**In Much Blessing: Worship Through Thanksgiving**

**Psalm 100 (ESV)**

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*A Psalm For Giving Thanks*

***1*** *Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!* ***2*** *Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!* ***3*** *Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who has made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.* ***4*** *Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!* ***5*** *For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.*

What are you thankful for? As soon as I ask that question, most of us can immediately begin making a list of hundreds of blessings in our life for which we are immensely grateful. We think immediately of things like our salvation, our very physical life, our Savior, our Bible’s, our health, our family, our freedom, our friends, our job, our food, our church, our house. We might get more specific; our dog, our cat, our eyeglasses, our makeup, our fishing pole, our I-pad, our new Callaway driver. We think of our bed, our pillow. We think of our teeth and our toothpaste, the donuts. (Laughter!) The list again is endless once we get specific and we start specifically thanking God for people and for specific qualities they bring to our life and for the manifold gifts. We like to kind of cover them. “Thank you God for everything.” But the Lord really enjoys to be thanked for specific blessings that He has given us. So it’s right for us to take time to thank the Lord. What are you thankful for?

I want to make two observations about this question. First, this question is a really, really important one. And the second observation is that this question is not the most important question. It’s an important question because without it, we become ungrateful. We become grumpy. In fact, we become ungodly. God tells us about how people will be in the last days, and this is what He says.

**2 Timothy 3:1-4** But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

Do we see any of these things happening in our day? Right in the middle of this list of horrible sin, God puts the sin of being ungrateful. If we don’t ask the question “What am I thankful for?” we will become ungrateful. And yet, this is not the most important question. The most important question is not “What am I thankful for?” but “Who am I thankful to?” It’s most miserable to be thankful for many, many gifts and blessings, and yet not know who to thank for them. That’s a miserable condition. And most of the people in this world are in that very condition. Without knowing who deserves the credit for our blessing, our gratitude actually leads us into idolatry. It leads us into anti-worship. So it’s human to be thankful. It’s Christian to be thankful to God, the God who has revealed Himself through His Son, in holy Scripture. Psalm 100 helps us to focus on both of these questions: What am I thankful for? And who am I thankful to? Psalm 100 points us to God as the source of every blessing that we experience. James picks up on this. This is what James says of God.

**James 1:17** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

So whether a person is a violent atheist or whether a person is the most holy of saints, every gift that person experiences comes from God. If they experience something good—and they all do in this world, because God is a God of common grace—it’s from God. That’s why they’re experiencing that gift, that bit of goodness. God is perfect in His perfection. He doesn’t change.

So we’re walking through this series on worship because worship is the most important matter to God. It’s the most important matter of all life. God cares not only *that* we worship, but *who* we worship. And He cares *how* we worship Him. God’s Book, the Bible, is filled with instructions and commandments and prohibitions and encouragements regarding worship. The first four of the Ten Commandments focuses on who we worship and how we worship Him. Jesus says this to the woman at the well, this woman who is confused about worship.

**John 4:23-24** But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

This is the most important thing to God. As He looks over the world, He’s looking and saying, “Where are those who would worship me in spirit and in truth?” We have to ask, what does the Father see when He pauses and stops on us, on me. He is seeking people who would worship Him in spirit and truth. And when He finds them, He takes great joy and delight because that’s why He created us. So God cares how we worship Him, as well as that we do. Not just any expression of praise will do.

Remember that God did not accept Cain’s worship. Cain wanted to come to God and worship Him in a way of Cain’s preference, of Cain’s choosing. And God said, “No, Cain. I’m not going to accept your worship. Be careful. Sin is crouching at your door. If you do what’s right, I’ll accept your worship. But you have to do what is right. You have to follow my instructions.” Without following God’s instructions on how to worship, that worship is empty. It is worship that is unacceptable to God. It’s worship that is tossed aside by God.

