

A Call to Joyful Worship

By Don Green

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Bible Text: Psalm 100
Preached on: Sunday, October 3, 2010

The GraceLife Pulpit
28001 Harrison Parkway
Valencia, CA 91355-4190

Website: www.thegracelifepulpit.com
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/gracelifepulpit

Phil Johnson was supposed to be here this morning but he's over in the main service. We had kind of a last minute change to the preaching schedule, oh, just a couple of weeks ago, and so I'm stepping in for Phil as he steps in for John MacArthur and there's just kind of a domino effect that takes place when that happens and I'm delighted to do that. It kind of gives me an opportunity to just put a little capstone from a different passage of Scripture on the series that we've looked at over the past few weeks on the fear of God and what it means to fear God and I'm not going to rehearse all of the details of what we talked about with that. A big part of the reason that I preached that series of messages was to bring to your attention the fact that for the believer, the fear of God is not a matter of craven terror in response to his power and all of that and the power of his judgment because the whole dynamic of our relationship to the Lord was changed when Christ suffered and died and rose again for our sins. He died to reconcile us to God, to deliver us from the fear of death, to deliver us from the reality of God's judgment, to cleanse us from our guilt and to forgive us of our sins. So we needed to see that the fear of God for the believer meant something different than what it means for someone who is still in their sins and what we said was that the fear of God for us who know Christ is a whole-hearted life of worship, of humble loving worship to this God who saved us in response to his saving mercy. Great reverence for this holy majesty, absolutely. We don't trifle with salvation. We don't trifle with his word. We don't trifle with sin. But we revere him in the context of a relationship where he has saved us and he has promised eternal life to us and that is a promise that he will certainly keep and that changes the whole dynamic from one of terror and guilt to one of trust and confidence and love and humility and submission to his authority and his Lordship.

And to kind of bring a capstone to that and to kind of give a benediction, if you will, to that series of messages, I want to go back to a passage we looked at several years ago, Psalm 100, which really kind of lays out in different terms the kind of response to God that we're talking about. Psalm 100. As you're turning there, think back on your Christian life. Probably for many of us, if not most of us, think back on this past week and remember that there are times when your heart grows cold toward the Lord; times where you are somewhat indifferent to the things of God, even perhaps without even thinking about it, without even recognizing it. Your heart isn't as warm and loving and humble toward him as it ought to be. Now, a newer believer might challenge that statement but most of us can relate to that to one degree or another. As the winds and storms of life

buffet upon us, we kind of lose track of what's most important. Well, whether it's through sin in your life or just indifference or life trials, difficulties, temptations, you find yourself with a cloud kind of hanging over your spiritual life, today's message is for you and today's message is for me.

Psalm 100. Let's look at it together here as we open up. Psalm 100, beginning in verse 1.

1 A Psalm for Thanksgiving. Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. 2 Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing. 3 Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; 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 lovingkindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations.

Now, this popular Psalm seems simple on the surface. Its language is direct, it is clear, it's simple in one sense, but I want you to understand that it is not superficial at all. Look at the way that it addresses your entire man. It addresses our entire man as it speaks to us.

It addresses your mind. Look at verse 3. It addresses your mind, it says, "Know that the LORD Himself is God." Think on these things. Think on this reality that the Lord himself is God.

It addresses your emotions, it addresses your heart response, if I can put it that way. It says, "Shout joyfully to the LORD." This is not a matter of academic recognition of the sovereignty of God. This is something meant to move you to joy. It moves beyond just the factual cognition of the presence of God to one that changes the way that you approach life.

And it addresses your will. It addresses your commitment when it says there in verse 2, "Serve the LORD with gladness." It calls upon you to serve him, to commit yourself to him, to direct your will into the submission of this God who is being described here.

Mind, emotions and will all addressed in this one simple Psalm. You know, we've read it in our family over the years, read this at dinnertime on different occasions and there is reason for that. It's such a simple thing to read, but we need to understand as believers maturing, growing in the Lord, that this Psalm speaks to the totality of man and calls upon us to that total whole-hearted life response of humble loving worship to God that we've been talking about for the past few weeks as we discussed the fear of the Lord, and this Psalm will move us in this direction.

