

It's Time for Joy

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We're going to look at Psalm 100. We're taking a one week break from our study of 1 John and there are multiple reasons why I wanted to take this little break. Part of it is because the past three weeks I realized that we have been dealing with some very significant, deep, theological issues as we've looked at the doctrine of regeneration and talked about how God brings us to new life and what the reason that Christian change when they are converted is because of the new life that God gives us. Those are heavy topics and a lot of Scripture involved so I just wanted to come up for a little breath of fresh air with this Psalm 100 that kind of elevates us and lets us see things from the big picture perspective. We've delved into the depths of certain doctrines but we're going to come up now and see the big picture of what it means that God reigns over all and how we respond to him in Psalm 100. I would say this: in Psalm 100 I believe that you find something that governs your fundamental disposition toward life. What you see in Psalm 100 are simple basic principles about God, about who he is and in a way that shapes the way that you respond to everything in life: the way you respond to fear; to anxiety; to depression; to sorrow. It's all found and shaped here in Psalm 100 in the simplest and clearest of terms. I would say this: those of us that have been Christians for any length of time at all, if we're honest we would acknowledge that there are times where our hearts grow cold in our Christian life. There are times when we lose sight of the magnificence of our salvation. There are times where trials and relational difficulties make it difficult to put one foot in front of the other and we understand that. Now, a newer believer, someone who is fresh in Christ and only knows the joy of new birth, might challenge that statement but for those of us that have walked with Christ for a period of years, we just have to acknowledge that there are times where it's just one foot in front of the other, not always the mountaintop experience that sometimes teachers try to create and motivate us to and keep us up at that exaggerated emotional level that really isn't sustainable. We understand that and we realize that there are times where clouds overtake the sky. There are times where clouds of life block our view of the Son of God. The question is: what do we do with those times? How do we respond? What is it that we come back to to keep our perspective fresh and our hope aflame?

Psalm 100 gives us the answer for that. Let me just read it again. I know I read it a little earlier in the service but I'd like to just have those words fresh in your mind as I begin

the teaching here this morning. With that little bit of introduction, look at Psalm 100 again,

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

Stop there for just a moment. Joy. Gladness. Joyful singing. This is a song of confidence, of optimism, of joy and rejoicing as we see and it's in the form of a command: shout joyfully, serve the Lord with gladness, come before him with joyful singing. This is the call of God upon our lives. This is what is to be reflected in our hearts and in our attitudes as we think about life in the presence of God. Verse 3,

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.

You see it, don't you? You see the joy that permeates this call to worship? That's exactly what this Psalm is: it is a call to joyful worship. When I say a call to worship, we're not talking about simply what we do on this Sunday morning, this isn't a call to worship for the next hour or so and then we go back to life. This is a comprehensive way of viewing life. This is a comprehensive approach to living in the presence of God and living out your Christian life in the presence of God. What I want you to see and what it emphasizes is that the reality that God is God and that God is good should permeate and flavor everything about your life and your thinking and your perspective. I did a little quick run through the epistles of the New Testament in light of this and you can see these themes that we're going to talk about repeated in each and every one of the New Testament epistles. This is simply a call to biblical living. This is what it means to be a Christian. In light of events over the past several weeks or so that have taken place in our world and in our country and the way that some have chosen to respond to that, I think that this call to joyful worship is particularly needed by Christians today. We are not meant to be heavy spirited people as Christians. We're not meant to be weighed down by the circumstances that are around us as if we had no hope, as if we didn't know the God who reigned over all. I'll go further and say that Christians are not meant to be angry, bitter people because the events of the world don't turn out to their liking. We transcend the world, beloved, as believers in Christ. Our perspective is shaped by things that are outside the realm of earthly diminishment, outside the realm of earthly rulers. Our joy is rooted in spiritual eternal realities that should totally flood our heart, cause us to rejoice and have a fundamental disposition of confidence, joy and gladness that causes us to give thanks to God.