So what does God want from us in our worship? It’s most natural when we think about a worship service, to ask ourselves, “What do I want from this hour? What is my desire to receive from this time that we would spend together in church?” And that question, “What do we want?” whether it’s asked by a person in the congregation or by a pastor or by an elder or group of elders, that question will lead us into anti-worship. It leads us away from worship because it’s not the question that God would have us ask. It leads us into the worship of self. What do *I* want to experience in a worship service? Instead, we must ask the question, what does God want from us as we worship Him in this hour?

When we ask that question with a Bible open, our preferences fade into the background. They no longer matter because our preferences are not found here in the pages of Scripture. We find that God doesn’t really care much about our preferences, if at all. God’s priorities take center stage. God’s priorities become central in our view, and it’s only then that we are able to worship God in spirit and truth. Our preferences might enliven us emotionally. I’m sure Cain was very enlivened as he gave his sacrifice. I’m sure he was very excited about that. But it’s unacceptable worship if our worship is not framed around the priorities of God, around His truth, around His instructions, around His prohibitions, around His very heart.

I find it interesting that when you get believers talking about why they like this worship service and why they don’t like that worship service, the conversation is almost entirely centered around our own tastes. It’s centered around things that we prefer or that we don’t prefer. Rarely in that conversation is anything said about what God has to say in His Word regarding worship. And this is really upside down. We’re right to measure the quality of our corporate worship first and foremost on whether God’s truth and God’s priorities are exalted and lifted up. The truth that we learn from Scripture is that worship makes much of God and makes very little of ourselves. It makes much of God and His priorities and makes very little of us and our preferences. So this whole series on worship is intended to teach us what God Himself says about worship, so that we would learn. It’s so that we would learn to enjoy God, that we would learn to exalt Him, that we would learn to value Him the way that He deserves to be valued.

So if you remember in this series, from Psalm 13, we learned how to worship God when painful loss knocks on our door. We learned from Psalm 51 how to worship God when shameful sin captures our hearts. We learned from Psalm 91 how to worship God when terrible trouble strikes our lives. And today we learn from Psalm 100 how to worship God when abundant blessing gives us joy. The main idea behind Psalm 100 is that God loves grateful, joyful worshipers. That’s who He loves. He delights in those folks of His that are grateful and joyful in their worship.

We begin by looking at the title of this psalm. It is given a title. Not all psalms are given a title, but this one is. It’s called *A Psalm For Giving Thanks.* It’s the only psalm in all the Psalter, out of all 150, that is identified as a psalm that is specifically for thanksgiving. Now of course there are many psalms that are filled with the calls to thanksgiving and expressions of thanksgiving. But this one is identified and separated out most clearly as a psalm to help us learn how to give thanks to God, how to worship God in grateful moments. This psalm is very short, and yet you might observe, even in a sort of a cursory reading, that there are seven commands that God gives us in these few short verses. Shout joyfully, serve with gladness, come with joyful singing, know that He is God, enter into His gates with thanksgiving, give thanks, praise His name. In other words, this is an action psalm. God wants us to read it and then take action, to do something after we meditate upon this psalm.

If we read this psalm and meditate upon this psalm, but fail to make application to our life as we leave, we’ve not listened to what God has to say, because it’s all about application here. There’s a lot of theology, and we’ll talk about that, but it’s all application. It says this is what you do. And at the end of this psalm, we’re going to either say, “Yes, I’m going to obey this,” or “That was a nice psalm. It’s good inspiration,” and walk away from it and be unchanged. But we have seven commands to obey. We’re either going to obey them or we’re not.

If you’re taking notes, we’re going to look at three areas regarding worshiping God in times of blessing, regarding thanksgiving. The first, in verses 1 and 2, we’re going to consider God’s instructions for thanksgiving. We then are going to move from His instructions to motivations that God gives us for thanksgiving; the fuel that causes that fire of thanksgiving to burn hot. And finally, a call, an invitation for thanksgiving.

