bible, we see God making covenants, but the people had to keep themselves holy unto Him. God doesn’t change. Why so many believe that God will heap rewards on those who don’t keep their commitments? Maybe we’re looking for the wrong rewards.

The church in America today seems to have lost the fact that we are a covenant people. When we accept Jesus as our Savior, we enter into a new covenant with Him – we commit to live for Him and serve Him by serving His people. We commit to witnessing to others.

Over the next several weeks, God willing, we’ll do a sermon series called a Flower in God’s garden. Verse 15 - ***As for* man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.** God raises ROSEs. In order to be a Rose in God’s garden, we must first accept Jesus, repent of our sins, and pronounce Him Lord and Savior. Then, we are to long to become a ROSE in God’s garden: Reverent, Obedient, Self-controlled, and Enduring.

Reverent… there was a time when everyone knew what reverent meant and how it applied to God. We’ll look at Reverence for God and His house and what that still means today.

Obedient… Some never think of disobeying their mother or a police officer the way God is regularly disobeyed. They give more fear to a judge than they give to the ultimate Judge.

Self-Controlled. We have a duty to be self-controlled… to control our actions, our tongues, our stewardship… The Holy Spirit must be indwelling and not just sitting at the door while we carry on inside.

Enduring. We mustn’t offer the light of a shooting star… there for a moment and then gone. We must offer an enduring light for others to see.

A ROSE is pleasing in God’s eyes. But this world struggles with these old-fashioned ideas. This week, let’s consider our reverence for God, our obedience to God, our self-control through God, and our endurance in God. God is still looking to raise ROSEs – reverent, obedient, self-controlled, and enduring children… ROSEs cultivated in Christ. How beautiful and fragrant is He finding our service today?