There are two main points for today that I want to bring out to you. This is simple and yet it takes a lifetime to apply. Two main points, the first one today is for you to see the call to joyful worship. The call to joyful worship.

Look at the first two verses which set the theme for the entire Psalm. Let's look at them a little more closely together. It says, "Shout joyfully to the LORD." There is that covenant name for the God of Israel, the God of the Bible, the God who keeps his covenant promises to his people.

1 Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. 2 Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing.

This call to joy, this call to shout is a call to an exclamation in response to God. It's not a casual response. This wells up from within you and calls for a response of joyful shouting to him. This is the word that is used, a shout of triumph when a king enters into the room; when a sovereign walks into a room with his subjects before him, this is the response, this is the word, this is the phrase that is used to describe their response to a beloved king. That is the call that is made to all of the earth to respond to the living God. It's describing a spontaneous thrill of a grateful heart that recognizes the greatness and the goodness of God. "Shout it out, this God reigns! Shout it out, this God is good! Shout it out from the bottom of your heart!"

Whenever I think of that kind of response to the Lord, a faint analogy comes to my mind. The closest thing that we in America have to a king would be our President and it was back on April 15, 1980 that I met Ronald Reagan. He was running for President. He wasn't yet President at the time and I've told this story in here before. But it was at that time where his candidacy was on the ascendancy and people knew that there was a developing possibility that he might become our President and there was a buzz about his candidacy. Well, I was at a reception for him in Terre Haute, Indiana; that's about the only good reason to go to Terre Haute, Indiana and that reason is gone with his passing. I say that just to make amends for all of those of you that I have offended when I have mocked Kansas in the past.

But I was at this political reception for him and we were in a room and we were going to meet him. We knew that there was going to be a receiving line and we were all going to be able to meet him and shake his hand and say a few words to Ronald Reagan. And the things were delayed and it was shoulder-to-shoulder but the doors opened and in walked Ronald Reagan and there was this spontaneous response, collective response from the hundreds of people that were jammed into that room. "There he is! There he is!" He was not a king, he was not yet President, but he was a commanding presence and people were delighted to see him. It was a spontaneous exclamation that came from the presence, the entry of greatness into the room and that was the response that was given. That is the kind of response that this Psalm calls the earth to in response to the Lord. "There he is! There he is in all of his greatness and majesty!" Spontaneous outflowing of worship and joy at the presence of the Lord.

It's been noted that after he met me, Ronald Reagan became President of the United States but that's for another discussion at another time. What we want to focus on here is true unmixed greatness, the greatness of our God. That's the idea in Psalm 100. "God reigns, hallelujah!" coming out of the bottom of your heart is what this Psalm 100 is

calling us to. "Shout joyfully to him!" And I find it fascinating that this Psalm, look at who it calls to this kind of worship. "Shout joyfully to the LORD," who? "All the earth. Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth." This Psalm calls all men everywhere to worship the Lord. This is a universal call to worship.

Now, admittedly, most men in this world reject that call. Most men are indifferent to that call. Most men refuse that call to worship him but it is not based on the failed response of men that this Psalm is focusing on, it is focusing on the worth of the one who is being extolled. The worth of this God is what is the basis of the call to shout joyfully to him. "Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth." It's a universal call, not just to the people of Israel and I want you to see this clearly and see the surrounding context in the book of Psalms that helps you see that this is a call that goes out to all the earth.

Turn back to Psalm 93. Psalm 100 is a climax to a series of Psalms that extol God's sovereignty over all of creation. There are a series of Psalms and the theme that runs through them is the dominant sovereignty of God, how he reigns over everything in the splendor of his majesty, in the splendor of his might, in the greatness of his power, in the unsearchable depths of his wisdom. God reigns over all and I want to walk you through you through a few of these Psalms that lead up to Psalm 100.

Psalm 93:1, "The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty; The LORD has clothed and girded Himself with strength; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved." The greatness of God. He reigns and he is clothed with majesty.

