

Enter With Thanksgiving

One of the most beautiful Psalms of thanksgiving is the 100th Psalm.

Please turn to it & follow along:

Psalm 100:1-5 - Psalm 100 A psalm. For giving grateful praise.

¹ Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

² Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

³ 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.

⁴ ***Enter his gates with thanksgiving*** and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

⁵ For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

- With all my heart I believe we are a people and a nation that has **truly been blessed by God.**

It is **not uncommon** to make wish lists at **Christmas** and draw up a list of resolutions for **New Years**. But there is **another list we often overlook** -

A Thanksgiving Day list of all for which we are thankful.

Let me read a part of the list that several housewives compiled.

They wrote that they were especially thankful:

- "**For automatic dishwashers** because they make it possible for us to get out of the kitchen before the family comes back in for their after-dinner snacks.
- "**For husbands who attack small repair jobs around the house** because they usually make them big enough to call in the professionals.
- "**For children who put away their things & clean up after themselves.** They're such a joy you hate to see them go home to their own parents.
- "**For teenagers** because they give parents an opportunity to learn a second language.
- "**For Smoke alarms** because they let you know when the turkey's done.

Now **our list** might not be the same as theirs, but I'm convinced that if we began to make a list, ***we would find that we have much more for which to be thankful*** than just our material possessions.

- Like you, I'm sure, ***my list would include the major things life***, health, family, friends, & the nation we live in, **despite all its flaws.**
- But even more than that, I'm thankful for **my salvation**, **our church family**, & **the mercy** that God showers upon us each day.
- **With Jesus** we have so much for which to celebrate during this season of **Thanksgiving!**

But has it ever occurred to you, that **no Americans** were more underprivileged than that small handful from **the Mayflower who started the custom of setting aside a day of Thanksgiving to Almighty God?**

- They had **no homes** & **no government agency** to help them build homes.
- They had **no means of transportation** but their legs.
- **Their only food** came from the **sea & the forest**, & they had to **get it for themselves.**
- They had **no money & no place** to spend it if they'd had any.
- They had **no amusements** except **what they made for themselves**, **no means of communication** with their relatives in England, **no social security or medicare.**

But anyone who dared to call them **underprivileged** would probably have ended up in the stocks, for **they did have 4 of the greatest human assets:**

- **initiative**
- **courage**
- **willingness to work**
- **boundless faith in God**

Our forefathers had "a **boundless faith in God.**"

***That almost sounds strange today in a time when:
Powerful forces are at work in our nation to strip us of every reminder that the very foundation of our nation was built upon the conviction that we are "one nation, under God."***

Thanksgiving Day, or the season of thanksgiving, in which I'm talking about, is a distinctive holiday/time of season.

- It doesn't commemorate a battle or anyone's birthday or anniversary.
- It's simply a day set aside, to express our nation's thanks to our nation's God.
- This week our nation will pause once again to celebrate Thanksgiving Day.
- And one would assume that because of the example of our forefathers, & because today we have so much, that we would be an extremely thankful people.
- **But it is often just the opposite, isn't it?**

The more people get, the less thankful they become, the less mindful of God they are, & the more they want.

I think that the 100th Psalm was written to deal with that attitude, to remind us of our need to be thankful, and to maintain an attitude of gratitude.

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***THE BASIS OF OUR THANKSGIVING

The 100th Psalm was written for the people of Israel.

God said to them, "*When you come into the promised land, & settle down in your warm homes, & you have plenty to eat, don't forget Me.*"

- *I led you out of the wilderness and I brought you into a land flowing with milk & honey.*
- But it doesn't take very long to realize that the people of Israel needed a reminder, and I am afraid that we need it, too.
- Maybe God had us in mind, also, when this Psalm was written.

Did you notice to whom it is addressed?

- The **first verse** says that it is addressed to "**all the earth**,"
- And the **last verse** says that it includes "**all generations**."

This message of thanksgiving is so deep and wide that it applies to every person in every era in every stage of life.

It's sad, isn't it, that we are the only country in the world, except for Canada and the Philippines, that has a Thanksgiving Day?

I wonder **how our world would be changed** if suddenly *all nations began to observe Thanksgiving?*

I think there is something about giving thanks together to God that breaks down barriers between people and brings about a unity.

- Much like that which occurred as the Berlin wall began to crumble.

I think also that there is **a real danger** in this season of **determining our thanksgiving based on how much we have.**

- **Do I** have enough turkey to gorge myself sufficiently?
- **Is my** money in the bank secure?
- **Am I** healthy?
- **We** let these ***things determine*** whether we ***are or aren't*** thankful.

The Psalmist says that all these things may change at any time.

- They may drift away, or burn up, or someone may steal them.
- The only thing we have for sure is **our relationship with the Lord.**

That is what the 100th Psalm **emphasizes.**

Just scan the Psalm.

- *In vs. 1 you'll find the name of the Lord.*
- *In vs. 2 you'll find the name of the Lord.*
- *In vs. 3 you'll find the name of the Lord.*
- *In vs. 4 it says, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving."*
- *And in vs. 5 you'll find the name of the Lord. The basis of our thanksgiving is the Lord.*

Alex Haley, the author of "Roots," had an **unusual picture** hanging in his office.

It was a picture of **a turtle on top of a fence post.**

When asked, "Why is that there?"