It's so plain and obvious on the face of the text here that I'm delighted to be able to show this to you today. This Psalm, as simple as it seems, as direct and short as it is, holds the key for joyful living. It holds the key for responding in a way that honors Christ and shows the appropriate gratitude to God for who he is. So there are two main points for

this morning. What I want you to see first of all is this call to joyful worship. That's the first point: the call to joyful worship. The first two verses of Psalm 100 set the theme for the entire Psalm. Look at them again with me as we try to just embrace and drink in the sweet refreshing waters of this wonderful Psalm penned over probably 3,000 years ago but still the same principles that brought joy 3,000 years ago, 1,000 before the time of Christ, still operate in the hearts of believers here today. It doesn't change. The word of God is eternal and unchanging just as he himself is.

So look at those first two verses with me: "Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing." You notice the imperative there, right? You notice that this is a command. This is not a request that you can take or leave, this is the call of God on our lives is to serve him with gladness, to know who he is and to respond with joy as a result. So, "Shout joyfully to the LORD," it says. This word "shout" is a word that's used for a shout of triumph when a king enters the room. When a sovereign enters into the presence of his people, there is a response of the people that rejoices in the presence of their king. That's the idea. Jesus said when the bridegroom is with them, they can't mourn and fast for joy of the presence of the bridegroom. What we have to calculate into our fundamental disposition toward life is that the Lord who saved us is the Lord who reigns and he is always present with us and joy is therefore always an appropriate response to him.

These first two verses are talking about the spontaneous thrill of a grateful heart in response to the greatness and goodness of God. It's the spontaneous thrill of a joyful heart in response to the grace and goodness of God. On April 15, 1980, I met Ronald Reagan in person. It was a very brief time but it was very, very memorable. He was running for President at the time and there was a campaign event in Terre Haute, Indiana and I happened to be there and there was a reception beforehand for a smaller group of people, a couple hundred, I don't know. Everyone is packed into what must have been a convention ballroom or something. I don't quite remember all the details but we're just packed in there and just waiting for him to arrive. The time goes by and five minutes, ten minutes, and the anticipation is building and then the doors opened and Ronald Reagan walked into the room. Not yet President, not a king, but there was this developing buzz about his candidacy and he walks in with this commanding presence and there was this spontaneous, simultaneous spoken reaction, "There he is! There he is!" and there was a bit of a surge toward the place where he was going to have the receiving line. "There he is!" That's a very pale reflection of what this Psalm is calling believers and all of the earth to respond to the Lord with, "There he is! The glory of the Sovereign one is there!" Now, I realize that we have a President, not a king, and that Reagan wasn't even President at that time, but you get the idea. Your leader is in your midst. Your king is with you. That calls for joy and a spontaneous reaction that says, "Praise God! He is here!" And all of the circumstances and all of the sorrows get swallowed up in the presence of a gracious and magnificent God and you shout and you serve him gladly and you come before him with joy because of who he is.

Here's what I want you to think about in that context is this: he never changes. In the vicissitudes of life, as your life goes up and down like the billows of the sea, sometimes

up, sometimes down, there is this constant eternal presence of an omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God who is there present in your midst through it all. That's cause for joy. What you have to see, beloved, what you have to see is that you look up and see the reality of this and then you look down, as it were, in life from that perspective. You don't look up through the dirty lenses of your circumstances to try to see God, you see the clarity of God for who he is and then with that clarity of perception in your mind, you look back at your circumstances and view them with a totally different attitude. It all starts with who God is and that's where you start your thinking and that's why it is possible for you to live with joy and gladness even in the midst of the adversity that this world inevitably brings.

This Psalm is setting forth before us what your heart and mine should look like. It's a mirror of joy. A mirror of thanksgiving. A mirror of praise. You look into this Psalm as a mirror and you say, "This is what my reaction to my God should be." So, we do need to ask ourselves this: was your life this past week marked by some semblance of spontaneous joy and gratitude toward God? Was there a perception of that that brought a tinge of joy even to the sorrow of life? That brought strength in the midst of your weakness? Because that's what this Psalm calls us to. Or were you drifting spiritually? Grouchy? Anxious? Going through the motions which I think may be the defining sin of American Christians. Just going through the motions content to have punched the clock on reading your Bible. Content to have punched the clock on your prayer time without really engaging your heart in it. You see, that lukewarm stuff just doesn't cut it any more than just as the crowd was not lukewarm in its reaction to Ronald Reagan. To a far greater extent, we cannot be lukewarm in the presence of this great and gracious God. The very power of the greatness of his character pulls our heart up, as it were, like a magnet toward the praise and joy and gladness of which he is so preeminently worthy. What I want you to see is that who God is – follow me here – who God is changes who you are and grumbling, complaining, grouchy Christians are a contradiction in terms.

