

A Psalm of Thanksgiving

Psalm 100

As we continue through this week of Thanksgiving celebration, we are going to examine a wonderful psalm of David this morning – Psalm 100. Did some of you take the challenge of memorizing the psalm? Let's recite it together. If you weren't able to do that or just found out about it this morning, you can turn in the Bible in front of you to Psalm 100 and read along. Let's go:

Psalm 100

Of the 150 psalms, this is the only one that has this particular superscription: A PSALM FOR GIVING THANKS, or in other translations: A PSALM OF THANKSGIVING.

This psalm was intended to be sung by the Jews in their public worship, perhaps in conjunction with the sacrifices of praise. Charles Spurgeon, the great 19th century English pastor, noted: "Nothing can be more sublime this side of heaven than the singing of this noble Psalm by a vast congregation." Indeed, many of the psalms have been sung in public worship over the centuries.

Let's look at the structure of the psalm before wading into the details of David's song. The psalm divides very simply into two stanzas: verses one to three, and then verses four and five. In each, you have first the *what* (three commands) and then the *why* (three reasons).

Two other observations by way of overview are these: first, note the seven imperatives:

- 1) Make a joyful noise
- 2) Serve the Lord
- 3) Come into his presence
- 4) Enter his gates
- 5) Enter his courts
- 6) Give thanks
- 7) Bless his name

Then there are seven descriptions given that speak of praise:

- 1) Joyful noise
- 2) Gladness
- 3) Singing

- 4) Thanksgiving
- 5) Praise
- 6) Give thanks
- 7) Bless

This psalm is all about praise and worship and adoration of the blessed Sovereign, God himself. So, let's begin our examination with the first stanza.

Stanza One – Psalm 100:1-3

Three Commands:

1) Shout Joyfully. David implores us to make a joyful noise to the Lord. In Psalm 19, he notes that all of creation shouts for joy to God. He writes: “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims his handiwork” (Psalm 19:1).

In Isaiah 55, we have a vivid description of nature's response to the Creator:

For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. – *Isaiah 55:12*

All of nature sings praise to God. What about you? Singing is a vital part of public worship. It doesn't mean your singing has to be good; it just has to be joyful. I hope we can become a more singing congregation, whether in tune or not. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord!

2) Serve Gladly. This isn't just service for the Lord; more significantly, it is service with the Lord. We are called as his children to be about his business. All that we do in his name and for his glory is service.

Let me ask you maybe a meddling question: Is your service out of a sense of obligation or is it rather out of an overflowing heart and joyful spirit? Now, remember, we are called to obey whether we feel like it or not. However, we can choose to be glad in our service. It's up to us.

3) Come melodiously. Music played such a large part in the Hebrew's worship. It is heart preparation; it is soul expression; it is spirit uplifting. Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians that as a result of being filled with the Spirit, we would be

... addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. – *Ephesians 5:19*

Singing is not just the filler before the sermon. First of all, our singing lifts praises up to God. It honors him with our lips. It also prepares our hearts to hear God's Word.

Shout joyfully; serve gladly; come melodiously. Three commands, three admonitions. These are the "*what*." Now comes the "*why*," the rationale, why it is reasonable to do what David has just exhorted us to do.

Three Reasons:

1) He is God. David uses the name for God we are introduced to in Genesis 1:1 – "In beginning Elohim." This is the Eternal One, the Creator God. There would need be no other reason beyond the fact of God. But I wonder, has the fact of God become a bit of "ho hum" to us? Think of the One who is being addressed here.

David says, "Know." Spurgeon writes:

Knowledge is the mother of devotion, and of all obedience; blind sacrifices will never please a seeing God. – *Charles Spurgeon*

The Bible is filled with places where there is this appeal to "knowing." It provides the reasonableness of what we are called upon to believe. Here's just one example from the New Testament. In Romans, chapter five, the apostle Paul explains some of the benefits of our justification by faith. He makes a hard statement, appealing to our knowledge:

More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. – *Romans 5:3-5*

Why can we rejoice? Knowing.... Why should we shout joyfully, serve gladly, come melodiously? Knowing... knowing that he is God. The second reason is:

2) He is Creator. God is the source of all life. Nothing has come into being that was not created by him. We owe our very existence to him. That certainly is reason for shouting, serving and coming to him.

