

Give Praise to God!

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[0 : 0 0] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! Psalm 100, one of the most well-known and one of the most wonderfully joyful psalms.

You know, people sing all the time. You sing in the sunshine, sing in the rain, right? I'm singing in the rain. I won't sing that for you.

I have to restrain myself today, actually. They sing when they're happy. They sing when they're feeling the blues. You know, we sing at birthdays, at weddings, at funerals, at inaugurations of presidents and kings and things like that, although we're not even kings in this land.

We sing at football games, rock concerts, musicals, and operas, which I'm less familiar with. We sing in the car. We sing in the shower.

[1 : 1 7] Some of us sing in an opera-like voice, and some do not. Some people sing in tune, and some, well, they do not.

As my wife recently told me, I don't hear keys. I said, honey, you just changed keys. She said, I don't hear keys. Some sing quietly.

Some sing loudly. Some people never stop singing and almost drive us nuts. They sing when they wake up. They sing when they work. They sing when they drive.

They sing when they walk. And some people have accused me of being one of those people. Some people clearly like to sing, though, and some don't. And when we gather together, we can often wonder, why do we sing?

Why don't we recite poetry to the Lord? Why don't we hum? Why don't we just dance, you know, some improvisational dance or something like that? Why don't we just pray the whole time?

[2 : 1 4] Instead of singing, why don't we just have some prayer intermittent throughout this service, you know? Is singing just a carryover from a traditional service? Do we have to sing?

Recently, one well-known Christian author said, I've got a confession. I don't connect with God by singing. Not at all. I've been to churches where I love the music.

But as far as connecting with God goes, I wasn't feeling much of anything. And maybe you like him. You're fine with a bit of singing. But it just doesn't do much for you.

But must even those who don't connect with God still sing? Does God want every Christian to sing? Well, the short answer is yes. But why is what we're going to study this morning?

While the Bible doesn't immediately jump out there and answer this question for us, peppered throughout it, it repeatedly tells us to sing. One of the largest books in the Bible, which we just opened to, is the Psalms.

- [3 : 18] And from the Old Testament to the modern church, it has been the songs the church sang. And thus it's taught us how to sing. Some of the songs are major key joy.
- If you don't know what that means, it just means the happy song. Some of them are just like that. But more than a third of the Psalms are minor key. They're songs to sing when life goes sideways and things don't go as we like.
- Well, this morning we're going to look at Psalm 100. It's a fabulous song for helping us understand why we must sing. It's one of the most well-known songs, and it's a psalm for giving thanks.
- So let's look with this, or look with me at Psalm 100. There the psalmist writes, 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, and we are his.
- [4 : 22] 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 generation.
- That is the authoritative word of God. It's the only word that we desperately need this morning. In a word, where we're going is worship our Lord the King, and sing to him with all your heart.
- Worship our Lord the King, and sing to him with all your heart. Point one is sing loudly.
- Sing loudly. So let me ask you, how's it going this morning? Did you sleep well last night? Did you stay up too late watching the playoffs?
- [5 : 26] Did you sing so much that your voice is a little raw this morning? Was your morning a bit uneventful? Or did it not go as planned?
- Did everyone welcome you as you came in? Has the meeting been going today? You know, I mean, has the leadership been competent yet genuine? Nice guys, but yet able to handle the situation?
- Did you like the songs we sang? Were they too wordy? Too simple? Too familiar? How about the sermon?
- It's going, but how's it going? Are you following along? Are you lost? Perhaps so. Have you begun to meditate on lunch?
- You know, when we gather together, our minds are often racing with questions like these. And far too often, how we respond in worship is based largely on what we find to those answers.
- [6 : 26] How's this? Do I like this song? Do I like how this is going? Do I like Ben leading? Do I like it better when Gil leads? Whatever it might be. And so we begin to respond in worship based on how we feel.
- On how we would like to respond. On what would be comfortable to us. But at the outset of this psalm, this psalm does not address us that way. It makes very clear God commands us to sing regardless of what's going on in a certain way.
- In a way, he commands us to sing loudly. This chapter has seven commands. And the first one's where we're going to look at it. He says, Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.
- Our text begins quite similar to many other psalms. It begins not with an invitation. Not with an appeal. It begins with a command. As one pastor has said, The command to sing is the most frequently repeated command in all of Scripture.