Look at Psalm 95:3, actually let's back up to verse 1 and just take it in its context because of the similarity of the theme to Psalm 100. Notice the call to joy and the basis of the call being the sovereignty of God. Psalm 95:1, "O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. For the LORD is a great God And a great King above all gods, In whose hand are the depths of the earth, The peaks of the mountains are His also. The sea is His, for it was He who made it, And His hands formed the dry land. 6Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker." Singing for joy, shouting with triumph, celebrating the sovereignty of God who owns the earth. Who owns the earth. He owns the mountains, he owns the sea because he made them. How unsearchable is the great sovereignty and the great worth of this God that the Bible reveals to us?

Look at Psalm 96:10, actually we'll go to verse 7. You try to make this as tight and concise as possible and then you just have to expand it to see the fullness of what's being discussed here. Psalm 96:7, "Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name; Bring an offering and come into His courts. Worship the LORD in holy attire; Tremble before Him, all the earth. Say among the nations, 'The LORD reigns; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved; He will judge the peoples with equity.'"

Psalm 97:5, "The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. The heavens declare His righteousness, And all the peoples have seen His glory." Echoes of Romans 1 where the heavens reveal the glory of God. They've seen it and because they've seen it, they should bow before him in true worship, and the fact that they don't and the fact that they do not give thanks is righteous grounds for judgment upon them.

Psalm 98, beginning in verse 7, "Let the sea roar and all it contains, The world and those who dwell in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, Let the mountains sing together for joy Before the LORD, for He is coming to judge the earth; He will judge the world with righteousness And the peoples with equity."

And Psalm 99:1-2, "The LORD reigns, let the peoples tremble; He is enthroned above the cherubim, let the earth shake! The LORD is great in Zion, And He is exalted above all the peoples." The God of the Bible is Lord over all. He's Lord over creation, he's Lord over the nations and he will one day judge all peoples with righteousness and equity. With perfect justice and perfect righteousness he will display his sovereignty in an exercise of judgment over all men who have ever lived.

He is a great God. He is a great God and Psalm 100 calls people throughout the earth, broadly without condition therefore including you and me, calls us to worship this great God, this great Lord with joy and gladness. With joy and gladness, not grudgingly. Not indifferently. Not half-heartedly. Not going through the motions. But with joy and with gladness. And the fact that sinners reject this call does not diminish the rightness of it. The fact that they reject this call does not diminish the worth of the object of this kind of worship. And Christian brothers and sisters, the fact that we don't engage this consistently with the fullness of our hearts is a reflection on us, not on the God who is worthy of this worship.

Worship him with joy and gladness and to the extent that you recognize as we're talking about these things, a difference between where your heart is at and what this Psalm calls you to. That is the margin of repentance, you might say, the margin of change, the margin of the growth that you still have to engage in your spiritual life to come to this point. The standard doesn't change simply because you don't feel like it.

So I ask you even as I've asked myself in preparation for this message, was your life this past week, was your life this past week marked by that kind of spontaneous joy and gratitude to the living God, to the God of the Bible? Or as you sit back and look at yourself, would you have to say that you were drifting spiritually? Grouchy? That amen you heard did not come from my family. It didn't. Grouchy, anxious? Just kind of going through the motions? Honestly, beloved, what's wrong with us when we know the living God? How can we live that way? How can those kinds of attitudes fester in our heart when this is the God of the Bible, this is the God of all the earth, this is the God of the universe, this is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? This is the God who has saved us out of sin and brought us into fellowship with him. This is the God who is going to deliver us into heaven one day and fulfill all of his promises to all of his people.

How can we live that way? I say it as part of the problem. Some of you leave those kinds of poor spiritual attitudes in your wake as a pattern of your life. You need to realize today, you need to see afresh that that is just wrong. We in this room should not be marked by going through the motions in spiritual indifference because we have the Scriptures which unveil to us the glory of the God who reigns and it is only fitting and right and proper that you and I respond to him with joy and gladness because that is what he deserves. That is what is right. And the fact that trials and temptations and all of the difficult, very difficult in some cases, problems of life exist, do not diminish that call to worship one bit.