**I. God’s Instruction for Thanksgiving (vv 1-2)**

When someone acts kindly to us, we often ask, “Boy, they were so very generous to me. What might I do to show my appreciation to this person? What might I do to show my thankfulness for their generosity?” And oftentimes, we don’t know because we want to do something really nice. Right away we think, “I can write them a card.” We write a lot of Thank You notes. They’re always appreciated and often, deeply. But sometimes we say, “What can I really do to really show that I’m appreciative of the way this person has been so abundantly kind?”

When I want to show gratitude to my wife for her many kindnesses to me, I think about the question, “What would she appreciate the most?” Sometimes I sort of float some ideas out and I discover that not all my ideas are good ones. (Laughter!) And often, I will ask her then, “What can I do to show my appreciation for you?” She’ll often tell me very, very specific things, and I’m grateful for that. That’s what I’m looking for. And when she does tell me, I am right to take note. I am right to listen because that’s really important. How can we demonstrate to God our deep appreciation for His bounty to us? Well God tells us in verses 1 and 2. He tells us three specific ways that we can express to God our thankfulness, our gratitude. He says, “These three are really important to me. If you really want to show me that you’re really grateful, if you really want to express thanks, here are three that are really, really pleasing to me.” The first instruction is joyful shouting!

***1*** *Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!*

Now we’re reading from the English Standard Version and there are many different translations. Many of them are very, very good. Let me read to you from a couple other really good translations, because I actually like the way these other translations read. It says in the New American Standard, “Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth!” It’s not just “make a joyful noise,” but shout joyfully. In the New International Version it says, “Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth!” And then the New King James Version says, “Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all ye lands!” So that word ‘shout’ is communicated. This psalm envisions a people from all over the earth gathering together in one place and shouting in joy for God’s kindness, grace and love.

Those who study the Bible might ask the question…They know that the psalms are written in Hebrew and they might say, “In Hebrew, what does this word ‘shout’ mean? What are the nuances?” And it’s interesting. If you look at the Hebrew, this word simply means that we use our vocal chords and make a noise that expresses joy. That’s kind of profound, isn’t it? What does the word ‘shout’ mean in English? It means we use our vocal chords. That’s what it means in Hebrew, too. We use our vocal chords. In other words, no one shouts silently. God has given us this amazing instrument, a voice. It’s not enough to mutter under your breath, “Oh boy! Thank you God!” No, God says, “Take this instrument I’ve given you and use it as an instrument of worship, of thanksgiving. Shout to the LORD, all the earth!”

This kind of joyful shout was given to kings in Bible times, when the king returned to his home city after a victorious battle. You can imagine the king going off to war. He’s risking his own life. He’s going to have to do some really brave and do hard things in order to defend the city, defend the nation against an enemy that would slaughter this people were it not for a strong defender. And after the battle, after victory, a messenger would be sent to run, run, run, run back to that city, that capital, and tell everyone in that capital the good news. “Our king has defeated our enemies! We are safe! The threat is ended! The king is going to arrive back tomorrow afternoon with his army riding in victorious procession. Be ready!” Now remember, this army is comprised of husbands and brothers and sons and friends. And everybody in that city has been concerned about that vast army. They know them. Can you imagine how excited they are to hear that there’s victory? There’s no google, there’s no internet to find out until this messenger comes. You find out that yes, the invading army is not going to come and slaughter us, because that’s what could have happened. Now you hear a messenger that says, “No, that threat is done! The king is coming back. They’re all safe and they’re coming back in joyful procession of victory.” So when the king returns then the next day, the city is to be ready to receive this king with shouts of joy.