Acts 17:24-27

3) He is Owner. We are his people. What a quantum leap from just being his creation. We are living in a time where self-worth is touted as one of the highest values. Self-fulfillment and self-actualization are promoted everywhere around us: knowing who you are and deriving self-worth from that knowledge.

But more important than who you are is whose you are. Listen again: more important than who you are is whose you are. As believers in Christ, we are God's children; we belong to him. Paul writes: "Do you not know....that you are not your own; you were bought with a price."

David's experience in his early life as a shepherd often finds its way into his writings. Perhaps the most familiar and beloved example is the Twenty-Third Psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd." We are his sheep.

Stanza Two – Psalm 100:4-5

Three Commands:

1) Enter: Gates with Thanksgiving, Courts with Praise

This speaks of coming into the presence of God. Why the qualifiers: thanksgiving, praise? I think because the presence of God demands as much. It is an acknowledgement of the majesty and the glory of God. The presence of God is a place of worship, adoration, and praise.

Every snapshot we are given in the Bible of heaven, in the presence of God, there is worship, thanksgiving, praise. Does it not make sense then that when we enter into the presence of God, either privately or publicly, it should be with the same: thanksgiving and praise?

For the Jew, these words spelled out how they were to enter into Jerusalem (his gates) and into the Temple (his courts). We don't enter into the great city or Temple today, but when we gather corporately for worship each Sunday, this should be our mentality, our ambition, our practice.

It is a choice again, isn't it? We come with our burdens, our concerns, our suffering. It's not that God isn't interested in those things, or that it is inappropriate to bring those matters before God, in public or private. But don't miss the power in healing and restoration and encouragement when we come with thanksgiving and praise.

Psalm 22 says that God inhabits the praises of his people. In some way, our praises not only honor God, they call forth his dwelling with us.

2) Give Thanks. Last week we talked about the biblical perspective of giving thanks. The focus then, and here, is on gratitude for what God has done. That is a recurring theme throughout the psalms.

3) Bless. We are to bless his name. The idea of God's "name" is all that he stands for: his character, his attributes. The word *bless* means "to eulogize, to speak well of." One of my favorite psalms is Psalm 103. Look over at the opening words of this psalm of David.

Psalm 103:1-5

After these three exhortations, these imperatives, David once again gives the reasons. Here is why it is reasonable to enter, give thanks and bless. This is a little different that the three before. They focused upon his being, his position vis-à-vis the creation and his people. Now, the focus is on his character in relation to his people.

Three Reasons:

1) The Lord is Good

A.W. Tozer writes that:

...the goodness of God is that which disposes Him to be kind, cordial, benevolent, and full of good will toward men. He is tenderhearted and of quick sympathy, and His unfailing attitude toward all moral beings is open, frank and friendly. By his nature He is inclined to bestow blessedness and He takes holy pleasure in the happiness of His people.

God's goodness has to do with *Intention*. Remember the experience of Joseph in the OT. His jealous brothers sold him into slavery. He ends up in Egypt. God prospers him even through adversity. He eventually rises to the position of prime minister. His brothers come down from Canaan to buy grain during a great famine. At first, his identity is hidden from them. For all they know, their brother Joseph is dead.

But, when he later reveals himself to them, they are scared spitless, fearful of what he might do to them in revenge. But Joseph says: "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good."

God's intentions towards us are only good. Certainly there are bad things that happen to us, but God's desires are all for our good and this is what Paul means when he says that "God causes all things to work together for good" in our lives.

David writes in Psalm 34: "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!"

2) The Lord is Loving

This has to do with *Affection*. God's affection towards you is love. David calls attention to love's endurance, its continuity.

As a boy growing up, I used to watch telecasts of the Billy Graham crusades. George Beverly Shea often sang a song titled *The Love of God*. The chorus went like this: "O love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong! It shall for evermore endure – The saints' and angels' song."

