

His

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Date: 14 July 2019

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[0 : 0 0] Welcome to the Church of the Advent. Very glad you're visiting us if this is your first time. I am Dan Beelman. I'm an assistant pastor here. Our senior pastor, Tommy Hinson, is halfway through a well-deserved month of vacation in the month of July. In the month of July, we are going through Psalm 100, verse by verse. Now, last week, Kevin Antlitz preached for us, and he threw down a couple gauntlets for me. The first is he had the whole thing memorized. We would encourage you in this month of July to memorize Psalm 100 as we go through it. And so I had a month, I thought, but Kevin comes his first time and has it memorized. I don't have it memorized for you. I can't recite it.

So, point for you, Kevin. Good job. The other way he threw down a gauntlet is he kept his sermon to under 15 minutes. Having mercy. I hate to break and see it. Two points. I'll do my best. I'll do my best tonight. So, Psalm 100. We don't know who wrote Psalm 100, so I'm going to refer to the writer as the psalmist. And the psalmist is calling God's people to worship. Last week, Kevin preached on the first two verses. So, we talked last week about joy, service, singing. Today, we're going to look at verse three. If you could go forward two slides. There it is. Thank you. Today, we're going to look at this verse. This answers the questions, why should we come singing? What exactly should cause such joy when we worship? And the psalmist replies, because we are his. Like, you can see those words repeated twice. The end of the second line, we are his, and then we are his. That's probably a good clue that this verse is about us being his. Perhaps being the possession of someone or something makes you uncomfortable, understandably. You know, I was talking to a woman about a few years back at a different church I served in, and she was there with her father, and I, in making small talk with her father, said, thanks for giving us your daughter these last couple years. And she did not like that. She said, I'm not anybody to be given away by anybody. Like, oh, I'm so sorry. And I get that. I mean, the history of human civilization is sustained with the sins of humans laying ownership to other humans.

But is this different being God's possession? Our culture would say, no, it isn't any different. The goal of each human being should be to be a buffered self. That is, to have complete independence from any person or persuasion, from any religion or tradition, from any enchantment or any kind of external moral code, and definitely from any kind of being we would call God. And yet, the Bible says, everything is God's, including you. So, how does that make you feel?

How does it feel to hear the claim that you are not your own? The psalmist here says, this realization brings joy and gladness and a desire to serve him.

So, let's look at verse 3 to see why. We're going to see that we are his because he made us, because he rescues us, and he unites himself to us. We are his because he made us, he rescues us, and he unites himself to us. Let's pray.

[4 : 0 5] Father, we would come as your treasured possession. Since you treasure us, Lord, would you speak to us?

Could you open our eyes and our ears to see and to hear your word? Open your word to us now. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Okay, before we do anything else, I'd like to do two things. The first is I'd like to do what's called catechism. Do you know what catechism is? It's like a question and answer format by which we learn and teach. And there's a really great one called the children's catechism, and I've done parts of this with my children. They have the first three questions down pretty good. I'd like to do that with us right now, all right? So, the first question is, and you can answer this out loud, who made you? Good, good, good. What else did God make? God made all things. Complete sentence.

Great job, Elizabeth Sally. Which is right. The third question is why did God make you and all things? For his own glory. That's right. Good. Let's do that again. Who made you?

God. No. What else did God make? God made all things. Why did God make you and all things? For his own glory. We're going to come back to that from time to time.

[5 : 38] The second thing I'd like to do is to make an observation. Last week, Kevin pointed out that verses 1 and 2 alluded to the book of Genesis, namely the first two chapters. We're going to see that verse 3 alludes strongly to the book of Exodus, which is my own gauntlet I'm throwing down to Kevin.

Next week, he gets to show how verse 4 alludes strongly to Leviticus. So, good luck with that. Okay? So, let's review the book of Exodus really quickly.

God's people who are members of one family, the descendants of Jacob, who was the grandson of Abraham, had been living in the land of Egypt for 400 years. During that time, they had become enslaved.