That’s the picture the psalmist gives us for how we are to give voice to our gratitude to God. And we have to ask the question, does this picture match my experience? Does this picture match our experience as a church? The King has ridden out to battle and He has won! So the greatest enemies that would wage war against our soul are done. We don’t have to worry about, “what is going to happen when I die?” because the King has ridden out. He has defeated sin. He has defeated death for us. The announcement has been made. Victory has been won! Wait for the King! And when the King comes, get ready to make a joyful shout. His victory guarantees our future. If He didn’t have victory, we wouldn’t have any future. And so now we live with the hope of the resurrection. We live with the guarantee of an inheritance of heaven as our certain possession. We have reason to meet the King every Sunday with a joyful shout, don’t we? So we give thanks to God by joyful shouting. A thankful people are a singing people, a shouting people.

Now again, some may protest, “You know, Pastor, I understand that’s what it says, but I’m a really reserved person. I don’t shout about anything.” And that might be the case for some of you. Now, I doubt it, but it might be the case. I would love to sit alongside of you as your son or daughter plays a basketball game and see if that really is true. (Laughter!) When a call goes against them, I want to see what you do. But some of you might be so reserved that even then, you never give voice to joy, never give voice to happiness. It’s possible! Let’s suppose that you’re right about yourself. You don’t shout about anything, ever. As we look at Psalm 100, do you find a loophole? Do you see any loopholes in there? It says “all the earth!” That kind of includes everybody. All the earth means regardless of your culture, regardless of whether you are people who do this or not. It says all the earth. Do you find a loophole? Does it say, “Shout for joy if your personality is exuberant”? No, it doesn’t say that. It just says that if you want to express thankfulness to God, this is what you do. This is how God receives your gratitude. Shout joyfully! It doesn’t say that if you’re a quiet person it’s okay to just smile a wee bit. Now again, I understand that because of personalities, some people’s joyful shouting is louder than other people’s joyful shouting. But there’s one thing in common with all shouting, and that’s that this instrument God has given us is engaged. It’s that our lips don’t remain closed.

If I can exhort you and perhaps correct you very gently…Understand that I don’t intend any condemnation. I intend some exhortation, some encouragement for change. Sometimes when I’m up here and I see how we are worshiping the Lord, there are some who really don’t open their mouths to sing. And there may be a lot of reasons for that. I know that every Sunday there are some who come and they are not born again. They don’t know the victory of the King. I understand that, and we welcome you. So, there’s no shame in that. But if you are a born again believer who understands and has been given this victory by God through Jesus Christ, if you’re a subject now of the King, you’re part of His nation, you’re citizens of heaven now. The way this King asks us, indeed, calls us and commands us to honor Him as He rides in our presence, is to shout. It’s to give voice with joy to Him.

Imagine in that city setting where the king enters the city after winning the victory against an enemy who tried to kill him. He fought hard and wisely and he won. It’s an enemy that would have slaughtered all the people. And imagine as he enters the city that next day, that all the people kind of just look up silently. It was such a moment that should have been a time of great rejoicing, and it was kind of nothing. That’s what a worship service often is when we don’t give voice. There should be something here, because we’re talking about a victory that’s amazing and we’re experiencing that. But there’s something lost. There’s a loss of glory, a glory to the king that should be his.

***1*** *Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!*

So whether you believe this or not, your voice is really important to God. It really is. It’s important to the church, to our community. Your voice is received by God as a sacrifice of praise. Your voice has the power to encourage other people. And some say, “Pastor, you don’t understand. My voice is bad. You don’t know how bad it is. It’s just bad. It just doesn’t sing well.” Here’s what I say to you. That’s all the better! I think you have the greatest opportunity to influence the church toward worship because your voice is bad. Do you know that many around you are not singing because their voice is bad, too? And they hear some other people that have great voices, around them. They’re like, “Oh man! That’s intimidating.” But if they hear your voice, they’ll say, “If he can do it, I can do it.” (Laughter!) Honestly! I didn’t have this in the notes, but I don’t think my oldest son…My oldest son has one of the worst voices on the planet. (Laughter!) But man, if you’re in this Sanctuary and you get around him, you’ll say, “Man, he’s singing. I can sing.” It’s because there’s great joy. The King doesn’t care about the quality of our voice. He made the voice. What He cares about is the joy in our hearts and giving some kind of expression to it.