And if you see yourself in this kind of foggy spiritual mirror, you need to realize something important: those kinds of attitudes are a sign of spiritual drift. If this is what your heart is like, this improper response to God, you need to realize that your spiritual life is not, maybe it's not as good as you think it is just because you attend Grace Community Church or that you come to Grace Life. And I say this not to rebuke you so much as to let you see and give you a sense of desire for a more mature, a more joyful, a more glad spiritual life in the presence of the living God. The Christian life is not meant to be one of drudgery. It's meant to be one of joy and gladness in joyful response, humble loving response to the saving mercy of the God of the Bible. Joyful, humble, loving response to the Savior crucified for your sins.

When you put it like that, it's hard to justify anything other than a joyful response, isn't it? It's hard to. You don't even want to justify your mediocre spiritual life when you see it in those terms and that's the point of this Psalm. It calls us back to what we know to be true and it shows us what the unfolding of our response to that truth should be. It should be joy. It should be gladness. It should be joyful singing.

And what you see, my friends, is that this call to joyful worship, therefore, isn't simply about bringing your physical presence to the appointed time of worship with the Lord's people. It's about so much more than that. It's not about these four hours on Sunday morning and maybe a couple of hours on Sunday evening, it's about the other 162 hours of the week. This sets forth what your heart should look like, a mirror of joy, of thanksgiving and praise because that's what God is worthy of.

And elsewhere in the New Testament, the Bible says that that kind of joy, that gladness, is an inherent part of true worship. Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" He repeats it. "Rejoice always! Again I'll say, rejoice!"

And so as you're perhaps sitting there reflecting on your lack of joy, understand that you need to come to the Lord and you need to confess that as sin. You need to repent of that because a grouchy anxious heart is not a worthy response to this God who reigns over all, who has shown mercy on your soul, who has an eternal heaven waiting for you. And I say that knowing some of the difficult life circumstances that some of you are going through, the serious heartaches that you're going through, but understand that you have to transcend your thinking about these earthbound temporal matters and lift your eyes up to

the worth of God and realize that this worth of God, his sovereign reign over all, his eternal plan for you, his intentions to work good for you, those can become grounds for joy, grounds for thanksgiving, even when the circumstances don't change.

So I'm not telling you to rejoice over your heavy sorrows, I'm telling you to look beyond them to see God, to see his character and say, "I'll set aside," I tell you this so very often, "I'll set aside the earthly circumstances for now and, Lord, just for the sheer sake of your glory and your worth and your eternal character, I'll give thanks and rejoice in that because, Lord, I see that you are worthy of it."

Now, here's the question. You find yourself kind of stuck in the mud, in the spiritual mud if I can put it that way, and you say, "How do I cultivate that kind of joy? How do I develop that when those joyous attitudes are lacking in my heart?" Well, some people will say and there are books that are practically titled this way, that you have to choose to be joyful. The Bible commands it. You say you're discouraged, go out and be joyful! Choose it! I don't know about you but I've never found that to be very helpful and it shows a profound lack of understanding about the way the human heart works. You can't just direct an imperative to a broken heart, to a discouraged heart, and say change it and now be joyful as if this was a light switch that you could turn on and off. That's not helpful and what you're going to see in Psalm 100 is that that is not the approach of this Psalm at all. But I just want to isolate it for now: you can't repair a cold heart through the mere exercise of the will. You might as well tell a rock to turn into bread.

Now, others will say, "Well, you need to pray that God will make you joyful." Well, perhaps that's a little closer to the mark. It expresses a dependence on God to make joy happen but I think even that leaves something out. How do you cultivate joy when you're not joyful? Well, we need to see point 2 here today. We've see the call to joyful worship. We've recognized that we don't fulfill that all that we should, but secondly, you need to see the reasons for joyful worship. The reasons for joyful worship is point 2 here this morning and I want you to pay very close attention to the approach of this Psalm, to the methodology of this Psalm, because when you lack joy, Psalm 100 teaches you to first use your head. Use your mind. Think. Don't worry immediately at the start about your lack of joy, don't worry about the circumstances that are causing you to get discouraged, you need to start by consciously engaging your mind in true, right, biblical thinking.