Moses is called upon to confront Pharaoh and demand their release. Pharaoh's heart is hardened. He refuses. But after 10 plagues, Pharaoh relents. Moses leads his people out of Egypt, only to be pursued by the Egyptian army. The Red Sea is parted for the Israelites. They pass through it safely. And when the Egyptian army attempts to pass through, the parting collapses and the army is destroyed.

Now, this story is central to Israel's identity and self-conception. In this story, God names himself. When Moses says to God, if I come to the people of Israel and say to them, the God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they ask me, what is his name? What shall I say to them?

[7 : 03] God says to Moses, I am who I am. And God said, say this to the people of Israel, I am has sent me to you. Now, I am is his name. In Hebrew, that name sounds like Yahweh. Yahweh is the name that God communicates to the people of Israel. In the English Old Testament, whenever you see the word LORD, and it's in all caps, that signifies that the Hebrew is using that name, Yahweh. In Exodus chapter 5, Moses and his brother Aaron tell Pharaoh, thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.

But Pharaoh says, who is Yahweh, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know Yahweh. And verse 3 of this psalm seems to answer Pharaoh's question.

Who is Yahweh, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know Yahweh. Well, know that Yahweh, he is God. And Yahweh claims ownership of his people.

Let my people go, yes? He claims ownership of his people over and against Pharaoh's claims of ownership. Now, why does God claim ownership?

Well, because, first of all, it is he who made us, right? Who is God? Excuse me, who made us? God, good. It's keeping us awake, right? And what else did God make?

[8 : 41] And why did God make you and all things? Good, good. But Pharaoh believed himself to be a God, one who could create and give life.

Pharaoh says in the book of Ezekiel, my Nile is my own. I made it for myself. Pharaoh says that. It's absurd, right? Because who made you?

And what else did God make? And why did God make you and all? Oh, come on, everybody. Why did God make you and all things? For his own glory. Thank you. And so to demonstrate that God created all things, has ownership of all things, God sends ten plagues to directly challenge the authority of the Egyptian gods.

The Egyptians believed there to be a god of the Nile, so God turns the Nile into blood. The Egyptians believed in a goddess of fertility, who had the head of a frog, so God caused frogs to come up out of the Nile River.

The Egyptian goddess of love and protection had the head of a cow, so God strikes down the livestock of Egypt, and so on, and so on. God is very intent for us to know that he made all things, which is a good place to start when you write a catechism.

[9 : 51] Remember, one last time. Who made you? What else did God make? God made all things. Why did God make you and all things? Thank you.

But though he made all things, he treasures us above everything he's created. In Exodus 19, God tells Israel, Now, therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine.

Because he treasures his people, he rescues them. And that's the second reason why we belong to God. He made us, and he rescues us. Now, where do we see that in Psalm 100, verse 3?

Again, naming God as Yahweh, the psalmist is evoking the story of the Exodus. Names conjure histories. For example, when we hear the name Abraham Lincoln, we think of not just an unusually tall president with a stovepipe hat, but also we think of the story of our nation, and it's struggle to live out the conviction that all people are created equal.

Similarly to the Israelites, the name Yahweh conjures up more than just the idea of the one God, but also his particular deeds in creating Israel and rescuing Israel from slavery in Egypt.

[11 : 20] Now, to drive this point home, the psalmist compares us to his sheep. And this was a way to refer to the Exodus. The psalmist does this elsewhere in Psalm 77. There we read, Your way, O God, was through the sea, your path through the great waters, yet your footprints were unseen.

You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. So we belong to him because he created us, because he rescues us, and third, because he unites himself to us.

When the Israelites recalled the founding of their nation in the book of Exodus, they recalled not just the deliverance from the hand of Pharaoh, but also their nation's charter.

And we call that charter the Ten Commandments. And we often misunderstand the Ten Commandments as being merely just a set of rules, but the Ten Commandments was a covenant binding Yahweh to his people.