I’ll tell you just a funny story. This is also not in the notes. We have a little bit of time here. Isaac, you know, taught us a new song. There was a time I was in Dallas and I was a young Seminary guy. I’m a bit of an absent-minded professor, if you don’t know me. If I’m locked into a thought, I don’t really know anything that is going on around me. That happens all the time. You can ask Kimberly. There’s just hundreds of almost daily examples of that. I was reading a little bit in the Word and I got locked into this passage. I was thinking about it. I kind of heard a little bit about what was going on in the service and I heard a song that I was very familiar with. It’s congregational singing, so I start singing, too. I sang through the whole song. I looked up at the end of it and my friends are busting up laughing, but they didn’t tell me anything. Evidently, what the song leader said is “I’m going to teach you a new song. I will sing it through first for you, and then you’ll sing it through.” After the song, he got done and said, “Well, I know one of you knows this song.” (Laughter!) I didn’t realize that I was singing out loud in a real loud voice, to the whole church. But you know, while it was a bit embarrassing, I’m glad that even in my subconscious I have a desire to give voice.

What will we risk in order to give thanks to God? Will we be willing to open our mouths in joy and just give an expression? I know that’s terrifying to many, but I know it’s so freeing. It will release you into worship. Instruction number 2 is joyful serving.

***2*** *Serve the LORD with gladness!*

We give thanks to God by joyful service. A thankful people are a serving people. Now he goes from shouting joyfully to serving the Lord with gladness. God loves for us to get busy not just saying things but doing things to express our joy to Him. Now this is fascinating because God doesn’t need our service. It’s not as though He is incapable of getting everything accomplished that He wants to see accomplished unless we’re going to be involved in it. He is completely capable and completely self-sufficient. But He loves it when we enjoy Him so much, we enjoy His blessing, His goodness, His presence, His person so much, that we say, “God, I just have to find some way to express happiness in you.”

We serve the things we most enjoy. And when we enjoy God the most, we serve Him. We serve our families because we enjoy them. We by nature, naturally, when we enjoy our families, we serve them. We serve other things. Like many of you serve in a myriad of ways. You serve your local schools because you enjoy that school, what they’re doing for your kids. You serve various charities to help the poor because you care about the poor. You love that work, so you want to be involved in it. You serve sports programs and dance programs and science programs that your kids join. You serve the Boy Scouts and Rotary Clubs and neighborhood watch groups and nursing homes. The point here is that we serve the things that we enjoy the most. This King rides in and says, “I want you to enjoy me more than anything else. And so if you really want to express gratitude, then serve the LORD, Yahweh, with gladness.” God is saying, “If you realize how good and kind I am, give me thanks by connecting to my mission, to what I’m about in this world.”

So when you have a church that is full of people who know the goodness of God and want to give thanks to Him, there’s an army that asks the question, “What can I do to serve God here, as an expression of His goodness to me? I want to express to Him that He is so valuable and He is so treasured. It’s not to pay Him back, because I never could! But just as an expression of the joy that I have, what can I do?” It’s vital then, and this is the thing. God loves cheerful servants. He doesn’t just love servants. God doesn’t want us to serve Him grudgingly. He doesn’t want us to serve Him in a way that, “Well, they passed around that sign up sheet for the tenth time and I guess I should do this because people are expecting me to.” That’s not worship. That’s not valuable to God. In fact, God doesn’t need that kind of service. It’s actually a dishonor when we serve God grudgingly. He says, “I want you to serve me with gladness of heart.” It’s an expression that all of my life is benefited because of my King. How can I be part of the mission that glorifies Him in this world?

