

July 7, 2013 Shout for Joy – Psalm 100 Randy Lovelace

This morning we continue in the summer series in the Psalms. We just finished the month of June where we were looking at *Psalms That Meet Us in Our Sorrows*. This month we will look together at *Psalms That Lead Us in Worship*. There is, perhaps, many Psalms that we could turn to, but it is Psalm 100 in its utter beauty and simplicity that calls us to worship. In fact, during the years of my ministry I think it's perhaps been the most commonly used Psalm as a call to worship. And it has been used---with all the Psalms---as the church's hymnbook for centuries and thousands of years, stretching back to the nation of Israel. Before Christ these Psalms were used to call God's people to worship. It is Psalm 100 this morning that we look at together, the nature of what our worship is about, and it calls us to *Shout for Joy*. In fact, we've already done this morning. But let us do that together as we hear God's word read as God leads us in worship.

Psalm 100

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

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.

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

For the LORD is good, and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

This is the word of God. Thanks be to God. Will you pray with me. Lead us O Lord, lead us in worship. Demonstrate to us through this beautiful word this morning, by the work of your Holy Spirit, demonstrate for us your beauty that is worthy of our worship. But demonstrate, as well, O Lord, the 'why' of our worship. So open our eyes that we would see wondrous things in your word. In Jesus' name, Amen.

So beginning this Sunday, this month we're going to be looking at the different elements of worship through the Psalms. Today we're looking at what does it mean to be called to worship. How does the Scripture instruct us? Pastor Flora will be leading us the next two Sundays to look at the different elements of worship: confession, and the word being preached and the word going forth. Then we will finish by looking at the Lord's promise and looking at our response to it, things like the sacraments. So this morning we begin with the call.

You'll see in your outline before you, I've listed there, according to the Psalm, you'll see the outline is Joy, Reverence, Thanksgiving. Those are there because this Psalm demonstrates to us the attitude that the worshiper of the one true God brings---and ought to bring---with them as we come in the worship: Joy, Reverence, and Thanksgiving.

Let me say by way of introduction that I will finish the sermon by looking specifically at Thanksgiving, and I will unpack it more. But let me say at the beginning this is not the only Psalm that talks about giving thanks to the Lord. But it is the only Psalm that we have in the psalter that lists, in what scholars call the superscription---you'll see at the beginning, under the title Psalm 100, where it says, "A Psalm. For giving thanks." This is the only Psalm that has that as its superscription, its main heading. And I will tell you that that is the ground of our worship, but we'll get there in a few moments.

What this Psalm does for us is, it tells us from the very earliest verse, verse 1, and we'll look at verses 1 and 2 together, first---as we look at joy---it begins this way: Shout for joy to the LORD, or make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth. And in verses 1 and 2 it says, Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. This Psalm that leads us in worship begins to tell us

that worship begins in exultation. It's very important to this Psalm, because, in fact, it's an exultation of praise, of demonstrating and giving voice to God's glory. The Bible understands the word 'glory' as being a weightiness, a substance, a profundity---that God is a God of substance, of power, of goodness and glory. He is God. And it tells us here, Shout for joy to the LORD. It begins---worship does---with exultation. And what I want to tell you is that this Psalm leads us in that exultation because it gives us seven different commands from beginning to end. Listen to them: Shout for joy, number 1. Worship the Lord, number 2. Come before him with joyful songs, number 3. Know that the Lord is God, number 4. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, number 5. Give thanks, number 6. Praise his name, number 7. It is about exalting God and giving joy, giving exultation. It tells us in the [imperative], Give these things to the Lord. Exalt his name.

But why do we do this? What's the point of giving a joyful noise? Why do we praise? Why do we exalt? C.S. Lewis, the famous British writer---this was for him a great stumbling point. He wasn't sure why God constantly tells us in the Psalms to worship him and why the psalmist continually tells everyone around him, Give praise and honor and glory to God. It took him quite some time to get to the answer, and he answered it this way in his book, *Reflections on the Psalms*. He says, I never noticed that all enjoyment, all joy, spontaneously flows into praise. The world rings with praise: lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favorite poets, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favorite game, praise of weather, wine, dishes, actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians or scholars. He said he had never noticed that all enjoyment, all joy, spontaneously overflows to praise. He then summarizes it this way: I think we delight to praise what we enjoy, because the praise not merely expresses joy, but completes it.