That's where it starts. You can't change the way that you feel and you can't just turn it on and off in a sincere way; you might be able to put on a facade, a mask for others that makes it look like you're happy when you're not but if you're serious about your spiritual life, what you need to know is that the elements of change, the things that start you back on a path to joy are things that you can use your mind and engage your mind in. And you can think, most of you, you can think about these things and just as a train engine pulls the rest of the train along, right thinking will pull along the kind of heart response that brings joy and gladness and singing.

Look at verse 3 here. Psalm 100:3 where it says, "Know," remember this, think on this, meditate on this again and again, engage your mind on this central fundamental principle, verse 3 says,

3 Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

What are the reasons for joyful worship? There are two subpoints here that I want to lay out for you and the first one is this and it's so simple. The first reason for joyful worship: the Lord is God. The Lord is God. The God of the Bible is the God who rules over everything. You must know God before joyful worship can take place. You must focus on his character. You must focus on the reality of salvation. You must focus on his sovereign rule and his sovereign care over you. And you particularly need to do that when circumstances would seem to suggest something to the contrary. When life blows opposing winds at your sails, this is when you most need to do this and this is when your greatest spiritual opportunity to exercise faith comes, because it doesn't take too much to rejoice when everything is going like you want it to. It's when serious, fundamental, foundational things in your life are thrown up for grabs that you most need to do this and your greatest need is not at that point a change in your circumstances, speaking from hard, difficult, sorry, life experience, you don't most need a change in circumstances, you need a change of mind, as it were. You need to change the way that you think. You need to think on transcendent realities, and if you're not a Christian, that thinking comes with recognizing your need for a decisive repentance from sin and coming to Christ for forgiveness.

Turn back to the book of Matthew 11. I want you to see this. I always like to address something to unbelievers who may be hearing this and not assume too much about every individual in the audience. But Matthew 11:28, a passage that's been special to me in times past over the years, Matthew 11:28, "Come to Me," Jesus says, 'all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.' If you know that you're apart from God, your only starting point for this kind of knowing that the Lord is God is to come to the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; to decisively turn from sin and consciously place your faith in him as your Lord and as your Savior to be redeemed. That's where joyful worship starts for an unbeliever and there is no other door through which you can pass in order to find this kind of rest. You must come to the person of Jesus Christ first and foremost.

For those of you that are believers, who know Christ, who know the forgiveness of your sins and yet find yourself stuck in the muck, as it were, spiritually, come back to the most foundational principles. Come back to the Gospel. Come back to your Savior. And in Psalm 100, you see that you come back in your thinking to the fact that the God of the Bible is the only true God.

Look at verse 3 with me again. This is how you deal with yourself, my beloved friends. This is how you deal with your heart. This is how when you recognize that you lack this

fundamental joy and gladness as your response to God and your response to life, this is how you deal with yourself to get back on track. "Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves." You come back to the most fundamental basic premises of the universe, that the God of the Bible is the Creator of the universe; that the God of the Bible is the one who made his people, of which if you are a Christian, you are one of his. He made you and beyond that, he cares for you.

Look at verse 3 again, he says we are the sheep of his pasture. He is the Shepherd who cares for and provides for his sheep and so, taking it into the whole context of everything that we saw from those Psalms 93 to 99 and here into Psalm 100, the matchless sovereignty of God who raises up mountains and owns the sea and at whose presence the rivers clap their hands, that God is your God. That God is not remote and distant and so totally transcendent that he has no interactions with your life. To use the theological term, he is eminent. He is close. He is involved. In the words of Psalm 23, "I fear no evil for You are with me."

The great sovereign majesty of God being the Shepherd of his people, that is where you go in your thinking. That is where you remember that this God is the one who is in control of my every circumstance. This is the God who sustains his people. This is my God. And as you think that way, as you reflect on those truths, the indwelling Spirit of God in your heart causes you to rise up beyond the poor attitudes, the grumbling, the complaining, the anxiety, and there is a part of you that wells up and says, "No! That is wrong because my heart is responding to the truth of the sovereign greatness and goodness and care of my God!"

