

What Worship Does

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[0 : 00] Again, I want to extend a very warm welcome this morning to the Church of the Advent. If we haven't met before, my name's Kevin, I'm one of the pastors here, and I'm very glad that you're here.

This is a special morning for the month of July. I think it might just be through the month of July. Our kids are going to be with us, and so I want to extend a really warm welcome to our kids who are worshiping with us throughout the entirety of the service.

It is a joy for us all to be together. It might get a little loud and noisy, and that's okay. It's great to be together as one big, happy, messy, noisy family.

One of the things that we like to do, as Susan and I do our best to wrangle our kids at the breakfast table to do morning devotions, is actually a prayer that we got from a book of prayer that Jane—what's your title now, Jane?

Children's Director Emerita? Is that—sure. Mere congregants. Okay, mere congregants. So there's a great book called Teach Us to Pray, and one of the things that we do with our kids, there's some hand motions that go along in preparing to hear from the Lord.

[1 : 08] So I want all of us to do the hand motions this morning, not just the kids, but I invite all of us to do it together. So it's really simple. It's just you put your hand over your ear like this.

Everyone do this and say, Spirit, help me to hear. Spirit, help me to hear. Now put your hands like this and say, Spirit, help me to see Jesus. Spirit, help me to see Jesus.

You guys are doing great. And then put your hands over your heart and say, Spirit, help me to love you. Spirit, help me to love you. And as I like to do before I preach, I want to give us a moment of silence and stillness so we can prepare our hearts to hear from the Lord.

So take a moment of silence together. You hear that? It's amazing.

It's quiet. We're all in here quiet. It's great. So Psalm 100. Let's see if I have it memorized. One of the challenges to the month of July is for everyone to memorize it together. So let's see how I do.

[2 : 20] Make a joyful noise to the Lord all of the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come into his presence with singing. Know that the Lord, he is God.

It is he who made us and we are his. We are his people and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him.

Bless his name for the Lord is good. His steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations. Psalm 100, a psalm for giving thanks. Is it up there?

Okay, so I think I did it, right? It's about time. So this is a particularly meaningful psalm to me and to Susan. As we're doing our best to raise our kids so that they might never know a day apart from God.

This is the first passage of scriptures that we've tried to get them to memorize. And they're pretty good at it. Billy pretends like he doesn't know it, but he really does. And I love this psalm because it's incredibly joyful and I need more joy in my life.

[3 : 21] It's a great psalm for children. It's a great psalm for adults. It's incredibly simple, but it's profound. It's incredibly accessible, but it's also very challenging.

And this is what we're going to spend all of July studying together. So if you think about last week, Tommy preached through four chapters of Revelation, which was amazing.

For the month of July, we're going to take basically a verse a week. So a bit of a change of pace. I think it'll be a little easier for all of us, especially with the kids in here. So I encourage all of you to memorize it.

It's just five verses. You really have no excuse. We have a month to do it. So we'll be reciting it all together like we did. Not responsibly, but all together so that we can work towards doing that. So

we're going to look at verses one and two this morning.

But before we do a deep dive into those two verses, I want to do a big overview of the entire psalm. So we don't know who the author is. He's some worship leader. It's not, we don't have a name ascribed to it.

[4 : 23] But the author, the voice is a person who is inviting God's people to worship God. And the first thing you'll notice about the psalm, the first thing I notice, is just how joyful it is.

It is an enthusiastic call and invitation, even a command to worship. It's bright. It's happy. It's effusive. It's exuberant. It's an amazing psalm.

It's a feel-good psalm in many ways. And not all psalms are this way, right? The psalms are amazing because they help us process through the whole range of emotion. But this is a joyful psalm. And so we're going to spend some time talking about joy.

There's a really simple structure to the psalm. Basically, the rhythm is an invitation, really a command to worship. And after that command, it's followed by the reason why we ought to worship. And it repeats that. A call to worship and the reason why. A call to worship and the reason why. So we are to make a joyful noise to the Lord. Why? Because the Lord is the creator. He created all things and he created God's people.

[5 : 23] We're to enter his gates with thanksgiving. And why are we to do that? Because the Lord is good. So it's really simple, really accessible. And we're going to be talking about worship this morning.