He is saying something profoundly human. That you really don't find joy in something by holding it inside. Those of you with children know that when a child alights onto something with their focus or their minds they are like laser-focused. I don't know about your child, but my child, when she loves something, it is going to come out with rapturous words. And lots of them. She is a female, however. But even boys know from their fathers that when their fathers, if they're into sports, are sitting there on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, if you're watching something, and you're going crazy, what are you going to do? You are going to say it out loud. Not one of you who love the Ravens, who saw them win the Super Bowl, enjoyed that moment in silence. *I think I'm just going to go in my closet and sit there while and think about this*. No, you put it on flags and bumper stickers and T-shirts---that's just another way of praising.

We exalt as human beings, because as human beings we were built to be worshipers. We demonstrate that worship, we find our joy in something, by finding its completion and giving it audible praise. That is why the Psalm says, Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Exalting and praising completes the joy. But it is not just the joy that we find in exultation. It is also the joy that comes from the fact that the nation of Israel was given this worship that was to be an invitation to the world. It is what the Psalm says: Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. This was not meant to be something that was solely designed for the nation of Israel. God, from the very earliest days of calling Abraham to himself, and through that call, through that covenant promise, he said, I will make you a mighty nation, and you will be my people and I will be your God. But it wasn't just to be something that they were to keep quiet.... Their worship of the one true covenant-keeping God was to be a demonstration, a light to the world. You will be a blessing unto all nations. This Psalm is putting in very poetic form what the worship of Israel was to be---it was to be an invitation to the nations, that all nations would come and shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Come before him with joyful songs and songs of thanksgiving.

And may I say to the Church of Jesus Christ, in whom the fulfillment of the praise which is given in this Psalm is demonstrated---that is, the praise of Jesus Christ---that there are those here this

morning that do not know the Lord Jesus Christ. What they need to hear is not just a preacher up front delivering a sermon from God's word, but they also need to see demonstrated in the people of God a joyful noise, that is then used by the Lord to be an invitation to all nations---not just what happens here in these four walls, but the worship that goes from this place in all that you do. In your joy, in your work, in your play, in your parenting, in your relationships, in your difficulty---of giving worship to God, shouting out for joy, and that is to be the world a demonstration that God is real.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones wrote it this way. He says, "We can preach the truth. We can defend it. We can indulge in our apologetics. We can try to present a great front to the world, but you know it does not impress the world. The need is for something so overwhelming, so divine, so unusual, that it will prove that we are the people of God." What demonstrates to the world that you are the people of God, other than sitting here on a Sunday morning?

Shouting for joy to the Lord. My sermons will only go to a small few, but the worship that is to be begun here in joy and exultation is to be an invitation that will flow out of this place. And you will rub shoulders and speak with thousands of people that I will never have the opportunity to meet. So the worship that begins here is to go out into the world as an invitation. Does the world see you, Christian, worshiping, shouting for joy? Because it is that to which God is inviting the nations---to worship him. Not as a demonstration of who we are, but a demonstration of who he is. Some translations do say it, right? 'Noise.' It doesn't have to be a joyful rhythm, it simply needs to be a joyful noise, because we are giving thanks and exalting his name.

Why? Because of who he is, and this is where the Psalm leads us---that joy and giving exultation are an invitation to the world to come before the Lord. What Lord are they coming before? The Psalm tells us: One who is worthy of our reverence. It says to us here, verse 3, particularly: "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." Now there are older translations which I actually prefer for that first part of verse 3, where it says, "Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and not we ourselves." Do you see? We give reverence to God because we did not make ourselves. It is the holy God, Yahweh, the Lord, who is the covenant creator of all that is. Who, we are told in the book of Genesis, created all things from nothing. He did so to demonstrate that he is a God of creation. He is a God not only of creation--- not that he just created all things---but when he created all things he created human beings to be the crowning jewel of his creation. And that crowning jewel turned in rebellion from worshiping God to worshiping created things, to ultimately worshiping ourselves. But God---who is holy, who is worthy of our reverence, who is worthy of our awe, who is worthy of our fear, a God who holds judgment in his hands, a God who holds wrath and almighty power in his hands, who created all things from nothing---looked down upon his crowning creation, who turned in rebellion, and he says to them, though I judge you in your sin, I give you the promise of salvation to escape it. He is not only a God who is worthy of our reverence because he is a God who is holy and created all things, he is a God---he tell us here, the word 'LORD' is 'Yahweh'---he is the covenant-keeping God. And the God who created all things, who created Adam and Eve, though they turned in rebellion---right in the heart of that rebellion, Genesis 3:15, the diamond in the rough of God's judgment of Adam and Eve, the diamond in the middle is the first announcement of the gospel. For I will send one from her womb, who will crush his head, but he will bruise his heel, referring to the eternal battle that God will win through his son, Jesus Christ, on the cross. That Yahweh God stays true to his promise, his covenant. And that covenant, from Genesis 3:15 would then be progressively unfolded and demonstrated by God's promise to Noah, by God's promise to Abraham, and through Abraham to the nation of Israel from Moses to David, from David to Christ in the new covenant. God, who has created all things, is worthy of our worship, because he is a God who is the covenant-keeping, holy God, who in his righteous wrath could simply have poured it out on all creation. But God, who is worthy of our worship, who is worthy to say that we deserve his wrath---yet he withheld it and sent forth his covenant promise that he would get for himself a people that would ultimately find its expression in the people of Jesus Christ, the Church of Jesus Christ. We worship a covenant-keeping, holy God.