If you have a regenerate heart, it is going to respond to that kind of input from your mind and your heart says, "No, I don't accept this spiritual mediocrity. This is my God! I believe these things! I belong to him and he is good! And I belong to this sovereign God by his right of creation over me. I belong to this God by his right of redemption over me. He is mine and I am his and it is well with my soul as a result of that, no matter what I see around me." And your heart rises up and stands on the platform of truth that your mind has informed it with and you say, "This other stuff that I see around me is totally secondary. I rejoice in the Lord my God. My circumstances are secondary to the unchanging reality of his great character and his great promises to me."

Am I describing you when I say that? Because what I want you to see is that this isn't just the obligation that we have as believers, this isn't just what we should and must do, this is our privilege. This is what we get to do. We get to live this way. We get to live in joy and gladness and joyful singing. We get to see life through a prism that says, "Despite the obstacles, I see the hand of God revealed in Scriptures. I trust it even when I can't see it tangibly in the circumstances of my life and I know where this comes out, it comes out with God being good to me in the end and I rejoice in that."

The only reason I'm telling you these things is that this is where the Bible calls you to live. This is where I as your pastor, I want you to live here. I want you to live with joy and gladness. That's why we talk about these things. More importantly, that's why the

Bible calls us to this. God calls us to this not to condemn us for falling short but to bless us with the tangible day-by-day moment realities of true salvation. It's wonderful. This is an expression of the goodness of God upon his people and it is your privilege to live in that sphere of spiritual blessing and when you fall short, it is your responsibility to seek it and as you're seeking it, you have the provision of knowing how to get from Point A to Point B.

This is not, and I like saying this and I rejoice in the truth of this, this belongs to every common, ordinary believer in Christ, these privileges. This isn't reserved for pastors and it's certainly not reserved for seminary professors as though it were their exclusive domain. This isn't the realm of scholars and those who engage in ancient documents and all of that. God bless them for doing that. I'm grateful for their scholarship but what I want you to see is that this kind of experiential Christian living belongs to you. This is yours to engage. This is yours to own. This is yours to manifest. Right now today, this belongs to you.

God calls you to this and he calls you to this not to frustrate you because of its unattainability, he calls you to this so that you would know the fulfillment of it and there is nothing in your life that is an insuperable obstacle to you knowing this joy and gladness. Nothing. Not a thing. It may take some serious commitment and effort on your part to reverse the years of bad thinking that you've cultivated but what I want you to see is there is nothing, there is no complex grammar here that you need to be a scholar to understand. This is the basic character of God that forms the reasons for our joyful worship. He is God. He is sovereign. He reigns. And if you know Christ, you belong to him and just as a good Shepherd cares for the sheep of his pasture, God cares for his people without fail.

So you submit to him. You submit to the one who made you and cares for you. And when you start to work this out in your thinking, you can have the attitude that's set forth in verse 4.

4 Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name.

Praise and thanksgiving, blessing upon him, responding to this sovereign God with the depths of joyful, humble, heartfelt worship. I love Psalm 100, don't you? I love what this Psalm teaches us.

And if you can say nothing else in the midst of your sorrows and trials and discouragement, if you're a Christian you can say this, you can say something like, "I wouldn't even be here if the Lord wasn't God. He's the Creator and he made me and he has made me his child through faith in Jesus Christ who shed his own blood for the forgiveness of my sins and I'm going to heaven one day." If you're a Christian, at the barest minimum you can say that and that bare minimum is the grounds for all of the joy that's going to fill eternity. "God is God. He made me. He saved me and he's going to keep me in heaven forever one day."

Everything else, beloved, is just a detail. It's just a detail. The whole context of your life, the whole context of your successes and your failures and your sorrows and your broken relationships if you are a Christian, the whole context is the sovereign goodness and plan of God through which he will take you to all of eternity with a place reserved at his table in heaven. Now, why can't you rejoice over that much to begin with? And as you engage your mind in those kinds of truths, you move in the direction of joy. Honestly, honestly when you see by contrast how much judgment you deserved for your sin and that God has exchanged judgment for blessing in Christ, everything you need for joy is right there in seed form and it's just a matter of working that out in your heart and giving appropriate heartfelt thanks to God for his unsearchable mercy and goodness to you.