For some reason, God cares very much that we sing. And sing loudly. Finally, the Scripture includes over 400 references to singing.

[7 : 33] And nearly 50 explicit commands to sing. Psalm 47 6 is one of my favorite. It says, Sing praises to God. Sing praises. Sing praises to our King.

Sing praises. That's four times. In one verse, it commands us to sing. And there we have it right here. Make a joyful noise. The psalm begins with a command to sing.

And the command just rings throughout this psalm. Look down there with me. He says, Come into His presence, verse 2, with singing. Enter His gates with thanksgiving, verse 4.

And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him. Bless His name. The idea is that our singing is not to begin when the bands really rock it.

It's not to begin when we feel it deeply. It's not even to begin when Ben leads our favorite song. Our singing is to begin immediately and continue joyfully because of His command.

[8 : 34] Do you see? And this psalm doesn't just command us to sing. It commands us to sing in a certain way. It says, Make a joyful noise.

Now, for some of us, noise is all we make. I remember one time, I was a worship leader for about 10 years or 12 years, something like that.

I was doing an audition. You know, we did auditions. And we tried to make them not so intense. But they were always intense because you had a couple people that would help me with the auditions.

And you'd have somebody come in and play an instrument or, you know, whatever. Or sing for us. And we had one girl that was really excited. I think it's kind of like her long dream to be on the worship team.

You know, and I'm the guy leading the audition. You know, so we're set up for this audition. She comes in joyfully. I sent her the songs ahead of time. She worked through the songs. She was excited. She was ready to sing.

[9 : 32] And we began singing some song like, Amazing Love, How Can It Be That You, My God, Would Die For Me. And, you know, we got about four bars, which just means about 10 words into the song.

And it was very clear to me that not only could she not sing, but that she was completely tone deaf. So what that means is, Amazing Love, How Can It...

You know, I was like, you know, I looked to my other people on the panel with me, and they're just covering their eyes. They're not going to say anything. I had to say to this girl, I said, you know, what I love so much about the way you sing is you just sing with joy.

Now, unfortunately, you can't sing at all. No, I didn't say it like that. But I did have to end the audition and gently send her on her way.

Well, that's not what this verse is talking about. When it says make a joyful noise, the point is not just make a sound. When it says noise, the reference here is not to pitch or to quality.

[10 : 34] The reference is to volume. It's saying make a joyful noise, not in the sense of just erupt with a sound, but sing loudly is what it's saying.

It's not referring to the quiet singing of a mother's lullaby or the soft singing along in the theater so as not to distract anyone around us. It's the loud singing that's fit for the honor and celebration of a king.

That's what's going on in this verse. It's singing marked not by decorum and restraint, but singing marked by wild, raucous, joy-filled partying.

Do you see? It's a celebration. This is the king. The king has arrived. And when we come into his presence, he sits on his throne, and we're to elicit praise that's fitting for this king, the king of all.

No one sings Rocky Top half-heartedly. And what he's saying is no one should sing in the presence of this king, this gracious king, except with all our hearts.

[11 : 40] He's the king of all. And we sing loudly to him. We also, point two, sing mindfully. Sing mindfully. What I mean by that, and I don't even know if this is the way this, or this is what this word means, but when I sing mindfully, what I mean is our mind is full.

Our mind is full of what we know about God. Our singing is not being overcome by emotion. Sometimes we can see a worship setting. We just think it's overcome by emotion. That's not where we're going. That's not what I want. I don't think that's what Scripture wants.

