

## Drawing Near to God: The Habit of Public Worship

7/23/17- Pastor Randy

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### Psalm 100

*Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness!*

*Come into his presence with singing!*

*Know that the Lord, he is God!*

*It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him;*

*bless his name!*

*For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.*

Psalm 100 is typically classified as a Hymn; a song of praise sung in the temple. The title, a Psalm of Thanksgiving could also be translated as a “Psalm for the Thank Offering”, connecting the psalm with OT temple worship. Psalm 100 is also classified by some among the enthronement, or kingship psalms; a unified group of Psalms whose main theme is the majesty and rule of God as King. Psalm 100 serves as the conclusion to this unit, with some scholars suggesting that this was the last of a group of psalms that were sung as the worshippers entered the temple.

We are going to walk through this Psalm this morning and my prayer is that we will hear God speak to us as we read these words together.

Psalm 100 **commands** us **to** draw near to God in worship, **communicates** **how** to draw near to God in worship, and **clarifies why** we should draw near to God in worship.

1. The Command to Draw Near to God in Worship.

*Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness!*

*Come into his presence with singing!*

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise*

These words are addressed to the people of God as a corporate body, not to individuals. Public, corporate worship is of critical importance to Christians

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and to the church. God doesn't just want you to worship Him, he wants us to worship Him...together. God doesn't just have sons and daughters; He has a family. He wants his family to gather together. He expresses this with four imperatives: Make, Serve, Come, Enter.

*Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!*

This expression, also found in Psalm 98:6,8 created the imagery the shouts of praise and adulation expressed by the people when the king would come before them to address them. The command here is for God's people to shout their praise and give their enthusiastic applause to their true King, God almighty. In the NT writers call Jesus Lord, they were not only stating that Jesus was God. They were also communicating to the Romans who ruled over them that Jesus, not Caesar, was their Lord. All the earth will one day hail God as king of the universe.

Serve the Lord! I specifically chose to use the ESV for two reasons. The first is because of the way it translates this phrase. In the NIV and NLT it reads, "Worship the Lord with gladness." Why serve instead of worship? The word serve helps us understand something vital about worship. To worship God is to serve God. Worship is an expression of God's superiority to us. When we worship we are expressing that He is above us; His ways are higher than our ways; His will takes priority over our will. When we come to worship, we come to serve God, not ourselves. The purpose of the worship service is to serve the Lord with gladness. You might say, "But pastor Randy, doesn't the NT teach that the purpose of the worship service is to edify, to build up, to strengthen, the people?" Yes, but only secondarily. Worship builds up God's people, not by fostering good feelings but by facilitating godliness. God builds up His people, by increasing our love for Him and diminishing our self-centeredness! The indicator of a "good" worship service is not the degree to which we enjoyed it. What matters is whether God was glorified. Did God enjoy it? Was He pleased? I can attend a service and leave having thoroughly enjoyed the music and the preaching, and conclude it was a great worship

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service, but if some of God's people were ignored, if the songs were not sung from sincere hearts, and if God's word was heard but not obeyed, it was not a good worship service. We are edified when we make God being glorified our goal. We must come into His presence and enter into His gates and courts. We are no longer living in the OT. We don't draw near by going to a specific building. The OT temple is no longer the place of God's presence. Wherever God's people gather is the place of His presence. It could be in this building, a house, or under a tree. What is important is not the place we come to, but that we come together to worship God.

In Thomas Friedman's book, *The World is Flat*, he described a conversation he had with a Chinese American Microsoft employee who had accompanied Bill Gates on trips to China. This Chinese American told him how popular Bill Gates is among the young people in China. He said, "students hang from the rafters and scalp tickets to hear him speak." Reflecting on what he heard, Tom wrote, "In China today, Bill Gates is Britney Spears. In America today, Britney Spears is Britney Spears - **and that is our problem.**" (See Pg. 365) There is a lot of truth to what Tom Friedman said, but our problem isn't that we worship people whose contributions are trivial and superficial, rather than those who produce something significant for the common good. Our problem is not that we worship entertainers rather than engineers. Our real problem is our failure to make God our supreme object of worship.

It is imperative that we draw near to God is worship. Individually? Yes, but also corporately. What, or rather who we worship, is so vital, because we become what we worship. What we esteem, adore, and honor, revere, will shape us into its image. We don't impact what we worship, what we worship impacts us!

2. Psalm 100 *Communicates How* to Draw Near.

***Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness!***

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*Come into his presence with singing!*

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise*

We are to draw near to God, worshipping with joy, gladness, singing, praise and thanksgiving. Christian worship is marked by audible sounds of joyful songs, expressing praise and thanksgiving to God.

In recent years there have been a number of articles written about the waning of congregational singing in churches, with titles like: "The slow death of congregational singing". "Six reasons congregational Singing Is Waning." "Nine Reasons People Aren't Singing in Worship". "My Congregation Barely Sings; How Can I Help?" Singing is the universal human language of the joyful and thankful. Singing is not something prescribed for us to do so much as it something assumed we will do.

3. *Psalm 100 clarifies why* we should draw near to God in worship.

*Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his;*

*we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*

*For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.*

There are two simple reasons here to draw near together as the people of God to worship Him! He is God and He is good. He is OUR God and He has been good to US! Don't lose sight of the corporate address. Be careful not to fall into the error of reading scripture as if it is written just to you as an individual! All true worship of God must be preceded by knowledge of God!! Why do we gather together for worship? Because we KNOW that He is God and that He is good. Know that the Lord, He is God! In the Hebrew, Yahweh (Lord) is Elohim (God). The one who has revealed himself to Moses is The God of all. He is the creator of the universe. He is your creator. He has designed you and you are His. You are HIS people, HIS sheep. You belong to Him. The reason for our shouts of praise and joyful singing is our knowledge of who God is, or as Tozer expressed it in the title of his magnificent little book,

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The Knowledge of the Holy. When you know him, you will worship him; both because of a sense of obligation as well as heart-felt adoration.

*"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."*

He went on to write, *"For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like."*

And later in his introductory chapter, *"A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well. It is to worship what the foundation is to the temple; where it is inadequate or out of plumb the whole structure must sooner or later collapse. I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God."*

There are so many profound truths about the world around us that are wrapped up in and founded upon God's nature, that when you meditate on them you can't help but be brought to a place of worship. The triune nature of God provides us with the basis for recognizing the value of unity and diversity in our social life. The unity among the members of the trinity explains why relationships are essential to human flourishing. The diversity within the godhead reveals the importance of protecting the dignity of the uniqueness of the individual. The individual needs community and the community needs the unique gifts of the individual.

We worship because we have come to know His goodness.

*For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.*

God's love endures forever. Just a couple of weeks ago we read in John's gospel that that Jesus loved His disciples to the end. He is the God who loves His people both continuously and unconditionally. God's love surpasses human love. Human love always has limitations. God's love knows no limit. In the words of the old hymn:

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“His love has no limit, His grace has no measure,  
His power no boundary known unto men,  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,  
He giveth and giveth and giveth again.”

God does what He does because He is who He is. Here that again! God does what He does, because He is who He is! He keeps His promises, because he is faithful. He forgives sinners, because He is merciful. He condemns and punishes sin and injustice because He is just. He exalts righteousness because He is righteous. He provides for and protects those who are His, because he is Father. He is a good, good Father.

He does what He does because He is who He is. Now that we know who he is, what he has done, and what he will do, lets take seriously the command to gather together every Sunday, celebrating him with joyful, thankful, singing!!