Alex Haley answered, "Every time I write something significant, every time I read my words and think that they are wonderful, and begin to feel proud of myself, I look at the turtle on top of the fence post and remember that he didn't get there on his own. He had help."

That is the basis of thankfulness to remember that we got here with the help of God, and that He is the provider of every blessing we have.

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***FIVE THANKSGIVING COMMANDS

Now, as we look more carefully at this Psalm, we find that there is a series of 5 commands given.

The first command is in vs. 1, "*Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.*"

- It means to "shout with the force of a trumpet blast,"
- *A shout of joy to the Lord* that comes from the very depths of your being.

Maybe God solved a problem you had?

- Maybe He has given you the direction to go.
- Maybe He has provided a blessing.
- Maybe you realize *that it has come from God*.
- So, from the depths of your being, you proclaim your praise.

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Roland Allen tells about a veteran missionary who came up to him one day after he had delivered his sermon.

The missionary introduced himself & said, "I was a medical missionary for many years in India. And I served in a region where there was progressive blindness.

People were born with healthy vision, but there was something in that area that caused people to lose their sight as they grew older."

But this missionary had developed a treatment which would stop progressive blindness.

So, people came to him & he performed his treatment, & they would leave realizing that they would have become completely blind, but because of him their sight had been saved.

He said that they never said, "Thank you," because that phrase was not in their dialect.

Instead, they spoke a word that meant, "I will tell your name."

- Wherever they went, they would tell the name of the missionary who had *cured their blindness.*
- They received something so wonderful that they eagerly proclaimed it.

That is what the Psalmist is saying.

"Suddenly you realize that God has been so good to you that you can't keep it inside anymore. From the depths of your being, you shout your joy unto the Lord."

The second command is, *"Serve the Lord with gladness."*

- It doesn't say "serve the church." It doesn't say "serve the preacher,
- or serve the leaders, or serve the organization."
- It says, "serve the Lord."

The Bible teaches that if we witness on behalf of the Lord,

- If we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, If we do the work of the Lord,
- Whatever it might be, **we are serving the Lord.**

Matthew 25:40 - 40 And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

I'm not sure that we grasp that.

Maybe we serve at times out of a feeling of obligation or a fear of guilt if we don't serve, or maybe even because we want to draw attention to ourselves.

It's natural for us **to desire appreciation** when we do something worthwhile.

But the Psalmist says, ***"In whatever you do, serve the Lord with gladness."***

The third command is, ***"Come before Him with joyful songs."***

Psalm 98:4 - Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth; Break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises.

- *"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord."* **And that I can do.**

Have you noticed? In these first 3 commands, God has said,

- "I want you to be happy.
- Shout with joy, serve with gladness, & come with joyful songs."

Now just take a moment & look at the people around you.

- Do they look happy?
- Or are they just sitting there with scowls on their faces?

The Psalmist says, ***"Come before Him and serve Him and sing His praise with joy in your heart."***

Command #4 is, ***"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."***

- God made us, inside and out.
- He made you the way He wanted you to be.
- And He made me the way He wanted me to be.

That is a mystery, isn't it?

I don't understand why, but somehow *in God's providence*, He decided that He wanted a medium sized man, not too good looking,

- not outstanding in anything, but **just a faithful father and minister who would keep plodding along.** *So, He made me.*
- Someplace along the way **He had you in mind**, and **He made you.**
- And **He is still making us.**

That is important to realize, too.

He's not satisfied with the unfinished product.

- He's not satisfied with **your temper.**
- He's not satisfied with the weak areas of your life where you are **giving in to temptation.**
- So, *he's still making us.*
- *He's still working* on our lives.
- **God is your maker**, and **you are created in His image.**
- Therefore, give Him thanks for who you are.

Then He says, "***We are His people, the sheep of His pasture.***"

Most of us want to be shepherds, not sheep. "It's not any fun being sheep."

But the problem is, we don't know where the still waters and green pastures are.

- Every time we go out looking for them, we invariably land in the far country.
- **He is saying,** "You be the sheep. **Let me be the shepherd.**
- **I will lead you** beside the still waters & the green pastures.
- **Just let me lead!**

CLOSE: Command #5 is this, "*Enter His gates with thanksgiving, & His courts with praise; give thanks to Him & praise His name.*

For the Lord is good & His love endures forever. His faithfulness continues through all generations."

In the O.T. the temple symbolized the presence of God.

Whenever the people came to the temple and entered the courtyards, they knew that they had come into the presence of God.

Now that temple no longer exists.

Oftentimes the place where we meet to worship God is called a "sanctuary," indicating that God is there.

God is everywhere. You know that!

- He is in you and with you as you drive on the highway.
- He is with you when you work.
- He is with you as you care for your children.
- He is with you every moment of your life.

That is the source of our thanksgiving, isn't it?

But I'm concerned.... What if God began to treat us like we so often treat Him?

What if God met our needs to the same extent that we give Him our lives?

God stopped loving/caring for us because we failed to love/care for others?

What if God took away His message because we wouldn't listen to His messenger?

- What if He wouldn't bless us today because we didn't thank Him yesterday?
- What if God answered our prayers the way we answer His call for service?
- What if God decided to stop leading us tomorrow because we did not follow Him today?

Lord, help us to be thankful! - Psalm 103:10 - He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities.

I pray this will be a meaningful Thanksgiving season for you and all your family.

Take time to read the 100th Psalm again. **And if you heed those commands, your heart will overflow with thanksgiving to the Lord.**