So the first reason that you can rejoice and give God joyful worship is because he is God. There is a plan at work. But there's another reason for joy. The Lord is God, yes. He reigns over all. You're not subject to the whims of fate. You're not subject to the wicked people that have harmed you in the past or are harming you now. You're not subject to the adverse winds of fortune. No, no, the Lord is God and he reigns but as he reigns, understand the second reason for joyful worship: the Lord is good. The Lord is good. It's so simple to say that but that principle runs through everything that happens in the lives of his people. The Lord is good.

Look at verse 5 with me. He just said, "4 Enter His gates with thanksgiving. Give thanks to Him, bless His name." Why should I do that? Verse 5, you should do that,

5 For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations.

God's very character should move you toward joy and gladness. What does it mean that the Lord is good? Well, back in Exodus 33, God told Moses that he was going to cause his goodness to pass before Moses. Exodus 33:18, Moses has prayed, "Show me Your glory!" And God said, "I will pass all My goodness before you." And when the Lord passed before him, what happened? Exodus 34:6. Here is the Lord's expression of his own goodness. He multiplies, he brings forth the rainbow, the kaleidoscope of colors of his own character. Verse 6, "the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God,'" listen to this, beloved, "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished."

Look, I know this is in some ways familiar truth to us, very familiar truth to us, but we should never get tired of this. The sovereign God who reigns over all is like what he described in verse 6 to Moses. He is compassionate and gracious. He is slow to anger. He forgives sin. He abounds in lovingkindness. The God who reigns over all, and the God who providentially reigns over your life, and the God who is carrying you forward to eternal glory, this God is good. Everything is under the control of a gracious and good

God who forgives sin, who does not sacrifice justice, and is moving all of that in that direction for you.

He's wonderful. He is gracious and merciful and I feel the utter lack of vocabulary, the limits of human language to extol the goodness of this wonderful God. But I suppose if you wanted a place to really see it on display, go to the cross. Go to the cross and see God in human flesh suffering for your sins not because you deserved it, but as an expression of his love toward you. Beloved, because God is like that, you should serve him gladly, happy to be under his care because God is good to his people.

So come back to these fundamentals, beloved. Your life flows from a God who created and redeemed you. If you're a Christian, you're part of his eternal plan. Nothing is out of control. Nothing is spun out of control here in anything that's happening in your life. And know based on the promises of Scripture that your trust in Jesus Christ will be vindicated in the end and in such a magnificent way, it will go beyond all that you can ask or think. Think of the greatest way that you can possibly imagine for this to turn out for you in heaven and know that your conception falls miserably short of the goodness that God has up in store for those who love him and are called according to his purpose. Scriptures say that he who believes in him will not be disappointed. You will not be disappointed in the end.

And by faith we appropriate this now. The Lord is God and the Lord is good and, therefore, I give him my joyful glad worship now and commit myself to living that way until he brings me home to glory. Will you do that? Will you commit your heart to that? To that way of thinking and that way of response? That's the promise of Psalm 100, of you and gladness and blessing for all of God's people from the newest Christian to the most mature saint. Give him that response as you dwell on his glory.

Let's pray together.

Father, behind us and around us and ahead of us lies your sovereign goodness. Thank you for setting your affection upon us in Christ Jesus. And Lord, give us the grace that we so desperately need because we tend to walk by sight and not by faith, even though your word tells us to walk by faith and not by sight. Lord, for each one in this room I pray that you would give them the grace to think beyond their circumstances. Give them the grace to consider the eternal and the absolute. Give them the grace to think on your unparalleled goodness, your unparalleled sovereignty. And Father, as they do that, bring forth the joy of Psalm 100 to their hearts and develop within them the commitment, the unqualified commitment to serve you gladly, to give joyful, humble response to you as their sovereign King. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.

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