Isn't it beautiful that this one who is worthy of our reverence, who is holy, is also, this Psalm tells us at the end of verse 3---that he is a God of tenderness. Notice what he says: It is you who made us, and not we ourselves. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. God, who is worthy of all worship, who is to be feared, who is worthy of our awe [through all of our ridiculous loving of fireworks], who created the universe by the word of his power. This God is also a God who is incredibly tender and loving and calls us his sheep, which means he is the shepherd. Is he not picking up on the themes of Psalm 23? The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

There is no other God like Yahweh. There is no other Lord like that of the Christian faith. Eastern religions talk about an infinite being. In the West, God has been reduced to that which is merely personal. But the Scriptures always give us the true biblical God: One who is eternal, one who is Yahweh, one who has created all things worthy of reverence, but also one who is incredibly personal, one who is worthy of worship, worthy to judge, but the one who is gracious in his mercy, tender like a shepherd. He is walking with those he has called to himself.

There are those here this morning who are walking with the Lord who doubt his goodness, his tenderness. Let me share with you a man who utterly changed my life in seminary, Dr. David Calhoun. I heard hundreds of sermons in seminary, but only a few do I remember, really remember. I think I've listened to this sermon...oh, so many times. But this is what he says: "As I have battled two different kinds of cancer during the last nine years, I have faced three surgeries, a course of radiation, three different regimens of chemotherapy, CT scans, bone marrow aspirations, colonoscopies and numerous blood tests. I have never heard an audible word from God saying to me, 'More,' but I do know that the promise is not that the valley is short and the time spent in the valley brief. The promise is something far better.

Perhaps two hundred times during the last three years I have gone across the street to St. John's Mercy Hospital. I walk in the front doors past the picture of St. John of God, the Spanish monk for whom the hospital is named, and down the escalator to the doctor's building where I receive chemotherapy. As I go down into my valley, I lift my eyes to the wall and to a colorful tapestry and read---often aloud---the words, 'The Lord is my joy.' And I experience something of what the psalmist knew: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. I had to learn not only that the Lord is always with me, but also that the time I spend in the valley is not wasted. These last few years have not been a parenthesis in my life. Indeed, they have been essential to the totality of my life. Something has happened in the valley that is for me at this time, more important than teaching and preaching and writing books."

He is worthy of our reverence, not only because he is the creator, covenant-keeping God, but he is also the tender Father who knows our valleys, but who does not leave us alone. And who says to us in the midst of those valleys, your time here is not wasted, for it is for the totality of your life, of me making you my own, and to reflect my goodness.

The Lord who leads us in worship this morning, leads us in joy and a worship full of reverence, but also a worship that is characterized by thanksgiving. The famous Russian writer Dostoevsky once called human beings, 'bipeds of ingratitude.' This Psalm ends where the superscription began---for us to be characterized by thanksgiving. There is nothing more difficult, I think, to our nature, than giving thanks. Because to give thanks as a human being, to someone else, means inherently we're recognizing that we received something from someone outside of ourselves---that we need somebody else or that we need it. And [despite] the human heart, which from its fallen nature in

Adam and Eve has been bent on trying to shout from the rooftops, 'Independence!'---we are a people that cannot live without others. Not only did God create us to be a people who worship and worship him, he also created us to be a people of gratitude.

And so the Psalm tells us: Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. Now that's the imperative. I want to begin with the indicative. He says in verse 5 why we give the thanks. He says, "For the LORD is good, and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations." He talks about the loving faithfulness of this covenant-keeping God, Yahweh, and he says he is good and his love endures forever. Do you hear the comprehensive nature of God's loving faithfulness? It tells us here of the comprehensive nature: it says it is eternal in nature, it endures forever, his faithfulness continues through all generations. Do you notice the emphasis in verse 5? God's love and his loving faithfulness is eternal and endures from generation to generation. Do you notice where it comes from? It comes from God. From where does God find the motivation? Does God find the motivation for his love in us? No. God does not find his motivation for his loving faithfulness in us, because the Scriptures tell us his only motivation is himself. He is a God of love. God is love.