Now, I'd like to think that I'm a realist. I don't know if I am or not. I want to be realistic about this. I realize that we're not naturally all like that. You know, life has been bad this past week. I get that and the question is – oh, this is so very important, it's so important how if I find myself in the midst of less than what I should be, how is it that I rise above that? How is it that I move from that gloomy disposition to this joyful worship Psalm 100 calls me to? How do I do that? Well, there are some people who simply would just make it a matter of direct command on your soul that says, "You're sad? Be joyful! Be glad!" Look, you don't have to live very long before you realize that's not helpful to just have somebody when you're discouraged to come and tell you, "Be joyful!" is not helpful. You might as well tell a brick to become bread as to tell a discouraged heart simply, "Be joyful instead of being sad." That does not help. You see, the human heart doesn't respond to direct appeals to the will like that. The human heart needs to be informed.

Why is it that I should be joyful? How do you cultivate joy when you're not joyful? Well, you need to see the second point here this morning and it's the reasons for joyful worship. We saw the call to joyful worship here, secondly, we're going to see the reasons for joyful worship. This is just about a whole way to think and to approach life. That's what I

want you to see. The reasons for joyful worship. When you lack joy, when you're heavy and discouraged as I know some of you are, when you lack joy, Psalm 100 teaches you how to deal with yourself, how to think so that you can move from that gloomy disposition to the joyful mindset that the Lord has for us and that the Lord calls us from. What I love about biblical thinking, what I love about a biblical way of approaching life is that it addresses your mind. This isn't about stirring up a lot of artificial emotions by cranking the lights down low and the music up loud, that's not it at all. That doesn't satisfy the human heart. You might generate a reaction that lasts for a half an hour after someone walks out of the building but you can't build your life on that, can you? You can't build your life on that. That's why so many of you are just so eager and responsive to the teaching of the word of God because you know that you need the Scriptures to do that for you. I need that too. When you lack joy, Psalm 100 teaches you to use your mind and think. You see, joy begins when you consciously engage in right biblical thinking about the most fundamental, clear, simple principles that there are in life.

Now, remember the call to worship from verses 1 and 2, "Shout joyfully, serve the LORD with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing." Now, I think it is legitimate to say, "Why should I do that? You called me to this, why should I respond that way? I have a difficult life. Things have not gone the way that I want. My heart is broken. Don't treat my soul superficially. Don't just turn up loud music and think that's going to make it go away. I have to live Monday through Saturday as well, Preacher. So why is it that I should worship? What are the reasons for joyful worship." The Bible doesn't back away from those questions at all. The Bible is preeminently aggressive in stating forth the reasons that you should be joyful no matter what else you might think.

Look at Psalm 100:3, "Know." Know. Right there. That's a mental term, right? That's addressing your thinking. Having called you to joyful worship, it now addresses your thinking and what is it that you are to know? Well, there are two subpoints here. What are the reasons for joyful worship? Two subpoints. Here's the first one. Why can you be joyful? Subpoint 1: the Lord is God. The Lord is God. Monosyllabic words, one syllable each: the Lord is God. Do you see how simple this is? Do you see how clear this is? There are a lot of profound things that can be said without 30 cent theological words. The Lord is God, that's why you can be joyful. That's why you must be joyful.

Look at verse 3, "Know," this is what you're to think about. This is a call to remembrance, "Remember this." Verse 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." Christian, you have to remember some really basic things. You have to go back to this again and again. You are here not of your own design; you're not here by an accident of evolution. You are here because the Lord God himself made you and not only did he make you, he made you for this time in history. Not only did he make you for this time in history, he made you for the exact circumstances in life that you find yourself around. The Lord our God made you and appointed you for such a time as this. All of a sudden, the doors are opened, the curtains are pulled back to realize that there is an enormous, incalculable, eternal significance to the fact that you are in the life that you're in at the time that you're in it. The Lord our God, know that he has made us and not we ourselves.

We are the product of a conscious intention, a conscious design of the God who runs the universe.