We're talking about singing that engages the mind, that brings the mind to life. And that's what we see right there in point three. He says, know that the Lord is God, or 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. And so we're not just commanded to sing. We're commanded to know something. We're commanded to know something fully.

Notice the progression of this psalm. Look in verse one. He says, make a joyful noise. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come into his presence. But know. Do all those things.

[12 : 48] But know. Our singing's not aimless. It's anchored by truth. It's not taken over by emotion. It's guided by what we know.

The idea is that when we come into his presence and we sing loudly, what we know forms a solid ground underneath our feet to sing in any circumstance. So what are we to know?

Know that the Lord, he is God. It is he who made us. That's a powerful reminder of creation, which we see so often in the psalm. We did not choose to exist.

Much as I love my parents. I didn't nudge on them to begin and come into existence. Not even my parents created me. God made me. And he made you as well.

We were created and brought forth by his will. We were made. The image there is much like forming clay. And that's what that word is used throughout the Old Testament.

[13 : 47] He made us. He formed us. He knit us together in our mother's womb. What it says in another place in Psalm. He made us.

Other people would make a God to worship. Well, God made us in his image so that others might learn to worship him. So we are his people. We're made by him.

That should elicit a lifetime of praise. But he continues. And we are his. We are his people and the sheep of his pastor.

Now you see immediately the metaphor changes. So he's at creation. He's talking about making something. He's in the, you know, he's in the artistic room. He's around the clay wheel or whatever.

You can see I'm struggling for language because I don't know much about this stuff. But then he moves to the pasture. Not only did the Lord make us, but he keeps us as his own people.

[14 : 49] We're not just creatures he's made. We're people he's drawn near. We are people he's brought to life and promised to protect much like a shepherd with his sheep.

Now you may not like being compared to a sheep and nor do I. But the image is powerful. We're the sheep of his pasture.

The idea is that we're under and within his protection. We're completely safe because he is our shepherd and we're within his pasture.

But we're also completely satisfied. All that we need is in this pasture. You know, you pasture or you lead sheep to pasture because you lead them to food.

And that's what God promises, that we are under his protection and we'll continue safe and satisfied with all we need until the end. Nothing can pluck us out of that. These are the things we're to know.

[15 : 44] And one way we remember them is through singing. So in a psalm, just packed with the commands to sing, he says so so that you might drive them into your heart.

Science has proven that we remember words and patterns and concepts more easily when set to music. Alzheimer's patients remember the songs long after they've forgotten their name and where they are.

I mean, this past summer, Kim's mom died of Alzheimer's. Between the two of us, I don't know that we'd ever sung certain songs with her.

But on her deathbed, we began to sing Amazing Grace. And she knew what it was.

Her eyes would respond and her lips would mouth along. And that's just the way it is. Long after she had forgotten where she was and what was going on in her life, these words were still there.

[16 : 55] It's incredible. You know, we know this to be true because songs we haven't sung in a decade and we're going to a supermarket or something like that, we begin unconsciously to begin to mumble and sing along.

Or jingles getting stuck in our head for days. You know, and you just can't leave them. Christmas is the worst because there's so many jingles that can get stuck in your head.

Well, Scripture's aware of this and Scripture reminds us to sing to remember truth. At the end of Deuteronomy, the Lord calls Moses to write a song to teach them about how they were delivered from Egypt and delivered into the promised land.

And he said, When many evils and troubles come, this song shall confront you and help you remember. The idea is that we're going to not just pass down a Bible, we're going to pass down a song so that the song might come and help us remember that God is who he says he is and he delivered us and delivered our people through the Red Sea.

And so we forget, we forget, so we sing. That's the idea. We forget so often, so we sing to remember. And numerous psalms teach us just that. All throughout the psalms, there are different psalms that are historical psalms.

[18 : 07] And that's all they are. They just tell the history of Israel and how God rescued his people. And so we sing to remember. We sing to remember God's words. We sing to remember his mighty acts. And most significantly, we sing to remember the cross.