And his love endures throughout all generations---why do I [emphasize] that? Because this Psalm is being announced to the people, who generation after generation after generation failed to love God faithfully, day in and day out. You see, here's the glorious nature, the comprehensive nature of God's loving faithfulness: it never begins with us. It will never be that you will be able to present yourself before a holy, righteous, covenant-keeping God that you are worthy of his love. You will never perform enough, you will never be obedient enough, you will never be righteous enough. It has never been about one human being. It is always been about God's loving faithfulness coming to a group of human beings who did not know his love, rejected his love, and even forget his love and are not thankful. Yet the Lord, throughout all generations, demonstrates his loving faithfulness, and it endures day after day after day.

It is instructive to us, is it not, this morning, that what the Lord wants from you is not trophies of goodness. When you come into worship as this Psalm instructs us, full of a joyful noise, giving reverence to him, he does not ask that you come in here with what Bryan Chappell writes are the 'trophies of goodness.' God is not telling you and me to come in demonstrating how good we have been. He wants us, Chapell says, to come acknowledging how deeply we need his loving faithfulness. It's when we recognize that God is willing to receive those of us who come in desperation that we become willing to be repentant. Do you recognize, he says, that if God wants us to trophy our goodness, then we wait till we measure up. But if we recognize it is God's great kindness that leads us to repentance, then in desperation we become willing to approach God, and we approach him with thankfulness for his loving faithfulness. It has never been, nor will it ever be begun with us. God's loving faithfulness starts everything, that loving faithfulness which would bring forth his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it is in Jesus Christ that this Psalm---though it is not specifically a Christological Psalm, it points us to what Christ has done. It points us to God's loving faithfulness in the action of his grace. That is where we find the ultimate locus of our thanksgiving---his grace. You notice what it says in verse 4: Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. What does that mean? He says, as he's drawing this image to the people of Israel---and, remember, to the surrounding nations---to come before the Lord at the temple, which was made up of all these courts. At its central point was the holy of holies, but in these courts that surrounded the holy of holies, was where the people of God could come. Even the Gentile nations had the outer court reserved for them. Here the psalmist says, Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Now this Psalm is instructing the nation of Israel and the surrounding nations to come to the temple to worship God, but could the psalmist scarcely imagine to what his words would ultimately

point?

That what God has provided for us in seed form here, finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Listen to the words of Hebrews when the writer of Hebrews says to the church of Jesus Christ to persevere. Here's what he says: Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful." The covenant-keeping God, who in his loving faithfulness that endures throughout all generations would find in the ultimate fulfillment and demonstration of his lovingkindness in the grace of Jesus Christ, who, by his body and blood on the cross entered into a temple not made by human hands, but by his body and blood, fully God, fully man, offered as a sacrifice his blood, his body once and for all, that God's wrath would be satisfied being poured out on his Son. Therefore, Jesus reserved the right, by his obedient perfection, his glorious nature as the only son of God, then entered the Holy of Holies, the right hand of God the Father Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth, and is seated at his right hand.

Hebrews tells us what the Psalm is telling us way before, that we are called to enter into his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. What court? They couldn't go into the Holy of Holies except by a high priest who had to offer a sacrifice, first for himself and then for the people. But we, the Church of Jesus Christ, the people of God, have been given Jesus, who was offered once and for all, for all our sins, past, present and future, and is for everyone to enter into his gates with thanksgiving and his court with praise. Therefore, through Christ, by his body and his blood, we can go before the throne of grace with boldness, because in Christ my sins, your sins are cleansed away.

It has never been, nor will it ever be that one iota of your best works will ever demonstrate to God that you've done enough. For we will never ever do enough. All he asks us is to come in desperation, giving thanks. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his court with praise. For there is no other name in heaven or on earth [by which] we can be saved. That at that very name every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. For the Lord is good, and his love endures forever. Do you believe that? How are you practicing it? Are you counting up your sins this morning? Are you trying to hide them? Are you trying desperately to cover them up? Are you trying to come before God with your goodness? I say to you in the name of Jesus Christ---Christian and non-Christian---come to the Lord. Lay it down before his feet. At the foot of the cross you will find completeness in Jesus Christ.

Let's pray. Come, Lord Jesus. By your Spirit renew us with a shouting of joy, not because of us, but because of you. That our worship would be renewed because we are reminded again that you are worthy of our worship. A God who is worthy of our fear and awe, and a God who is tender. A God who is faithful in his love. A God who is generous in his grace. Lord, help us, then, to shout anew to you this morning for joy with thanksgiving, for you are good. In Jesus name we pray. Amen