The Lord is God and when you know Christ, when you are a Christian, you have to call these kinds of things to mind. You have to remember that the God of the Bible is the only true God. You have to call to mind that he is the Creator. Look at the end of verse 3 with me again, "We are His people and the sheep of His pasture," and allusion to the fact that the Lord is our Shepherd. The Lord, the God of the universe, is the one who guides you. He is the one who provides for you. He is the one who protects you even if you seem and feel very vulnerable at a particular time in life. Through all of those shifting, changing, difficult circumstances, the Bible tells you to call back, call to conscious mind, call to conscious thought, and to meditate on the reality that as a Christian, as a believer in this great God of the Bible, you are under his providential care. His hand is upon you. He started the process. He's guiding the process. He will culminate the process for you in glory. You have to come back to those conscious, basic, simple thoughts. You are not the victim of random circumstances. You are not the victim of the people who have wronged you. Christians are not the victim of contrary electoral processes in 2012. We have to stop thinking that way. We have to stop reacting to circumstances that way. No. No, the guiding, defining principle of life as a Christian is that I am a child of God, we are the people of God, we are the sheep of his pasture and as the Great Shepherd, he cares for us and he provides for us.

Look, one of the aspects of a shepherd in the Middle Eastern culture is that they knew the lay of the land. They had to lead their sheep through difficult terrain, sometimes through arid places, dry, brown places. They had to lead the sheep so that they would find the food and the water that they needed for their sustenance. The sheep didn't always know where the shepherd was going but the shepherd did and because they were under the care of the shepherd, their security was certain. Do you see that? And what you have to honor God with from the bottom of your heart – oh beloved, from the bottom of your heart – you must honor God by saying, "You are my Shepherd. We are the sheep of your pasture. You know what you're doing. You know where this leads and while the terrain here may be difficult, my God, I trust the fact that you as my Shepherd are going to lead me through it with skill, with a protective hand and this is going to come out good in the end." That's why you can shout for joy and serve him with gladness. It's not because you understand how every individual circumstance is going to come out. It's not because America is going to go back to what it used to be. You're joyful, you're confident, because God is God. The God of the Bible reigns. The Lord who gave his life on Calvary to save your soul is the same one who is orchestrating history to accomplish his purposes and who will never lose sight of you in the process. He will as most certainly guide you as he guides history to achieve his purposes. If this God is your God, do you understand that that utterly changes the fundamental disposition with which you view life?

You get it, don't you? This changes everything. This defines the context in which everything in your life happens. The God of the Bible is God. The Lord is God. Now, if you're here and you're not a Christian, I know we have a lot of visitors here. I want you to turn over to Matthew 11, actually I want you all, not just the non-Christians. But a

particular word for those of you that are unbelievers here today feeling the weight of sin, the weight of sorrow, perhaps the Spirit of God is at work in your life as well, awakening your understanding. "I'm estranged from this God. This God is not my Shepherd. This God is my Judge because I'm guilty and sinful before him." Do you feel the weight of that? Matthew 11:28. Knowing who this sovereign God is, the greatness of his power, the greatness of his magnificence, you wonder what is man that you take thought of him? Even more, what is sinful man that you take thought of us, O God? Here in verse 28, you as a guilty sinner see in Matthew 11:28 what our Lord Jesus says, "Come to Me, 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."

The Lord is God. How great and how gracious is he? That even those of you still in your guilt, he calls you. He calls you out of the world and says, "Come to me. Give your life to me so that I can give you rest." This is an invitation to the lost, an invitation to those who have spurned Christ. Once again, with his open invitation, "Come to me for salvation and find rest." Christian, God reigns. God directs even your sorrows to accomplish his good purposes. When you know that, when you know that the Lord is God, when you're remembering that, when you're calculating that into your approach to life, you see how it changes things. The Lord is God. God is the one who is God. He reigns. He is sovereign. He directs it. He always accomplishes his purposes. Satan is not an equal opposing force to God, he's a tool of God. He's the stool of God. God will use Satan long enough to accomplish his purposes and then he'll banish him into the Lake of Fire, Revelation 20.