Colossians 3, 16 says it like this. I think we have this for you. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another with all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thanksgiving in your hearts to God.

Singing helps us remember the cross. Singing helps us, helps it to be driven into our heart. The idea is that it draws out the words so we can meditate. And it adds melody so that we can express our praise.

Take a song like Amazing Grace. You go read these lyrics and take you 30 seconds maybe to read the whole song.

But you don't sing it that fast, do you? You sing, amazing grace, how sweet the sound.

[19 : 17] All the while while you're singing this, your mind's active. That saved a wretch like me. And then you keep going, I won't sing anymore for you.

But this idea is that it's set that way so that we might sing, our mind might be full, and we might meditate on what this grace meant to me.

We might meditate on the work of Christ. So we're to sing mindfully. Our mind is full. We're not trying to empty our mind in order to experience God.

We're trying to fill it up. We're trying to fill it up with the word of Christ. Not merely the word of God, but the word of Christ, the gospel of Jesus Christ, so that it might shape us deeply.

And that's what we want to dwell richly in us. So we as a church, we love to sing, but we also try to choose carefully what we sing.

[20 : 12] For this reason. We want songs that push the gospel deeper and deeper into our hearts. That's the best news that the world has ever heard, that there's a holy God, and we've sinned against him.

We've strayed all. While we are like sheep that have gone astray, and God's laid on Jesus, the perfect one, the iniquity of us all, so that we might be rescued through him.

So we're trying to sing mindfully, because we want to sing in the good of those truths. Thirdly, sing gratefully. Sing gratefully. As I pointed out, this psalm is a psalm of giving thanks.

That's right there in the subscript. So it's not surprising that gratefulness or giving thanks is a rhythm throughout this psalm. Look with me in verse 4. He says, Now this picks up where verse 2 left us, when it says, Serve the Lord with gladness.

You know, the repeated refrain of this song, of this psalm, is thanksgiving. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. I mean, that's just a parallel.

[21 : 33] The idea is that thanksgiving is praise, and praise is thanksgiving. Same thing with give thanks to him and bless his name. Give thanks is equal to bless his name.

Bless his name by giving him thanks. Do you see? He says all throughout this is emphasizing giving thanks to the Lord. And the idea is this command is not generic or isolated.

It's tied to all that we've discussed. We give thanks in response to what he's done. We sing to remember, and we sing to give thanks for what we remember. We're singing to get this truth into us, and sometimes we'll sing songs that are a little more truth-driven.

In the sense, they're a little more descriptive. We're singing songs that are describing the life and the death of Jesus Christ, and some are necessarily or intentionally so expressing gratefulness for that.

So Amazing Love is a great song that's just expressing gratefulness. Amazing Love, how can this be? That thou, my God, shouldst die for me. So you see what's going on.

[22 : 37] We're trying to not just sing truth. We're trying to sing it with gratefulness. The idea is that true worship is always responsive. You know, sometimes we can say things like, man, we were really worshiping tonight.

Man, we got into it, and we were feeling it. I don't know. We were really worshiping tonight. Now, I don't exactly know completely what that means. I have said it before, but I don't know what that means.

But true worship is not when we feel it. It's not when we really feel it, biblically. It's not when the tears begin to flow. I remember when I first became a Christian, and this is not surprising to you because you've been here for a little bit, that the tears began to flow.

And I thought, man, it's a good Sunday if the tears start to flow. You know, when we get goosebumps or when we get to the third song and now we're finally ready to sing, regardless of what we feel, that's not what makes true worship.

True worship is not something we do or produce. It's always a response to what God's done. So we come in from the first song. We're responding to what God's done. We're responding to what he's done when he made us.

- [23 : 46] We're responding to what he's done when he's brought us into his pastor by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I love the way this one author puts it. John Rizberger, he says, Worship in the Bible is a story of grace.

A story of God's initiative. That's what grace is. God's initiative to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves by offering us unmerited mercy and undeserved love.