This morning, we're going to sort of do some self-reflection on why it is that Christians worship. Specifically, what worship does. So we're not going to necessarily look at what worship looks like. Or the various reasons why we ought to worship. We ought to worship God because he's worthy. What we're going to focus in on is what worship does to us. So we gather every Sunday morning. That's what Christians do. And we worship God. We sing praises to God. We confess our sins to God. We pray to God. We listen to God through the reading of his word and his word preached. And we celebrate the Eucharist. And the question I want to look at this morning is, what do all of these things do? When we're engaging in these things week in and week out, what do these things do?

[6 : 25] What effect does worship have on us, God's people? And there are a lot of answers. But because we have just a short amount of time today, we're going to look at just one answer.

So the question, what does worship do? The answer I want to argue is that it gives us access to our full humanity. When we worship God, we become more fully human.

When we don't worship God, we don't have access to who we really are. St. Augustine, a famous Christian from the 4th century, famously said in the beginning of his book, *What he means is that apart from God, if we're not in relationship with God, we are incomplete.*

There's something missing in our lives. We're restless. There's something lacking. If we don't know Jesus, we're alienated not only from God, we're actually alienated from ourselves, and we're alienated from other people, and we're alienated from the rest of creation.

But when we do know God, when we worship Jesus in spirit and truth, our full humanity is restored. We're reconnected with God and our very selves and with our neighbors and all of creation.

[7 : 42] That's because worshipping God makes us into the people that God created us to be. And so I want to look at verses 1 and 2 of Psalm 100 and explore how these two verses show us this.

Now, one of my favorite things about the Bible is how interconnected the Bible is. Every verse, practically, is connected to every verse. I was looking at this really amazing diagram.

I don't have a picture of it, but apparently there are over almost 67,000 cross-references in the Bible. So 67,000 connections from verse to verse.

Everything is very interconnected. And there's a great analogy that N.T. Wright, one of my favorite teachers, uses to explain how the Bible is all connected.

So he uses this analogy of a window. So imagine a house on the countryside, and you're in one of the rooms, and there's a really small window on the far side of the room that you're standing in.

[8 : 45] If you're stepped pretty far away from the window, all you can see is a really narrow snippet of the countryside, if you're pretty far back from the window. But if you get really close to the window, and if you press your nose up against the window, you get to look into it, and you see the entire sweep of the countryside from the window.

And N.T. Wright says that every single passage, every single verse of the Bible is like that window. If we press our noses up to it, we can see the whole story of the Bible through the lens of that particular passage.

And so I want to look at that this morning in Psalm 100. When we press our noses up against verses 1 and 2, we see the whole story of the Scriptures. We see why God created the world. We see how it went wrong, and how God is going about fixing it. So in verses 1 and 2, if we can have that on the screen, it's right there, that's great. There are three words, as I was meditating and studying this passage, three words that jumped out to me that reminded me of Genesis 1 and 3. Can anyone guess what those words are? Okay, yeah, just throw it out there. Earth, yeah, earth. What else? I heard make, yeah, make, earth.

[10:00] Anything else jump out, remind you of Genesis 3? Presence, yeah, noise is a thing, sure. These are all right answers. You're all doing great.

Serve, yeah, that's right. Okay, so the three words that jumped out at me, and all of those were correct. You can find them in Genesis 3. Earth, serve, and presence. Each of these three words are really important in Genesis 1 through 3.

And I don't think it's an accident that these three words are here. And I think what we are to see is that when we worship God, worship ends up being a reverse of the curse of Genesis 3.

And that worship is actually how God restores humans to their original vocation. That's how God restores the entire earth to how he created it to be.

So I want to look at that this morning. In Genesis 1 and 2, as I'm sure you're familiar with the story, God created the heavens and the earth. He created everything, and he created everything to work rightly, to be a massive symphony where when everything is ordered rightly in the world, the Psalms and other places in the Scripture describe creation poetically as singing God's praise when it is functioning as God created it to function.

[11:22] And the way it was supposed to function, the only way really that it was going to function as it ought to, is if humans were serving God in the way that they were intended to serve.

If humans were serving the Lord with gladness. If they were ruling over the works of God's hands as God intended them to serve. We see in Genesis 2 that the Lord God took the man, and he put him in the Garden of Eden.