So you submit your heart and mind to the one who made you and cares for you and when you realize the incalculable greatness of who this God is and the incalculable greatness of the fact that he's laid his hand upon you for good, then you can respond in verse 4 as it's shown there. Look at verse 4 with me, Psalm 100, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name." Notice the commands again: enter his gates, come into his presence, as it were; give thanks to him; bless his name. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, "In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." What you have to see is that you've got to think rightly about these things. If this is the reality, if I as a formerly guilty sinner now stand in this privileged position of being a sheep of God, a sheep of the Great Shepherd, if I stand in the privileged position, if my life is no accident, the Lord has brought me to this point, he's leading me all the way through all the way to heaven, a gracious Savior has shed his blood to save my soul and then I have a lot of temporal blessings all beside: a wonderful family; a church family; I've got material blessings; you enjoy a good meal. All the other things that we enjoy in life on top of all of that, you see that the spontaneous response is, "The King is here! Oh, bless his name! Praise his holy name! Father, I give thanks to you. You are so good to me."

If the darkness is just really tight around your mind right now because of the way life is, let me just say this to you: you can start here. You can start here. Sometimes you just have to find one solid place if you're sliding down the hill, you have to find one solid place to catch your foot and break the fall. One branch that you can grab hold on and just

break the fall and then start to work your way up from there. Sometimes it's don't try to be over spiritual, just find one place to rest your foot, one place where you can stand. Well, here it is in light of what we're saying. You say, "I wouldn't even be here if it wasn't for God. If the Lord wasn't God, I wouldn't even be here." If you're a Christian, you can say this and you should say this, "This God has saved my soul by shedding his own blood. At the very least, if I do nothing else today, I can thank him for that. My sins are forgiven. God, I thank you for that. It came at the price of the lifeblood of the innocent Son of God, God, I can thank you for that." You start there and then you say, "Wow, do you know what? I'm going to go to heaven and all of these sorrows and issues are going to be behind me, never to be remembered again and I'm going to be in his presence. God, I can thank you for that too." Just start there.

But when you're in the presence of a sovereign, you can't let your disposition be shaped and the way that you live in front of this sovereign and the way that you approach this sovereign, you cannot let it be shaped by the passing events of this world. You can't. That's not worthy of him. You let our response and reaction to him be shaped by who he is, not by what you have going on around you and that changes everything. As you move in that direction of what we're talking about here today, as you move in that direction, you start to see that the character of God defines your reaction to him rather than what you have in your circumstances. We have to be a people whose worship is premised on the reality that the Lord is God. That changes it. That changes everything.

But there's another reason for joy. There is another reason for joy, to worship God with joy. The Lord is God, the God of the Bible, the omnipotent, holy one is God. But the second point that the Psalmist brings out here: the Lord is good. The Lord is good. This is so simple. Look at verse 5 with me, "For," shout joyfully to the Lord, serve him with gladness, come before him with joyful singing. Why? Verse 5, "For," because, for this reason. This is the foundation upon which you build your joyful worshiping response to him. It's because, "the LORD is good." Notice the all caps there in most of your Bibles. The LORD, the covenant name of Israel, Yahweh. This covenant keeping, promise keeping God is good. "His lovingkindness is everlasting," never to fail, "And His faithfulness to all generations." Unchanging. Everlasting. Lovingkindness. Faithfulness. That is what this God is by very nature. For him to act unkindly or unfaithfully to his people is impossible. It cannot happen.

So as you move forward and as the story of your life is written and one day concluded, it is going to have the stamp of authenticity of the goodness and faithfulness of God permeating every detail even if you don't see it right now. You see, you don't have to see it right now. Sometimes we walk by faith, not by sight. But our perspectives are defined by who God is. Why can we worship joyfully? Verse 5, we can worship joyfully for the Lord is good. What does it mean that the Lord is good? Turn back to the book of Exodus. I want you to see this. Exodus 33:17. This is cool whether rebels and pagans and infidels like it or not, there is a God who runs the universe and it's the God of the Bible. That could be a fearsome thing to someone and it should be a fearsome thing to someone who doesn't know him. But what is it about his goodness? Exodus 33:17, this is where the Lord reveals himself to Moses and show him his glory. Verse 17, "The LORD said to

