

Praise & Thanksgiving

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- [0 : 0 0] Psalms that we read, Psalm 100. Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all 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. We are his. We are his people and the sheep of his pasture.
- Now, as we know, when we come towards the end of a year, one of the things we always do is kind of reflect and we look back.
- It's a kind of a milestone event. Every new year, the end of a year and the beginning of another. And we, to a certain extent, have come to another milestone in our life.
- The last Lord's Day, the last time that we will, on a morning, a Sunday morning, gather publicly to worship God. So, in a sense, today is a milestone event.
- [1 : 0 0] And there's something about the hundred that we often look on as milestones. We think of a hundred with regard to, for instance, years.
- If somebody reaches a hundred, it's an amazing time, amazing length of time. Whether it's a hundred pounds or a hundred sheep, Jesus talks about the hundred sheep or a hundred years or something about the hundred that is really a milestone.
- And so, this psalm really is a milestone psalm. And it comes at the end of a series of kingly psalms. Psalm 93 and then Psalm 95 to 99 are psalms that talk about the kingship of God.
- And this psalm, in a sense, although it isn't necessarily expressing kingship, it is still showing the desire to show our Lord as Lord over all.
- And so, again, it's a wonderful way to close these kingly psalms. And this psalm, we are told, is a psalm of thanksgiving. It's a psalm for giving thanks.
- [2 : 1 0] It's a psalm of praise. And that is something that we should always be doing. And particularly, again, when we come to the end of a year and as we reflect. Now, I know that for some of you, this may have been a particularly difficult year.
- And there might have been its own particular sorrows and trials. And there might be aspects to this year, parts of this year. And you would say, you know, I wish that I could just push that part away.
- But, you know, when you look at things as a whole, even although you go through difficult things and sad things, things that have nearly broken you, yet there are always areas within where we can give thanks.
- Where we're able to see God's grace, God's strength. Because there might be some of you here today and you're saying to yourself, in and of myself, I couldn't keep going.
- I know that it's God who has kept me going. Because of what I've gone through, I couldn't do this on my own. And so there is a sense of indebtedness, a sense of thanksgiving within your heart.
- [3 : 2 3] And it is, I would say, an essential part of any Christian's life is to express thankfulness and praise to God.

In fact, to meet a Christian who is void of thanksgiving and praise is really a contradiction. If you were to meet somebody who was confessing and professing to be a Christian, and yet their life was void of praise and thanksgiving to God, you would have to say to yourself, that is very strange.

Because the Bible tells us many things about praise, but it tells us two particular things. It tells us that God inhabits the praises of his people.

It's not an amazing thought. God inhabits the praises of his people. It tells us, again, God says, Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.

So you can see straight away that at the very heartbeat of the Christian, to know that God is inhabiting your praise, and to know that as you seek to glorify God, and that is your chief aim in this world, man's chief end is to glorify God, we're told, Whoso offereth praise, that is praise to God, glorifieth me.

[4 : 49] We are going to the land of eternal praise. And if praise has not become part and partial of our life here, because the life, remember, eternal life which the Lord gives, isn't two different lives.

The eternal life that the Lord gives when a person is born again is a life that continues forever and ever and ever. And one aspect, something that comes from that life, is praise.

It is joy. It is thanksgiving. And you will find that when you go through the Bible, even although some of God's people were put into the most awful and difficult circumstances, they were still able to praise and thank the Lord.

There was still joy. So that's why I'm saying it's kind of a contradiction if we find somebody who's saying that they're a Christian, and yet they're void of praise and thanksgiving before God.

So here is this psalm, and it's entitled, as we see, a psalm for giving thanks. And verse 1 shows us there's kind of a threefold way of giving thanks. First, we're told to make a joyful noise.

[6 : 04] Then we're told to serve the Lord with gladness. And then we're told to come into his presence with singing. We're told to make a joyful noise.

And I'm sure that there are many times there has been a kind of a spontaneous surge within our heart of thankfulness and praise.

Where you've, it might, and this may often happen privately, where you just give God thanks. It's spontaneous. It's something you, maybe there might be others around, and you might be quieter about it.

But there are times that you will actually give shout. And you will thank God for who he is and for what he has done within your life.