So if you desire to give thanks to God as an expression of worship, find a place of service to God in His church. Serving opportunities are abundant. There is serving God through caring for little ones in the nursery, teaching Sunday School, leading Good News Clubs, greeting one another at the door, helping with AWANA, connecting to local missions, committing to orphan care, visiting shut-ins, communicating with missionaries, helping with evangelism projects, committing to intercessory prayer, making coffee at the Connection Café. Seriously, those are the kinds of things that make a big difference for the glory of God and His church. There are things like even vacuuming floors and mowing the grass around the church grounds. Ask God, “Lord, I want to serve you with gladness. What would you have me to do to serve you?”

And as you decide to serve, again, make the kind of commitment that reflects the generosity of God, your appreciation for the generosity of God. It’s the kind of commitment where you actually have to rearrange your schedule quite a bit. You have to rearrange your priority. You have to rearrange your time because it’s not just sort of a nod to God. “Yes, thank you. Let me give you a quick note.” No. It’s saying, “Your grace is so profound in my life. I want to do something that expresses how profound I’ve experienced you and your benefits.” The third instruction is joyful assembling. At the end of verse 2 he says

*Come into his presence with singing!*

The New American Standards reads, “Come before him with joyful singing.” So ‘come’ is the command. In order to obey this command, we physically have to do something. We have to leave our homes. Again, the picture is of a gathered group of people coming together to honor this king who is leading this victory procession. And in order to be part of that, you have to get out of your house in order to get in the street to await the king. And that’s the picture here. It’s that God would have a people gathered for the purpose of exalting Him, of bringing Him praise. Later in that call to worship in verse 4, He says

***4*** *Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise!*

So it’s a picture of a gathered group of people going to the place where God dwells and singing to Him there. In the Old Testament, that place was the temple. It was the tabernacle. In the New Testament, that place is His gathered church. And yes, there is a sense where every individual person is a temple of the Holy Spirit. But yes also, every local church is a temple unto the Lord, a temple of the Holy Spirit. Listen to what Hebrews 10 has to say because the instruction is to gather together, to assemble.

**Hebrews 10:24-25** And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Don’t neglect to assemble. That would be so ungrateful to the Lord. It would become a part of those people who are ungrateful. What is the Day drawing near? It’s the day when the King arrives in full victory procession. Let’s make sure that now we’ve had some dress rehearsals for this event. That’s what Sunday is. It’s a dress rehearsal for that ultimate day when the King arrives.

I want you to notice that in all of these three instructions, that attitude matters. In fact, in some ways, attitude is key. It’s the first matter of business. Each one of these commands is joined to an adverb. So it is shout joyfully, serve with gladness, come before Him with joyful singing and joyful assembling. God loves cheerful worshipers. So we give thanks to God by joyful assembling. A thankful people are a gathered people. The Bible is filled with commands to worship God joyfully. It’s with the heart. Again, it’s not just an expression that is outward. It’s not writing a Thank You note that we write out of obligation. It’s writing with true joy. It’s expressing to God a gladness, a happiness because of a satisfaction that God has brought through His Son, Christ Jesus.

**Psalm 33:1-3** Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright. Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings! Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.

It’s right to clothe ourselves with this. Gather together praise! This is clearly a call for a congregation, for a gathered group of God‘s people. Do these descriptions of joy match our experience in our corporate worship? That’s the question. And I would confess in my own self that it’s not true every Sunday. But what God is saying is, “I care about what’s happening on the inside, not just on what is happening on the outside.” It’s not enough to grumble, grumble, grumble, grumble, get to the church door, smile, smile, smile, smile, get to the church door and out to the car, grumble, grumble, grumble. That’s not worship. Worship is “this is who I am now because of what God has done for me.” And that’s why Gospel living always precedes godly worship.

God doesn’t command us to sing like we mean it. Have you ever heard a music or praise leader say that? “Sing like you mean it.” That’s not God’s command. In fact, I don’t think it honors God to do that. Because if you don’t mean it, the thing to do is not to pretend. That creates a church of hypocrites. The thing to do is to say, “God, my heart is not grateful. That means I’m in darkness. I need Christ Jesus to fill me with the abundant life that He offers. What is happening to my soul that it’s not filled with joy? What hindrance is there that I am creating that keeps me from a heart of genuine love, genuine adoration, genuine praise?” You see, genuine joy creates singing hearts. It creates smiling faces. You don’t have to tell this face to smile. Joy just naturally does it.