Moses, 'I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name.'" Verse 18, "Then Moses said, 'I pray You, show me Your glory!'" I want to see you for who you are, O God. Show me your glory. Show me your essence. Look at what the Lord says in verse 19, track with me, remember we're saying that we can worship joyfully because the Lord is good. Verse 19, "And He said," meaning the Lord said to Moses, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

So follow me here. This is really simple. Moses says, "Lord, show me your glory," and the Lord says, "I'll make my goodness pass before you and I'll declare my name to you." The name being the sum totality of all of his character. "I'm going to show you my goodness, Moses, in response to your prayer." Now look over to chapter 34, verse 5. After promising to show him his goodness, what does the Lord do? This is so cool! It's so awesome in the holiest sense of that word "awesome." Verse 5, "The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD. Then the LORD passed by in front of him," remember, he's going to pass by and show Moses all of his goodness, is going to make his name known, his character. Verse 6, what happened? What was the manifestation of the goodness? When the light beam of the goodness of God hit the prism, what did the rain shatter into in the prism? What was the rainbow of character that was shown in response? Here it is, verse 6, "The LORD, the LORD God, 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." The goodness of God seen by the fact that he is compassionate. The goodness of God seen by the fact that he's gracious. The goodness of God seen by the fact that he is slow to anger. The goodness of God seen in the fact that he abounds in lovingkindness and truth. The goodness of God seen in that he forgives iniquity, transgression and sin. This is really, really good.

The Lord is God and what is this Lord like? He's like this: he's compassionate, slow to anger, not vindictive toward his people, not arbitrary but wise, slow to anger, gracious. This is who God is like. Now, put all of this together in your mind. You've got to put this thing together in your mind. So many times I have heard Christians say in the midst of sorrow, in response to adverse circumstances, they say, "Well, the Lord is Sovereign." I'd rather have them say that than other things, I guess, but listen and you know what I'm talking about: people will say that in a spirit of defeat and resignation that says, "Well, the Lord is Sovereign. He's going to do what he wants to do." Look, both of these things are the pillars that support your fundamental disposition toward life. The Lord is God, yes, he's sovereign but the Lord is also good. Do you see that? Because he is unchanging in his character, every exercise of his sovereignty in your life which is to say every detail of your life is animated by his goodness. He brings trials. He brings joy. He brings sorrow. He brings a perfect blend of those to what he has appointed you to do and be in this life and he does it all motivated out of this good heart which is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounds in lovingkindness and truth and even forgives you of your sins.

That's who's running the show. That's the one in whose presence we sit here right now in this room. His presence fills this room. His presence fills the earth. His presence fills the universe. This is the one in whose presence we are. A sovereign reigning God who is good and gracious and compassionate and who is the Shepherd to his sheep. What can you say in response to that except, "Hallelujah. Joy, gladness and praise be to you, my God because of who you are." Everything, beloved, everything, everything, everything is under the hand of this great God who is a good God and accomplishes it all for his purposes. That's why you can be joyful. Not only can you be, the Bible calls you even now, even now, right from the seats that you're in, to respond from your heart and say, "Lord, praise your holy name. You are good and great and I honor you and I give thanks to you." That's the spirit that flavors this day. That's the spirit that flavors this life. This is why we can be joyful. It's because the Lord is God and the Lord is good.

Bow with me in prayer.

Our Father, in the simplicity of the language of this Psalm, we have contemplated the eternal and absolute. In the simplicity of this Psalm, we have been drawn to unparalleled goodness. You sit alone in the realm of this great and awesome goodness. You sit alone on the throne of the universe and you have your hand on us from that position of exaltation? We enjoy the providential care of your loving, gracious hand? Father, we do rejoice. We set aside the problems of this life for this moment and, Father, with heart and mind focused exclusively on you, we rejoice and give thanks. It is a glad call that you have put on our lives to serve you. It is a glad call that you have given, Father, not only to believers but to all the earth. Father, we understand that most men reject this call. Even though it goes out to all men, we understand that most men reject it. Father, we just want to say that we understand that that is not a reflection on you or the propriety of this call at all. It's a reflection on those who are too stubborn, blind and sinful to respond. For those of us that have known your grace, Father, we know that you are God; we know that you are our Shepherd. We give you thanks and praise and we bless your holy name and we commit ourselves to serve you, our Great and Sovereign King. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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