And it's very much like the covenants made in the ancient Near East between kings. Here, too, God is revealed as a king. And comparing us to sheep, it's implied that God is the shepherd.

[12 : 32] And that's how the Old Testament refers to kings. Whether the king of Persia, or the king of Syria, or the kings of Israel and Judah, kings were thought of as shepherds, either good shepherds who were responsible and took care of the sheep and fed them, or bad shepherds who were irresponsible and did not feed or take care or protect the sheep.

So in a covenant made between kings in the ancient Near East, these two kings were called the suzerain, who was the overlord or the superior king, and the vassal, which is like the inferior king, who pledges fealty to the suzerain.

In a covenant between two kings, the two parties would be named. And that happens in the Ten Commandments. God says, I am Yahweh, your God. The covenant would include the deeds of the suzerain on behalf of the vassal.

That's spelled out in the Ten Commandments. Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. The covenant would lay out the expectations of each party.

It'd be clearly stated. And that happens in the Ten Commandments, right? You shall have no other gods before me, etc. And then there would be the punishment spelled out for the vassal who breaches the covenant.

[13 : 48] Now implicit in a covenant is the promise that the suzerain would defend the vassal from all of its enemies. And so too does God come to our rescue against all of our enemies.

He's joined himself to his people, to us. And because we are joined to him, our enemies have become his enemies. So what are your enemies?

Is it loneliness? Is it futility in your vocation? Is it infertility?

Is it addiction? Is it the struggle to forgive someone?

So these enemies are God's enemies. Your enemies are his. And I think he hates them more than you do. So imagine prayer in light of this as your enemies being God's enemies, right?

[14 : 56] You are besieged on all sides. And prayer isn't just a wish that he might come through and send some aid. Prayer is putting the suzerain in the vice of his own promises.

God, I am besieged on all sides by loneliness. The futility and frustration I feel at work has all of its artillery aimed at me.

I am helpless here. There is no way I'm going to forgive that person without your help, God. You need to help me. That's what he wants.

To put the king in the vice of his own promises. That's prayer. Our God wants us to do that. He helps us.

He delivers us from our enemies, including our ultimate enemies, sin and death. Let's go back to a different covenant, one that God made, not with Israel, but before that, with Israel's ancestor, Abraham.

[16 : 04] God made a promise to Abraham to provide innumerable descendants, as innumerable as the sand on the seashore, to bless him and through him all nations.

And the covenant is ratified. And there's a ceremony that is enacted, not dissimilar to a ceremony that you found between other kings of the ancient Near East.

Various animals were cut in half, and those carcasses were laid into the house. And there's a path that goes down the middle. The idea is these two kings, upon ratifying the covenant, would walk through the carcasses.

The idea being, if I fail as one of these kings to live out my part of this covenant, may this happen to me, what happened to these animals.

Now, when God does this with Abraham, and in effect his people, it's only God in the form of a flaming fire pot that passes through the carcasses.

[17 : 11] And what does that signify? Well, it signifies that Abraham and his descendants would ultimately not have to suffer the consequences of their breaking the covenant.

God is saying, when the law is broken, I'm willing to take the punishment for that. And what does that point forward to? That points forward to the cross.

Thousands of years ago, God promised that his people would never have to face the wrath they would ultimately deserve for breaking the covenant. And that would be fulfilled on the cross, where our covenant with him is ratified.

And so on the cross, there's an exchange made. I'm his, he is mine. I get all of Jesus's obedience, all his goodness, his record, all the love that the Father has lavished on him since the beginning of time.

And in exchange, Jesus takes our stuff, our brokenness, the wrath that we deserve. The apostle Paul says, death is swallowed up in victory.

[18 : 25] Oh, death, where is your sting? Oh, death, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Because he created us as his treasured possession, because he rescued us from sin and death and all of our enemies, and because he unites himself to us, we can make a joyful noise to the Lord.

We can serve him with gladness. We can come into his presence with singing. We can know and acknowledge that he is our God. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.