It's spontaneous. And I'm sure you know exactly what I'm talking about. But we've all, at times, done just that very thing. And that is one of the ways that we give thanks to the Lord, is by giving this spontaneous shout for joy.

[7 : 10] Then we see the second thing, that we are to serve the Lord with gladness. You know, this is the most amazing privilege, that God has saved us in order that we may serve him.

The God of glory. The God who has, we sang that in Psalm 147, about how the Lord brought, well, I mentioned this before, but I keep going back to it, about how he, he sets the number of the stars and calls them each by name.

And the actual word there is kind of, it's like a military expression where somebody would be giving a command and calling out one after another to come.

Right? Come out. Well, that's like what the Lord has done. It's like he's called one star after another into being. Created, spoke the word, brought into being.

And he knows every single one of them. The most amazing telescopes invented cannot find the very end of, they're searching into the galaxy, searching there, just, it's this almost innumerable number of stars and the Lord has brought them all into being.

[8 : 34] He's called them out one by one and he's named them. This God is the God who has called us into service for him.

Isn't that the most amazing thought? And so there ought to be a spontaneous joy and gladness within our heart. We are to come into his presence with singing.

That's what we did. That's what we're doing when we sing before him. We are to sing with joy within our heart. And you know, it's, every time we come to worship, we should be singing with all our heart.

It's to the Lord we're singing. And I know sometimes we can be a wee bit different, we may be a wee bit self-conscious about our voice and we sing, you know, I don't want to let it out too loud in case the person behind me or beside me thinks, oh man, that's a bit of a croak.

Sometimes we can think a wee bit like that. Well, we shouldn't. You know, you look at, for instance, at a football match and you see the people on the terracing and you hear the singing.

[9 : 46] There's no inhibitions there. They are just singing their hearts out. And then we come to church and sometimes we hear God's people and it's feeble.

I wonder what the Lord is thinking. We have every reason to give God glory. And I know that we do sometimes have problems in letting our voice out and I may be guilty myself sometimes if you're sitting in the congregation and maybe people around you aren't singing and you say to yourself, oh, I'm going to look a right clown if I'm singing.

singing. But we've got to get over that because our focus must always be upon the Lord. It is to Him that we sing. So let us get into the way, into the habit of giving our all because this is really what this psalm is saying.

So that when we come into His presence with singing and this service that we see has to be with gladness. we aren't to be reluctant servers.

Can you imagine what it's like if the Lord of glory is looking down upon His people serving and they're glum and they're complaining and they're saying, I wish I wasn't doing this.

[11 : 08] I think we used the illustration before. Supposing you go out for a meal. You're sitting, it's a lovely meal, lovely table. And everything, everything about it, the cutlery and the settings are beautiful.

The menu looks superb and the food as it comes is superb. But the person who's serving your table is a total disaster. This person has their shoulders down.

They look utterly miserable. They're complaining all the time about the management, complaining about all the people they're working with, complaining about what's going on in the kitchen.

They're kind of throwing you the food reluctantly. You're just going to spoil your meal. You're going to say to yourself, even although the food is good and everything, this person is ruining my food.

It's ruining my meal because of his or her attitude. How do we serve the Lord? Very important question.

[12 : 12] As the Lord looks upon us, is he seeing someone there who is like this reluctant person who's serving at the table or is he seeing somebody who's serving with gladness, appreciating, being thankful, acknowledging the tremendous privilege to be called into serving the Lord.

And remember, every believer is a server. everybody. People have different gifts for service, but everybody is called into service for the Lord.

And so we are to come before him into his presence with word and prayer and acknowledging his greatness and majesty and glory. And in fact, that joyful noise that is spoken about there at the very beginning make a joyful noise really as a kind of, it's a kind of like a fanfare before the king where there's this call before the king.

And indeed, there's a call for all the world. Make a joyful noise to the Lord all the earth. That's really, isn't that what we want to say?

If we're looking at it in the metric, all people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice. And that's what we wish that everybody would serve the Lord.

[13 : 39] We're wanting that all different people from all the cultures and creeds and people in all different circumstances and all over the world would come in order to worship the Lord.

And then it tells us in verse 3, know that the Lord, he is God. Now this is essential in order that we will worship aright. Know the Lord.