Here’s the principle. Joy cannot be manufactured. In fact, it must not be manufactured. This is a danger because in a congregation, music makes you feel happy. Good music does. And that’s a danger. If we become reliant like grumpy, grumpy, grumpy, Oh, music! My soul is uplifted! And then we leave grumpy, grumpy, grumpy, that’s not real joy. That’s a manufactured joy that can happen at any secular concert. And it happens among people who don’t know God at all, all the time. So it’s really important for us to evaluate our soul and say, “Is this expression of joy driven by the Spirit of God and His work in my life?” Joy is the fruit of God’s Spirit at work in us. Joy is the fruit of our fellowship with God. And that’s again, why worship on the six days is preparation, it’s fuel to the worship on that seventh, when we get together, that first day of the week. God must give us joy or we won’t have joy.

There is a remedy for a lack of joy, and that’s the cross of Christ. A lack of joy in our worship rightly then leads us back to Jesus. It doesn’t lead us to self improvement, saying, “You know what? I just need to…” No, it leads us back to Christ because He is the source of abundant life and we need Him. There are many reasons that a believer may not have joy. We will list a few. There is bitterness against a brother or sister who has hurt us. There is unconfessed sin. There is a lack of communion with God, a lack of prayer through the week. There is spiritual attack from the Evil One. We need to put on the full armor because those flaming arrows are getting through. There is paralyzing fears. There is a love for the things of this world. All these things are joy-stealers. But all of these have a remedy. That remedy is our victor, the One who allows us to be more than conquerors. It’s Jesus Christ. Here’s what Jesus says.

**John 15:1, 4, 11** I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser…Abide in me, and I in you… These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

This is the promise. Jesus says, “I just spoke to you about how I am the vine and the Father is the vinedresser and how I care for the vine and how I’m calling you to abide in me, to connect with me in communion. I spoke these things to you that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. That’s why I spoke these things to you. That’s why I told you about this kind of relationship that I’m offering.” Friends, let’s go to Christ with a heart of submission, a heart of faith, and ask Him to fill our life with grace. Here’s a prayer I often pray for myself and for you and for this congregation:

**Romans 15:13** May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

That’s a great prayer! Let’s pray it for one another.

**II. God’s Motivations for Thanksgiving. (vv. 3, 5)**

We’re just going to touch on these. It would be great to spend so long on these, but let’s just touch on these. We ask the question: Why should I give thanks to God? Why should I shout joyfully? That’s hard for me to do. Why should I serve? I have a lot of stuff to do on my plate. I have a lot of things to do at my work and with my family and I have other responsibilities. Why should I come and gather together in joyful singing when it’s a busy life and this is the one day I have? Why? Why? Why? Why should I do that? God gives us the answers. It’s because of who He is and what He has done.

***3*** *Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who has made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*

***5*** *For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.*

Verse 5 says He is good, He is loving, and He is faithful. This is the fuel that motivates us to give thanks to God in a way that God appreciates, a way that God is pleased. When we know God, our hearts will naturally just burn toward these expressions of thanksgiving. There are three qualities of God that are highlighted for our joy. The first is that God is a good, loving and faithful Creator. Verse 5 provides those attributes of good, loving and faithful. Verse 3 provides these other aspects of God’s Person. He is Creator. He is the good, loving Creator. It is He who made us.

In other words, what would we be were it not for God? Nothing! We talk about *my* time, *my* schedule. What would that be if it weren’t for God? Nothing! You wouldn’t be here. So we just acknowledge He is our Creator. Everything needs to be about Him because of who He is. He made us. Let’s meditate upon this for a moment. God is our personal Creator. We’re not an accident. We’re not an afterthought. We’re not a product of chance. We were made directly and purposely by God. Everything we experience in life is because of God’s decision to create us. In Psalm 139, the psalmist reflects on this more.

