

## Praise and Thanksgiving

### Psalm 100

#### Gordon Randall – 16<sup>th</sup> September 2012

Two men were walking through a field one day when they spotted an enraged bull. Instantly they darted toward the nearest fence. The storming bull followed in hot pursuit, and it was soon apparent they wouldn't make it. Terrified, the one shouted to the other, "Put up a prayer, John. We're in for it!" John answered, "I can't. I've never made a public prayer in my life." "But you must!" implored his companion. "The bull is catching up to us."

"All right," panted John, "I'll say the only prayer I know, the one my father used to repeat at the table: 'O Lord, for what we are about to receive, make us truly thankful.'"

Today we continue our sermon series on prayer but with particular emphasis on praise and giving thanks. Today is also our Harvest Festival Sunday which is helpful because - why do we celebrate Harvest Festival? To remember and give thanks to God for all He has given us. We need only look all around us at his wonderful creation to get a sense for how he provides for us and ultimately need only look to the cross to see how much he loves us. Giving thanks to God is crucially important. Giving thanks means it is God we worship, adore, depend on, find our security in, seek our comfort from, and put first.

G.K. Chesterton put it this way.

You say grace before meals.

All right.

But I say grace before the play and the opera,

And grace before the concert and pantomime,

And grace before I open a book,

And grace before sketching, painting, swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing, dancing: and grace before I dip the pen into the ink.

There is so much to give thanks to God for. God calls us to be actively involved in giving thanks. And one way to put this into action is through prayer. Our reading this morning provides five verses packed full of how we can give thanks to God. It calls us to action.

The first three verses ...calls us - "To shout", "to worship", "to come" and "to know". This is followed by a statement about God telling us why we should take this action. "It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture".

The pattern is repeated with three more calls to action in verse four: We are to **Enter** his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise; we are to **give thanks** to him and we are to **praise** his name. Why? Verse five tells us ..Because "the LORD is good", "his love endures forever", "his faithfulness continues through all generations"

So here are the action words from Psalm 100...

Shout – (Worship)Serve – Come – Know - Enter – Thanks – Praise

Let's look briefly at each of them particularly from the position of giving thanks to God through prayers starting with

#### 1. 'Shout for Joy'.

God's given us emotion but sadly our culture sometimes squashes it. For example – crying (men in particular try to suppress this) yet it's normal, it's the way God has made us. He gives us the emotion to cry because actually it helps us. Another God given emotion is joy. This psalm says be joyful about what God is doing in our lives. Think about it...He gave you the strength to get out of bed this morning. He gave you clothes to put on and wear to church. He gave you the beat of your heart. He gave you the breath in your lungs. He lets us breathe His air. He lets us drink His water. He lets us bask in His sunshine. He lets us enjoy the showers of blessing that come on a September day. All good gifts come from God. He is the creator, the sustainer. He has His eyes on the sparrow and knows when one of them falls to ground – He knows the exact number of hairs on your head – fortunately for God it does take him long to count the ones on my head but even for people with a full head of hair – he knows the exact number. As we thank God this morning the first thing this psalm is saying is – SHOUT joyfully to the Lord – for He is Lord – He is God – He is mighty – He is magnificent.

But how do we do that through prayer? Well two thoughts on this. As we pray we can shout joyfully (in silence or out loud).

Each morning I try to start my day with these words. Thank you Lord for today, thank you Lord for yesterday, thank you Lord for Jesus and for what you have done for me in Jesus, thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit, thank you for your grace and favour, mercy and forgiveness, thank you that you love me. Thank you for my wife Ruth and my two children John and Lorna, thank you that you love them.

I don't shout this out but I do try and say it joyfully and belt it out in the silence of my heart – depending on how I'm feeling it doesn't always come out that way but when it does it makes a difference to my whole perspective on the day as if I'm praying myself into God's presence.

Here's another thought on shouting joyfully... Sometimes in church when we're singing Ruth leans over and tells me to stop shouting – but I just can't help it. I get so excited, I get so full of joy about what we're singing and I end up just shouting it out. When we sing a hymn or a worship song it's a prayer - we are singing ourselves into His presence – so sing it out joyfully to God. And please forgive me if you hear me shouting (particularly if I'm standing next to you) the next time we sing!

Shouting joyfully whether through silent prayer or blasting out a song of worship – let's be counting all the blessing God has given us – and never cease counting. Yes - sometimes life can be very tough but come what may - even when times are really hard – when all else fails – you can count on God. He is a friend who never lets us down. He leads us through dark valleys when we go through times of trouble. He will give us – exceedingly – abundantly all the things we **need**. He is God – and He watches over us. So get excited - "SHOUT JOYFULLY" to the Lord.

**2. This psalm also calls us to Worship** – although in the context of how this is written 'worship' is better translated to mean 'serve' – so verse two is better understood '**serve** the Lord with gladness'

The Bible proclaims one of God's deepest desires is to have His people serve Him: Deuteronomy 10:12-13 says: <sup>12</sup> And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to **serve the LORD your God** with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>13</sup> and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

Jesus said we are to make service to God a priority in our lives: **No one can serve two masters**. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. Matthew 6:24

Who or what we serve shows where our priorities are. I have heard it said:  
If we are created, He is the Creator.  
If we are sheep, He is our Shepherd.  
If we enter His courts, He is our King.  
If we serve Him, He is our Master.