And it's the same word to, most of our translations say to work it, but really it's the same word to serve. To serve the ground and to keep it. We serve God by serving the ground in the Garden of Eden.

When humans fulfilled their vocation to be God's image bearers, reflecting God in the world and ruling over the world, all of creation would sing praises to God. And we were made to be with God, to live in God's presence.

And when humans rightly served under God and over the world, the world was created to come to full bloom. That's when the entire earth would make a joyful noise to the Lord.

[12:29] And as David powerfully read for us this morning in Genesis 3, our original parents, Adam and Eve, they did not serve the Lord with gladness.

God gave them a command and said, you can eat of any tree of this garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you cannot eat. He gave them that commandment and they disobeyed. In Genesis 3, 8, we read that after they had eaten the fruit, they heard God walking around in the garden in the cool of day.

Presumably God did that often. And Adam and Eve enjoyed being in God's presence because they were rightly related to him. But when they disobeyed, they were alienated. And we read that the man and his wife, they hid themselves.

And this is the first mention of presence in Genesis. They hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Now, there's this really powerful painting.

If we can go to that, Worthy. There's a painting I want to show you that captures this scene incredibly well. Do you have it there? It's by an artist named Francis Hoyland.

[13:36] He's a British guy. And this is Adam and Eve hiding from God in the garden. I think this is a really powerful image that captures the scene. That's God on the right.

And he's looking for Adam and Eve. I think that's the serpent there in the middle. And the scene looks chaotic. It looks marred. There's all of this darkness where there would have been light.

And Adam and Eve are hiding from God. I want you to take a look at that. And I think this painting is where every single one of us is who does not know Jesus.

If you don't know Jesus, you are alienated from God. You're hiding from God's presence. You're alienated from him. And the Bible says we're not just separated from God's presence if we are not in relationship with Jesus.

The Bible actually describes those folks as God's enemies. And that would describe every one of us before we knew Jesus. If you're separated from God, if you're alienated from God, the Bible describes you as God's enemy.

[14 : 41] But it's amazing. The good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that God solves the problem that we created. Even though we are alienated and enemies of God, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son.

That's what Paul writes in Romans 5. There's a really powerful scene in the gospels. All of the gospels, except for John, they describe the moment when Jesus was on the cross, when he died. Does anyone remember what happened when Jesus died on the cross? What are some of the things that happened? in the story? Can anyone remember? Yeah, the temple veil is torn in two. There's an earthquake. Lots of crazy things happened. Yeah, dead people were rising. There's some wild things going on when Jesus died. The thing that I want to focus our attention on is the temple curtain, which was the curtain, the veil that separated God's people from God's presence. When Jesus died on the cross, that tore in two from top to bottom. And what we are to understand that to mean is that now God's people have access to the presence of God because of what Jesus did.

[15 : 50] When we trust Jesus Christ and his death on the cross on our behalf, we can enter into God's presence. We're no longer alienated. We're no longer enemies of God. So through the cross of Jesus, God made a way for us to be in his presence.

And as Psalm 16:11 says, in God's presence, there is fullness of joy. And I think that's why joy makes an appearance in this Psalm, why this Psalm is saturated and dripping with joy.

This is where joy comes from. We can't take for granted that we can just be in God's presence. Christ had to die for us to be in God's presence. And this is, if you understand Christ's forgiveness and the love that he has for us, this is where joy comes from.

It's not something that we manufacture or make up or pretend to exist. It's a gift of grace. It's only when we experience this kind of forgiveness do we experience this kind of joy.

G.K. Chesterton, a Catholic author from the 20th century, one of my favorite writers, argues that human beings were made for joy. On the very last page of his book, *Orthodoxy*, many of you may have read it, he writes this about human beings and joy.

[17 : 05] Chesterton writes that, man is more himself, man is more manlike, when joy is the fundamental thing in him. This is because human beings were made for joy.

When we feel joy, it's when we feel the most alive, when we are the most human, most ourselves. And worshiping God through Jesus is the only way to access the life and the joy that we are made for as human beings.

We worship God because he's worthy. As Psalm 100 tells us, he's worthy because he is the creator and because he's good. And when we worship him, worshiping gives us access to who we are in Christ, who we're becoming in Christ, and who we will one day ultimately be in Christ.

People full of life and joy. Let's pray. Josephine Josephine Zambo Josephine Josephine