The thing is this, we cannot worship properly unless we know the Lord. We cannot worship intelligently unless we know the Lord.

That is the problem. You say to yourself, why is it that so many people are not coming to worship the Lord? The reason is because they don't know Him. They're ignorant of Him.

They don't know anything about Him. Or even some who may know a little about Him, they don't know enough that will drive them in order that they will worship. But you know Him.

[14 : 37] That's why you want to worship Him. And the more you get to know Him, the more you want to worship Him. Isn't that true? And that's what brings often that spontaneous shout for joy.

There have been times you've been given a glimpse of the glory of God. It's had an impact upon you. There has been a response. The response might be different.

It might be as we were looking at last week, the likes of Isaiah who fell down before the glory of God. And he's saying, Woe is me for I am undone or I am unhinged.

I'm coming apart because I have seen the glory of God. But there will be a response. There has to be when the glory of God is made clear to us.

And so if we know Him, we will worship Him. And as we say, the more that we know, the more we will worship Him. It won't be like Paul found in Athens when he went there as an inscription where they were worshiping to the unknown God.

[15 : 46] My friends, the God we worship is not an unknown God. We know Him. God has revealed Himself to us. And that's what we find here.

Know that the Lord He is God. It is He who made us and we are His. We are His people. So we see here our worship because of what we know of God is such that we know that He's done two things for us.

First, He has made us and then He has redeemed us because we are His. We are the work of His hands. He's made us. No craftsman ever made anything like what we are.

When you think of how awesome the human being is, when you think of the whole bone structure and all the muscles and tendons, all the different systems, the pulmonary system, the respiratory system, reproductive system, the nervous system, all the different aspects and parts of our body that make us so that the psalmist says we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

The Lord has shaped us and molded us from the dust, from the dust to the ground and from the rib He fashioned and built.

[17 : 15] It's got the idea in the making of the woman, it's got almost the idea of delicate care being made as He shapes and fashions, brought into being. And so there's this amazing reaction from us.

But as we know only too well, tragically, it all went wrong. God made man not only an amazing upright structure with the most amazing physical body and with the most amazing mind and all the different emotions and all that we are and the senses and all that stimulates us and able to enjoy things, but He made us in knowledge and righteousness and in holiness reflecting Himself.

We were made in the image of God. Extraordinary. But we know, of course, that man fell. And instead, instead of righteousness there was rebellion.

Instead of integrity there was iniquity. Instead of walking with God there's running away from God. Has God left mankind to that state, that ruin?

No. Not only did He make us but He came after us. in His love and in His mercy and in His grace. Reached out to us. That's why we're here today.

[18 : 42] We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. We are His people. I think it's probably one of the things that we do here more than, I suppose, in the city or whatever.

But you know, supposing you meet somebody for the first time and supposing it's a younger person and you're asking what's your name and so on and I know that we should take people for who they are.

But we tend to in these parts ask another question. Who are your people? Don't we often ask that? Who are your people?

So that we're trying to work out a wee bit better who is this person? Who do you belong to? In other words, we're really asking what families do you come from?

Your father, your mother, your grandparents and so on. And very often you say, Oh, yeah, I know now who you are. Don't we often do that?

[19 : 43] Maybe we're wrong doing that. We should take people for who they are. But we like to probe a little further. Well, you know, this is what we're saying here and what the Lord is saying of us.

We're saying we are his people. People will say, Who are you? And you'll give your name. Aye, but who do you belong to? Well, at a human level we belong to who we belong to.

But at another level we belong to the Lord. We are his. Isn't that wonderful? We are his. We belong to him.

And we are his people. And we are precious to him. We are his portion in this world. We are his inheritance in this awesome, wonderful world.

As you look around it at all the things that are man-made and all the things that are God-made. And you look at the majesty and glory of this world, its beauty, its creative glory.

[20 : 46] Just sometimes you stop and you marvel at it. And then again, sometimes the things that man has made, some of the tremendous structures and buildings and amazing things, even just cars and boats and various things.

Sometimes, you know, but you know, in everything, in all this world, in all its resources, where you're talking about its oil and coal and gold and all these kind of things, there's one thing God has chosen for his own.

One for himself. That's you and me. My people are my portion. That's it out of this world.

