

# What Do We Want For Our Children

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Lord and Father, grant that as we turn to your word, as we apply our minds to the reading of your word, so you will open our hearts to the import of your word, and such grace you will grant to us that we may go from this place with no concern but to serve you and to rejoice in who you are.

We ask this in the name of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. I am very mindful of what it must be like to be a stranger in church this morning for this service of baptism, not to be sure what book to turpick up, not to be sure what page to turn to, not to be sure what tune is being played to what hymn, and generally to feel yourself slightly awkward.

And in order to understand a little bit more of what that means, I want you to look at that passage which I want to talk to you about this morning and which I think applies to the circumstances of all of our lives.

It is Psalm 100, and it's found in the blue pew Bible on page 530, which is approximately the middle.

Psalm 100 and page 530. And this, in fact, is a sermon which you should preach to one another.

[ 1 : 3 9 ] That is, it's sort of every member ministry. When you come into church in the morning, it's not me standing up here preaching to you sitting down there, but it is you preaching to everybody else there, and you're given the words of the sermon, and oftentimes of a Sunday morning, you are invited to preach this sermon to the rest of the congregation, as the rest of the congregation will preach it to you.

So in order to do that, let me ask you to preach first to the rest of the congregation, verses 1 and 2 of Psalm 100, by joining with me as we mutually minister to one another in this admonition.

Are you ready? Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the lands. Serve the Lord with platters. And come in. Thank you.

You've done it. Now, let me tell you what's being done. Make a joyful noise is translated in the prayer book as, oh, be joyful.

And it becomes so familiar if you have gone like, I mean, I sang in a boys' choir for years and years, even though I wasn't very good at it. And it was always, oh, be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands.

[ 3 : 0 5 ] So the first verse tells us what to be. If you look on a little further, you'll find out where you are to go. That is, you are to go into his gates with thanksgiving.

And then the third one, you are told what is. The Lord is. Now, one of the things that I want to share with you this morning, and I hope I won't make it too confusing or too difficult, but I am not very good at dancing.

My wife could confirm that. And the problem is that while some people can pick up the beat and the rhythm and start banging it out, I can't.

I pick it up, but it just doesn't come out. I am incapable of responding. I've dreamed of playing a guitar, but I can't get the rhythm. I know where the strings are and where the notes are, but I can't do it.

I'm left-handed to boot, which means you have to play it backwards. But it's just that sort of frustration, which is really fairly minor, but I want to use it to illustrate to you the sense that I just don't know how to relate to participation in things musical, where music is the basis of it.

[ 4 : 21 ] And the reason I tell you that is because I think what's happened to us and what we've done to ourselves in this century is to get us to the place where we can no longer relate to the reality of God.

The God of the mountains, the God of the skies, the God who is with us on the way, the God of the dark nights, the God who is always present with us. We just don't know how to relate to him.

We feel about him the same way I feel when I approach a dance floor. I just don't know what to do. And as I observe the congregation on a morning like this, I see in the frustration reflected in your faces something of this sense that you don't quite know what to do with the situation in which you find yourself this morning.

And you can sit passively through the whole thing and hope it will soon go away, which indeed it will. But not for a few minutes yet. It's this incapacity.

We're not allowed to read our Bibles. We're not allowed to pray publicly. We're not allowed to talk personally about any convictions that we might have in God because it offends people and it in a sense trespasses many of the understandings that we have about our society.

[ 5 : 38 ] So that it's extremely difficult and often very embarrassing to bring up the subject of God, let alone to be very specific and talk about the person of Jesus Christ.

And for that reason, we are utterly deprived. It may be like it, and I'm only suggesting this because I, in fact, have never been there myself. It may be like going to a party where everybody's smoking marijuana but you, and you don't know how to cope with the situation.

Or where everybody's drinking or where everybody's mainlining drugs and you are sitting there cold sober and not understanding anything of what's going on. And so we have inflicted on ourselves this kind of life in which we live out the days that belong to us without any consciousness of the presence and reality and purpose of God.

We don't know what we are to be, we don't know where to go, and we don't know what is. Look at the text here for a moment. Be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands.

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all ye lands. And that means it's like the kind of wave that happens when a royal personage passes by.

[ 6 : 53 ] We sat near High Park Corner during the coronation and hundreds and hundreds of people came by in a wave. But when Her Majesty the Queen and her golden coach came by, you could just hear a tremendous wave of cheering come as the coach processed up through the crowds and crowds of people following the coronation.

Well, that's what they want here when he says, Oh, be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands. A wave of acclamation from the hearts of the people through their voices proclaiming the reality of God.

Be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands. singularly appropriate this Sunday, I might say, because Time magazine features as the man of the year, the planet of the year.

And we have a message for the whole of the planet built into Psalm 100. To the planet, we say, make a joyful noise to the Lord, all ye lands.

Serve the Lord with gladness. Come into his presence with a song. That's to be the dimension of our lives in which we are to give expression. So often, in the realm of counseling, you run into people who have no longer any capacity to respond emotionally.

[ 8 : 14 ] They just are not able to do it. They're not able to relate to their spouse, to give expression to the things they feel. They're not able to receive the love of their children.

They're not able to enter into the joy of Christmas. They're just not able to do those things. They are emotionally all closed down. And that's what happens to us when we live apart from the continuing presence of God and we're no longer in a position to respond to this admonition to be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands, to serve the Lord with gladness and to come before his presence with thanksgiving.

people telephone on Fridays generally or during the weekend and listen to our wonderful church tape which tells the time of the services.

Why are they services? You know, you don't phone the theater and say, what time is the service? Because you sit there in the dark and you don't do anything.