Worship in the Bible is never a bridge that we build out to him, but simply a responsive journey we make to cross the bridge he's built out for us. And that's an important idea.

Worship in the Bible is never a bridge we build out to him, but simply a responsive journey we make to cross the bridge he has built to us. He speaks his word and gives his presence.

We, his worshiping people, simply respond to what he has done. True worship is always a response. And because true worship is always responding to what God has done, it's always to be marked by thankfulness.

- [24 : 54] All that we have is from him. And nothing we have done has brought all that we have. It's solely because of grace.

The idea is that God wants us to not just feel thankful. God wants us to sing and proclaim our thankfulness. God wants us to not just feel thankful, but to proclaim.

Now, there's a big difference between feeling thankful and expressing it. Anyone who's been married longer than a week knows this to be true. Sometimes my wife will come around and say, you know, were you not thankful for that thing I did for you?

Or something like that. Yeah, sure, I was thankful. She's like, well, you didn't say anything. The idea, though, is dead right. Thankfulness unexpressed is not thankfulness.

Regardless of how much I say, I really appreciated that thing. But if I don't say anything, it's not thankfulness. That's what's going on in this psalm, you know. Praise unsung is not praise.

- [26 : 04] Blessing unproclaimed is not blessing. And so God wants us to come in, not just feel, not just know his, or not just feel and know thankfulness, but to proclaim it.

That our mouths will be filled with gratefulness for all that he's done for us in Jesus Christ. And while we sing of creation and his character and our work and our need for him and our longing to know him more, the major theme of our song is thanksgiving for what God has done in Christ.

For his great salvation. That's the repeated theme of the Bible. The singing, the singing in the psalm is all about God's salvation. The major theme of singing in the New Testament is about God's salvation.

The major theme of singing in heaven is about God's salvation. After all of the work of redemption is done, after all the redeemed are gathered home to heaven, after we've been there for 10,000 years, we will not begin singing another song.

That is what Revelation tells us again and again and again. We'll still be saying, just like they said in Revelation 5, worthy of you to take the scroll. Worthy of you, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God, and from every tribe and language and people, and nation, you have done us, and you should be praised.

- [27 : 26] I love the way one author says it. One is, I think we have this for you, one is taken aback by the emphasis upon the cross in Revelation. Heaven does not get over the cross as if there are better things for us to think about.

Heaven is not only Christ-centered, but cross-centered and quite blaring about it. I love that. I love that. Heaven doesn't get over the cross. There's not a new message heaven's about.

Heaven is still stunned in amazement. Heaven will be an eternity of amazement of what God has done in Christ. We who were once lost have been brought near.

We were once not a people, have been found to be a people. We who had not received mercy, because he was slain, have received mercy, and we'll never get over it.

Never. In fact, in heaven, we'll be able to sing it more effortlessly, because sin will no longer cling to us so closely.

[28 : 30] We're not going to get tired. Our legs are not going to give out. We're going to be singing and singing and singing and so amazed by the cross because he was slain for us so that he might ransom a people for God.

So it's no surprise that in and through our gratefulness, the emphasis is not just singing gratefully, but singing joyfully. Making a joyful noise, serving the Lord with gladness, coming into his presence with singing.

The idea is that, not that the psalm is saying, you better sing with joy. I don't think that's the idea at all. I think the psalm is saying, would you just consider his salvation? And if you would, you can't help but sing, and you can't help but sing with joy.

To fail to sing with joy is to fail to understand the gift of salvation. I mean, joy and singing are almost synonymous in this psalm.

It's a psalm. Serve the Lord with gladness, come into his presence with singing. The idea is that singing equals joy, joy equals singing, and so it's supposed to shape us in such a way that it just changes our life, and we sing with joy.

[30 : 01] And the scriptures don't stop there. You know, in light of what we deserve and in light of what we have received, we will never get over expressing how worthy God is of praise.

And so the psalms say, don't just sing, shout. Don't just shout, bow down and kneel. Don't just shout and bow down and kneel, but clap and lift your hands and even dance.