The third verse of that hymn was a small part of an ancient lengthy poem composed in 1096 by a Jewish songwriter, Rabbi Mayer, in Worms, Germany. The lines were found one day in revised form on the walls of a patient's room in an insane asylum after the patient's death. It is thought that the unknown patient, during times of sanity, adapted from the Jewish poem what is now the third verse of this song – *The Love of God*.

The words of this third stanza were quoted one day at a Nazarene camp meeting. In the meeting was Frederick Lehman, a pastor, who described his reaction:

The profound depths of the lines moved us to preserve the words for future generations. Not until we had come to California did this urge find fulfillment, and that at a time when circumstances forced us to hard manual labor. One day, during short intervals of inattention to our work, we picked up a scrap of paper and added the first two stanzas and chorus to the existing third verse lines.

Pastor Lehman completed the hymn in 1917. His daughter Claudia assisted him with the music. Look at the words:

The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell,
It goes beyond the highest star and reaches to the lowest hell,
The guilty pair, bowed down with care, God gave His Son to win:
His erring child He reconciled and pardoned from his sin.

When years of time shall pass away and earthly thrones and kingdoms fall,
When men, who here refuse to pray, on rocks and hills and mountains call,

God's love so sure shall still endure, all measureless and strong:
Redeeming grace to Adam's race – the saints' and angels' song.

Could we with ink the ocean fill and were the skies of parchment made,
Were ev'ry stalk on earth a quill and ev'ry man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry,
Nor could the scroll contain the whole tho stretched from sky to sky.

We have such an advantage over David and the men and women of the Old Testament. We are able to the greatest expression of God's love – the sending of his Son. And most of all, God's love is supremely demonstrated at the cross. Here is God initiating – providing a way of escape from the penalty of sin. Look at this declaration from the writing of the Apostle John in his first epistle:

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
– *I John 4:9-10*

Look at this definition of love from J.I. Packer in his book *Knowing God*:

God's love is an exercise of His goodness towards individual sinners whereby, having identified Himself with their welfare, He has given His Son to be their Savior, and now brings them to know and enjoy Him in a covenant relation.

David says we should enter, give thanks, and bless God's name because God is good, he is loving, and here's a third reason:

3) He is Faithful

This speaks of his *Implementation*. All of God's work in you and me is bracketed by his faithfulness. It is his guarantee that all he has promised, he will deliver. With this in mind, Paul writes at the end of his first letter to the Thessalonians:

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.
– *I Thessalonians 5:23-24*

Every promise of God will be fulfilled. Why? Because God is faithful. His promise to be in you and with you. His promise to provide the grace you need for any circumstance. His promise of his peace that passes all understanding. His promise

of his abiding joy. His promise of the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. His promise of his presence at all times in your life. His promise of ultimate deliverance from the disappointments, the sufferings, the trials of this life. His promise of life forever in his presence. God is faithful!

Let's take a victory lap this morning around this passage. David exhorts us to shout joyfully, serve gladly, come melodiously. Why? Because the Lord is God; he is Creator; he is Owner.

He further encourages us to enter into God's presence, to give thanks, to bless his name. Why? Because the Lord is good; he is loving; he is faithful.

This should be the basis of a life of thanksgiving, of gratitude for who God is and for how he relates to you. We develop a life of thanksgiving based upon *knowing* ... knowing all these things about God.

Today, as part of this season of thanksgiving, we are going to celebrate communion. This is also called the Lord's Table. In some church traditions, it is referred to as the Eucharist. To see why, we need to look at the Apostle Paul's instructions to the church. He writes about public worship in his letter of First Corinthians, chapter eleven. He warns them about the consequences of abusing the Lord's Supper. Then he says this:

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Paul writes that Jesus "gave thanks." Perhaps he was not only giving thanks, as we do before eating today. Is it possible that Jesus was giving thanks to the Father for his soon to be broken body and shed blood? He knew that it would be through his sacrifice that the door would be open for redemption, that the purchase of a sinner's salvation would only be possible because of his atoning death.

And so, Jesus gave thanks. The word in the Greek New Testament is: eucharistāsas. This comes from the word eucharistēō, meaning "to give thanks." We talked about his last week. Look at the root:

eucharistéō – *cháris*: “grace”

Grace-giving = Thanks-giving