But when you come to church, you come to be joyful in the Lord, to serve the Lord with gladness. So this is an opportunity for service.

[ 9 : 29 ] Working for and worshipping God are one and the same thing. That is what you offer to God on a continuing basis. As Romans 12 and 1 tells you, I beseech you, brethren, Paul says, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, a service to God out of a sense of worship that is due to him.

So that's what Psalm 100 says that we ought to be. We ought to be joyful in the reality of who God is.

And we're closed down. We're incapable of responding. We can respond to nature, but you're meant to respond to the God of nature in nature, not just dead end it with nature.

Do you know what happens in our world? we get very sectarian. That is, if you happen to run triathlons, the only people whom you can really associate with are other people who run triathlons because only they have experienced what it all means.

We form into little groups who like to smoke marijuana or to take drugs. We form into little groups and we can only talk to a small group of people. But what this is saying is that all you joggers and all you singers and all you dancers and all you workers and all you lawyers and doctors and all of you come together and find that in what you have particularly, you also have universally and that is the ability to acknowledge God in what you're doing and to worship him by what you're doing so that you run to the glory of God.

[ 11 : 15 ] You don't run for the private building up of your muscle system because it's going to wear out anyway. You run to the glory of God and whatever you do, you do to the glory of God so that the universal circumstance of our lives is one in which we are admonishing one another to be joyful, to come into his presence with thanksgiving.

All right. I'm hammering you pretty hard. Take it easy for a minute. Let me show you what I want to say here. Verse 3.

Know that the Lord is God. If you look at it, you'll see it's capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D.

And this is the way God's name is presented in the Old Testament. It's the unpronounceable name of God.

It's Jehovah. And it's got a mixture of vowels and consonants which the devout Jew would not dare to allow to cross his lips.

[ 12 : 28 ] So that in high schools, even here where there are lots of Jewish students, they won't put the name of God, they won't write it down because it's too holy.

That's a good lesson to have. But this is the name that is too holy almost to pronounce. Know that the Lord, he is God. That's the great, that's the great reality of our world is that the Lord is God.

Now, I don't, I mean, the nature of God is this, that he doesn't exist independence upon you believing in him. Whether you believe it or not, the Lord, he is God.

Whether you've ever experienced him or not, the Lord, he is God. Whether he has ever done what you think he ought to do or not, still, the Lord, he is God.

And not only is he God, but look what it says. It is he that made us. We are not self-made. We often say, here's a self-made man.

[ 13 : 39 ] God help him. I hope he will. That we have this understanding that our very existence derives from God.

The Lord, he is God. It is he that has made us. We belong to him. And you can't live your life without acknowledging who it is you belong to.

what's the use of living your life if there is, if you don't belong to anybody. We are his, we are his people, that is, all through the world, in every nation, in every country, in every culture, in every language, you will find people who are his people, who recognize that though they may have this language or this geographical identity, they are God's people.

And we are the sheep of his pasture. That is, he cares for us. And verse four tells us, very simply, that we are to enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise to give thanks to him and bless his name.

Why are we to do that? Look at verse five. We're to do that because the Lord, capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D, the Lord God is good, his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness or his truth to all generations.

[ 15 : 26 ] Because of that, we are to enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and bless his name.

For the Lord is good. What, what this, you know, the, can I just tell you something that I think is important just to give you a little focus at this moment.

Most people, I think, really come to understand what their faith is when they have a child in their hands and say, what do you want for this child?

You can have all sorts of fears and anxieties about this child. You can have all sorts of cares and concerns about this child. but you'll probably discover most of what life means when you ask the question, what do I want for my child?

Your child is probably more important to you than you are. And most parents would gladly give their life for the life of their child if such an exchange could be made.

[ 16 : 46 ] So it's a very significant moment when parents bring their children here to be baptized and to say what it is they want for their child. Well, whether we have rightly understood what you want this morning or not, I don't know.

But I'll tell you that it's right here. What you have claimed for your child is that the Lord is God. It is he that has made us.

We belong to him. We are his people. And the sheep of his pasture. He will pastor us. He will care for us.

And this God, to whom in baptism we give our children, this God is good in a way that we could never be good to our children.

His steadfast love endures forever, long beyond any care or protection that we can give to our children, God's steadfast love will endure.

[ 17 : 54 ] His truth and faithfulness will go from generation to generation to generation to generation, from parents to child.

And it's that inheritance that you have claimed. And because you have claimed that inheritance, verse four tells you what you're to do. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him and bless his name. And lots of adult people strongly suspect that when they come to the gates, the gates will be closed.

And there will be no admission. church. But in Christ, the gates have been flung open. And through Christ, we have access and entrance into the presence of God, where we are to give our thanks and our praise and to enjoy the presence of God who has, in his grace, brought us into that presence so that we may give thanks and bless his name.

I long that as we begin this new year, we will begin it with the sense of what we are to be. And that is because God is.

[ 19 : 25 ] Earthquake, famine, civil war, or any of the others tragedies that may befall us, still God is. And we are to be joyful in the Lord.

And we are to go into his gates with thanksgiving. We are to acknowledge that the Lord is God, and the Lord is good.

And underlying the reality of the circumstances of our lives is a far more profound reality which God has revealed to us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That reality which the psalmist says is the revelation of the steadfast, enduring love of God and that his truth and faithfulness endure from generation to generation.

May God grant that this new year will be joyful. We will know that the Lord, he is God. We will enter his gates with thanksgiving because of his grace to us in Christ Jesus.

[ 20 : 46 ] Amen.