And I want Trinity Grace to be a place where we can respond and worship appropriately to the worthiness of his great name. Now take the lifting of hands. Now we may think, man, we've got to really be feeling it to raise a hand in worship.

Now I was raised in a Presbyterian church, so we didn't even move during the service, you know. Might get shocked or something. Scripture encourages us to raise hands, not just when we really feel it, but to express praise and gratefulness, to express celebration, much like a Vols game, to express surrender.

I give my life to you, Lord, to express need, to express desire for God. One of my favorites is Psalm 143, 6, where he says, I stretch out my hands to you. My soul thirsts for you like a parched land.

[31 : 21] Now there's no parched land in East Tennessee right now because we've got more rain this year than the last 129 years on record. It may be longer than that. That's just as much data as we have, but you get the vision, right?

I reach out my hands, not because I'm feeling it, because I'm so thirsty. I'm filled with a world where there's no water. There's no real water, and so I reach out my hand to you, and if you're new to this, I thought I'd bring this guide to help us raise our hands.

So I think we have it. Yeah, this is official worship signals. Now the left-hand column lets you know what level you're at, you know?

So let's be honest with ourselves here. So maybe what you're into is just that elbow flap, you know? Maybe you're a TV guy.

You know, you're carrying the TV. You're going big screen because you're going out wide, you know? I love the intermediate. My fish was this big. No, no, no. I'm holding my baby.

[32 : 26] I'm doing Mufasa, but if you get those down, you can begin to move up a couple levels, and I think we have those, yep. I don't know the light bulbs. Never done that, but one of my personal favorites is the gold post and the heartburn, you know?

Like, you can be ready. You can respond to lunch and worship the Lord at the same time with a pointer or the hatchet or any of these things, the village people.

That's a personal favorite. Rocky touchdown. You can take that down, but you get the idea, and that's classic Tim Hawkins silliness. But, you know, sometimes we need a few ideas in order to get our hands up, and you don't have to do this because it's something people do.

The only reason we're raising our hands or responding is because we're so amazed at how worthy God is of praise, that a gracious God like this would come after us is completely amazing.

And I do invite you to raise your hand, to respond, because I think what you'll encounter is more of the Lord.

[33 : 47] And you'll say, Lord, I need you. I'm so desperate for you. Or you'll just celebrate, much like of all's game when you're celebrating touchdowns because you're beginning to see that, you know, he who knew no sin became sin for you so that in him you might become the righteousness of God.

and it just fills your heart with praise. You just want to say, Lord, I praise you and worship you. And I just invite you to do that, regardless of what your background is. I invite you to respond gratefully and with your hands or with your body to express how worthy God is of praise.

Point four, sing continually. Sing continually. Now we may be thinking, I can sing loudly, I can sing mindfully, I can sing gratefully, but how can I sing continually?

Sometimes we feel this tension when we sing. Well, Lord, I see a little bit of what you're doing in my life. I see a little bit of your goodness and I can sing right now, but I'm just a little worried that around that corner is something that will make me not want to sing.

And so we can come into the worship of God with a little bit of hesitation. Because we have haunts and fears from before and say, Lord, I want to sing with you all the day with joy, but I'm just a little scared of what might come.

[35 : 11] We kind of sing almost like that bop it game, you know, where you pop up and you get smacked on the head. We can begin to relate to the Lord like that. Lord, if I just sing too confidently, continually, maybe I'll regret it.

But this psalm concludes powerfully with why we can sing continually. And I love it, why we have plenty to sing about continually and why we can be confident that we'll still be singing.

Look down with me in verse 5. So every other verse begins with a command, but this verse does not. This verse does not. This verse begins with a purpose clause.

This begins with saying something that's true that anchors everything we've said before. Verse 5 anchors it all by telling us the Lord is good and promises steadfast love and faithfulness will continue forever.