**Psalm 139:13-16** For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

He says, “You created me in such a way that from the very beginning, you were there. I was your work. And you ordained even the number of days that I will be alive on this earth.” So what is more important than God? That’s the question. What takes precedence when we recognize “God, you made me! Nothing would be possible apart from you!”

The second quality of God is God is a good, loving and faithful Redeemer. We are His people. It’s remarkable! You see, the Bible teaches that because of sin, we are naturally strangers to God. We are natural enemies of God. We are outside the family. We are not His people. That’s not how we’re born, not one of us! But God, by redeeming us, brings us inside His family. And the cost God pays to adopt us into His family is immeasurable. Let’s consider just a few verses.

**1 Peter 1:18-19** knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

You were ransomed from a life of total emptiness by God. No amount of silver and gold in all the world could have accomplished that. You were ransomed by something far more valuable. It’s amazing! Peter goes on to say

**1 Peter 2:9-10** But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

You were redeemed. This is who you are. You are His people. Every one of us began as ‘not a people.’ But now we are His possession. Let me ask you, do you know that God is a God who made you and that He offers redemption? He has redeemed you if you are in Christ, so that you would enjoy Him and would make all your life about Him. You would be His possession, proclaiming His excellencies. That’s the whole purpose. That’s the whole goal.

The last quality Psalm 100 teaches us about is that God is not only a good, loving and faithful Creator and Redeemer, but also a Shepherd. You are the sheep of His pasture. He pledges to care for us like a shepherd cares for his sheep, and to supply every need for the present and the future, to protect us against all enemies, and to lead us safely home to glory. We fear no evil. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life. And I say that just simply because God is my Shepherd. I couldn’t say that if I’m making a self-directed path. I can say surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life. Why do I know that? Because God is my Shepherd and I am His sheep. I’m in His flock. That’s what God does. And then when I die, I will dwell in His house, the house of the Lord, forever.

Friend, I want to ask you, do you know the Lord? Do you know Him as your Creator? Do you know that He created you personally? More, do you know Him as your Redeemer? Do you know that He sent His Son to die so that Jesus’ blood would ransom your soul out of being alienated from God, distant from God, and bring you into His own family? That’s the cost that was necessary, but that’s the purpose. Do you know Jesus as your Redeemer? Do you know God as your Shepherd? In other words, are you sheep who hears His voice? And when you hear the voice of the Shepherd, do you turn and follow Him because you know Him? Friends, how can a person know the Lord? That’s the command here, isn’t it, in verse 3?

***3*** *Know that the LORD, he is God!*

Do you know Him? And the answer to that question…I love John 1. Let me just read this to you.

**John 1:10-11** He (Jesus) was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

Our natural state is that we don’t know God. We don’t know Jesus when we’re born. The world didn’t know Him. He came to His own and His own people didn’t receive Him. They didn’t recognize Him as anything special.

**John 1:12-13** But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

There is spiritual life inside of these folks. Do you have that spiritual life? Receive Him. Believe in His name. That’s the access to this grace. The last matter I want to talk about this morning is

**III. God’s Call to Thanksgiving. (v. 4)**

***4*** *Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!*

God has instructed us how to give thanks. He has instructed us on why we give thanks. Now He just says, “Okay, let’s get to it. Enter! Go!” The invitation is made. God loves grateful, joyful worshipers. So we’ve heard seven commands. And the question we’re going to ask is, what will I do? Lord, will I obey?

Lord, we cry, fill us with your Holy Spirit, a Spirit of hope, so that we will abound in joy. And in our joy, we want to give thanks to you, our generous, gracious God, in a way that you most appreciate. So we commit ourselves to shout with joy, to serve you with gladness and to come together as often as we possibly can, with joyful singing. Praise God!