And isn't that a wonderful thought? What an honor and what a privilege. So we're saying we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.

And as we know here, this brings us right into the whole area of the shepherd and his sheep. The good shepherd who gave his life for the sheep. The shepherd who has given the pasture land for the sheep.

[21 : 53] He's given us feeding places. He hasn't just saved us and says, well, you know, I'm the good shepherd and I'm going to give my life for the sheep and that's it. No. He says, I'm going to actually give them feeding places.

I want my people to be nourished and filled and strengthened and developed. And you know, my friend, if at the end of the day you have to say to yourself, you know, I am a hungry Christian.

I never get anything for my soul. You have to say, you know, you have to ask yourself, why? The fault isn't with the shepherd.

You know, as we were looking at that very thing last week in our worship, in the whole area of worship, that sometimes we've got it all wrong.

We come to church and we come to church and yes, we do come in order that we might be nourished, but we come to worship. And it's not just about us, it's about him.

[23 : 02] And if we go away not having been in any way affected by what we're doing, there's something wrong. Because we have come to give glory to the Lord. We have come to give to him.

It's not just a matter of us coming here to get from him. We are giving to him the worship that he deserves. And so we have to have our hearts right and prepared and ready for that.

It works both ways. things. So if we go away saying, you know, everything's dead flat. You've got to say to yourself, well, is it me that's dead flat?

Because remember, we've got to work at things. Anything that's of worth has to be worked at. I always say that when a couple are getting married. It's a great thing.

Institution of marriage, wonderful. But you've got to work at it. Not just work at it in the day of the wedding, but continue throughout life to work at. But it's worth working at.

[24 : 02] And it's the same with our Christian life. It's worth working at. And the more we put into it, the more we get out of it. There's no question of that.

And so this is all part of what's tied in here with the pasture that he has provided for us. He is the one who has given us the green pasture and caused us to lie down by the still waters.

And then finally we have that great invitation to enter the Lord's gates and courts, even into the Holy of Holies. The holy place, the curtain, remember, was torn into its open, direct access to the king.

And it talks here of his faithfulness. Down throughout the generations, the Lord who was faithful to Noah and saved him and delivered him and faithful to David and to Daniel.

Same Lord is faithful to you. It's the same Lord. And he is working in you. And he's preparing you day by day for the glory that he has for you, reserved for you, kept for you, your place.

[25 : 15] And he's keeping you for that place as well. Isn't that a wonderful thought? God. So may we have within our hearts this desire to praise and to thank the Lord.

May we see that this is our business, this is part of our serving, the Lord, is to praise him and to thank him. If you're a believer, make absolutely sure that praise and thanksgiving is part of your life.

If it's not, ask the Lord to refocus your heart upon him. If we lose sight of him, we will not praise and thank him the way we should.

The most thankful believers are the ones who are focused upon him. If you're here today and you say to yourself, well, you know, I have to, with my hand and my heart, I can't say that I have come to faith in Jesus Christ.

Well, I would say to you as well, still thank him that you are here. You are in the pasture land of the sheep. This is where the Lord deals with people.

[26 : 25] It's while his sheep are feeding. Isn't that a wonderful thing? You're here. So many people in this town, in this community choose not to go to worship God.

You have come. The Lord, there's something in that. You ask the Lord that as you are here by this pasture land that you might get a glimpse of the shepherd and say, Lord, I need to see, I can't quite see the shepherd.

I need to see the shepherd. You ask the Lord today to show him to yourself so that you will see him as a shepherd who has given his life for you.

Ask him to do that for you today. Let's pray. O Lord, we pray that we may give thanks today through genuine thanks to the Lord for all the good things that we receive in life.

May we give thanks, O Lord, and praise thy name for all that thou art in thyself. And how little, although we do know, Lord, how little we are able to fully comprehend and understand.

[27 : 45] but we give thanks, Lord, that thou hast revealed to us in the word. And we pray that our hearts might expand more and more to take hold of more and understand more of the glory and greatness of God.

Oh, be with us, we pray. Take us all home safely and watch everybody because the conditions on their foot are so slippery. And we pray to bless the cup of tea that will be in the hall and that we may be able to enjoy friendship and fellowship in the gospel.

Take away sin for Jesus' sake. Amen. We're going to conclude singing.