For the Lord is good. His steadfast love endures forever and His faithfulness to all generations. The Lord is good. That's a word we're so familiar with we can fail to understand it.

- [36 : 21] It means there's no get back at you ness with God. There's no you have received too much from me and squandered it in His ways. The Lord is thoroughly good from all His expression down to His being.
- His heart is good. He delights to do good to us always because of Christ. This will always be true. The Lord is good. John Newton I think sums it up very well when he says it like this.
- Everything is needful that He sends and nothing can be needful that He withholds. That's goodness. Everything is needful that He sends and nothing can be needful that He withholds and that's what it means that He's good.
- So how do we know that? The psalmist says well because His steadfast love and faithfulness continue forever. steadfast love and faithfulness continue forever.
- The word steadfast love is difficult to translate. It means love not merely with warm emotional feelings but with repeated acts of kindness. Repeated acts of doing someone good.
- [37 : 28] It's not just love in a heart. It's love expressed in our ways. And so the Bible tells us to do justice to love kindness. That's the same word.
- and to walk humbly with God. And in Luke 10 we're commanded to show mercy to the hurting like the parable in the Good Samaritan but here it's not us that show this steadfast love.
- It's not us that show this mercy. It's God. The Lord shows steadfast love to us again and again and again through repeated acts of kindness.
- I love the way Psalm 23 puts this. This is probably a psalm we all know by heart. He says surely goodness and mercy that's that same word steadfast love surely goodness and steadfast love shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
- Now we may hear the word follow and think trail behind or lag behind like surely goodness and mercy will trail behind me all the days of my life. Now that's not very encouraging but that's not what this means.
- [38 : 39] It's more active than follow. The idea is something like pursue something like chase down something like overtake that's a wonderful image. God's not just lagging behind us with steadfast love he's pursuing us with it.
- John Piper describes this like a highway patrolman chasing us down with good. I don't know about you but when I see those blue lights behind me I'm not thinking good is waiting on the other end of that.
- And yet that same fearfulness you know get the blue lights and maybe it's just me that gets the blue lights behind me on occasion and your heart begins to beat rapidly and you're just you know you're guilty.
- You know you look down that's a speedometer you know you're guilty and you just get that heart beating super rapidly and you know he's coming down to do you bad.
- Like he's actually just coming down to do justice you know. But the image that God would have us have it's not the when we look at the future it's not the rapid heartbeat of fear but the rapid heartbeat of anticipation.
- [40 : 00] the rapid heartbeat of anticipation because this God does not treat us as our sins deserve. This God rejoices in doing good to us. And so we're just saying who is a God like this who would conquer us with kindness.

I think that's right. I think that's what it's talking about here. He comes to conquer us with kindness once in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and again and again and again so that when we look to the future we're looking not with fear but with anticipation for how he might conquer us again, how he might show goodness again.

And so that's what 2019 is going to be all about. God chasing us down, turning on the blue lights to catch us unnoticed so that he might bless us with good.

That's the truth of God's word. That's what it means that the Lord is good. His steadfast love endures forever. No season is taken off, no year is taken off, and his faithfulness to every generation.

So that's why we sing. That's why we worship the Lord our King and sing to him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength that we sing loudly, we sing mindfully, gratefully, and continually because he who called us will keep us.

[41 : 15] He who created us has redeemed us and will bring us all the way home, blessing us with good we don't deserve all the way there. Let us pray.

Father in heaven, we thank you for these words. We thank you, Father, that you do not treat us as our sins deserve. How many times, God, have you withheld what we deserve to give us what we don't?

We give you thanks and praise. So we pray that you would come by your spirit and help us to live lives of worship to you. We want to be people that worship you on Sunday morning with our voices, yes, but Lord, we want our lives to be thoroughly submitted to you and thoroughly worshipful to you.

God, would you come and help us? Lord, thank you for these few minutes to sit and to hear and to listen. Shape us more and more, we pray. Your glory, in Jesus' name, amen.

You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com.