But notice God wants more than just us serving Him – He wants us to serve Him with "gladness".

He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Therefore what an honour it is to serve God – for He who is above all things has called us to enter His presence and serve Him with joy and gladness. What a brilliant way to express our thanks. So in the context of prayer here are two things to consider.

Frequently pray giving thanks to God for the opportunity (the honour) He gives us to serve him – for example – serving tea and coffee, being a school governor, doing the flowers, hosting a home group, volunteering for a charity, serving Him through our job or whatever it is we do most of the time. Shining his light through giving our care, comfort and compassion for those in need.

Secondly pray and simply ask – Lord please place on my heart how I can serve you – this day, this week, this month, this year. And then be ready to follow his call.

And so we move to:

### 3. “**come** before him with joyful songs”

Giving thanks to God has never been stationary or static. It involves movement between those giving thanks and the One who is receiving thanks. That’s why the psalmist calls us to “come”. An invitation has been offered. A door has been opened. We are to enter His presence with a song of joy on our hearts. Sing to the Lord a new song – tell Him how thankful you are for all the blessings He has given you. Giving thanks is an invitation from the One we are to thank. After all Jesus said: **Come to me**, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. – Matthew 11:28

And: I say to you that many **will come** from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. – Matthew 8:11

God has given us great blessing – our response should be movement - it should be travelling – coming before Him – with joyful singing – thanking Him for all He has done.

But - a little insight at this point – coming before Him doesn’t mean having to physical leave the location you find yourself in – but it does mean leaving behind our self-sufficiency and our pride. “Come” means making God – God. “Come” means acknowledging we are dependent on Him for all the good things that have come our way.

The Bible says: Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. James 1:17

We are called to always be moving toward Him. So come to the Lord in Prayer.

Verse three says:

4. **Know** that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. This verse calls us to **know** – two things:

1. God made us
2. We are His possession

Let’s look at each for just a moment.

1. God made us – not ourselves. But it’s easy to get caught up in self-sufficiency and pride. This verse helps combat those thoughts and ideas. We are not self made people. Yes, we all have some control of our lives to a certain extent – but God is ultimately in control. He knew you before you were formed in the womb. He knew what the colour of your eyes would be. He knew how tall you would become. He knew what nationality you would be and what gender. Psalm 139 says: For you (God) created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

If He is our creator then: 2. We are His possession. We are His people. We are the sheep of the Good Shepherd. We belong to Him. He created us - He formed us in our mother's womb. We did not make ourselves.

The more we embrace this the more we remove our self-sufficiency or pride as we come before God with thanksgiving.

Verse 4 says:

**5. Enter** his gates with **thanksgiving** and his courts with **praise**; give thanks to him and praise his name.

In other words - Enter with the password: "Thank you!" Make yourselves at home, praising and worshiping God. When we give true thanks it is to be in the presence of God. He is the object of our worship – because He is worthy - He should also be the object of our thanks - He gives us blessing day by day. Everything we are or possess is because God is who God is. The more we understand this the more clearly and totally we can say, "Thank You, God." So how can we best say "thank you" to God? **By worshipping Him sacrificially** giving Him our time, energy and attention and presenting ourselves in such a way that we are giving ourselves to His service almost without giving it a second thought. God wants our attention – our time – and our energy. Why? So He can use them for His glory. So...give thanks to Him. Give praise to Him. Give your time – give your energy – give yourself to Him. He is worthy of our worship. The Bible says in Romans 12:1: Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as **living sacrifices**, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

Here is a truth about all of Psalm 100 – it's not about us – it is about God. Look down through it. What do you find? In verse one you'll find the name of the Lord who is over all the earth. In verse two you'll find the name of the Lord who wants us to rejoice and celebrate with Him. In verse three you'll find the name of the Lord who is our creator and sustainer. In verse four you'll find His castle – His home with the doors opened wide for us. In verse five you'll find His name that is good and kind and faithful to all generations.

So in response take action to give thanks to God. As God provides for us let's **shout** joyfully to Him through our prayers, praying our thanks with gladness for the opportunities He gives us to **serve** him, through our prayers **come** into his presence and acknowledge our dependence on Him. Pray and **know** He is God. Each day pray and **enter** yourself into God's presence giving **thanks** to Him and **praising** Him. Because He made us, we belong to Him, we are His people and He is good, His love is eternal and His faithfulness lasts forever!

To conclude – if you have something you've brought with you to symbolise your thanks for God's provision please bring this forward. Please now think about what you brought forward to symbolise saying thank you to God. Or just think about something you'd like to give thanks for. Now let's take a short time of individual prayer and give thanks to God either silently or alternatively please feel free to say a short prayer out loud.

Father God thank you that you allow us to pray – please strengthen us in our prayers. Help us to joyfully shout our praise of you. Thank you for the privilege it is to serve you. Help us to continue to seek your will for the way you wish us to serve you. Thank you for the songs and hymns we sing. Help us to offer these to you together with our prayers in such a way that it pleases you. May we constantly open our hearts and enter into your presence giving you thanks and praise. Thank you that you are good and that your love endures forever. Thank you for your faithfulness through all generations. Thank you for Jesus. Amen.