

Open your Bibles to Psalm 100 (right in the middle of the Bible)

This prayer is going to guide our conversation this morning (keep Bible open)

We are continuing this morning in a sermon series called ASK

Focusing on the practice of prayer, looking at different kinds of prayer

Prayer service today at 4.30pm in the chapel

On November 7, the day before election, we'll have an entire day of prayer

Two weeks ago: Prayer of Examination (Ps. 139)- "Search me & know my..."

Last week: Prayer of Surrender (1 Sam.)- "Speak Lord, your servant..."

This week we are looking at a Prayer of Adoration

Psalm 100 (Pew Bible p. 937)

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.

These 5 short verses are beautiful words of poetry

In these verses we have some layering

Of invitations— things the reader is encouraged to do

And affirmations—statements that make a claim about nature of God

Let's look at the invitations to the reader (& then the affirmations):

SHOUT | with JOY

WORSHIP | with GLADNESS

COME BEFORE HIM | with JOYFUL SONGS

ENTER | with THANKSGIVING

ENTER | with PRAISE

GIVE THANKS

PRAISE | his NAME

These words are an invitation to all the earth—all the Lord has made—

To celebrate him, to revere him, to enjoy his company

To overflow with gratitude and to worship him in joyful abandon

There's a purity of heart to this kind of worship

There's an innocence to it

The person who worships in this way has come to truly DELIGHT in God

I've mentioned to you before that I just love my kids

My daughter turns 5 this week and my son is 3 next month

We moved to a new house a few months ago

And since we moved to the house, the kids started doing this new thing

Whenever Emily or I leave—to work or even to just grab 1 thing @ store

Both kids will come out on the porch

Wait for us to roll down the window in street

And yell, "Bye daddy! Bye mommy! We love you!"

And wave and blow kisses. It is the absolute best.

Or on Sunday mornings, after the kids have been in Asbury Kids

And Emily brings them in to the 11 o'clock service to worship w/us

They see me, and run and hug me like they haven't seen me in years

They love me purely and sincerely, without any guile or any agenda

My kids just delight in me and I delight in them

Now, lest you think too much of us—we all melt down at bedtime. It's a mess.

The psalmist is inviting all of creation to delight in God in this way

And this invitation to delight and to give thanks and to worship joyfully

Is intimately tied to these two affirmations the psalmist makes

Why do we shout for joy? Why do we worship w/gladness? (Look at v.3)

Know that the LORD is God.

The Psalmist is using the name of God revealed to Moses—YHWH

Know that YHWH—the God made known through Israel—is God

It is he who made us and we are his.

We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

This is intimate, healthy, familial language.

Sometimes on a hard day, Emily will say to me (on behalf of herself & kids)

"We're your people."

It's not a statement of possession; it's a statement of belonging

It's a way of saying, "You fit with us."

It's like God is saying, "You fit with me."

It's he who made us & we're his. We are his people. The sheep of his pasture.

And if we are the sheep, then God is our Shepherd.

Reminds us of the words of Jesus in John 10:

I am the Good Shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep.

I am the Good Shepherd; I know my sheep & my sheep know me.

Meditate on the power of this imagery:

We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

He is our Good Shepherd.

Is it the responsibility of the sheep to guide the flock to their destination?

Is it the duty of the sheep to figure out where they'll eat that day?

Are the sheep in charge of mending their own wounds

Or reuniting themselves with the flock when they get lost?

The shepherd guides the flock where they should go.

The shepherd ensures the sheep have food and protection from the elements or from threats of attack

The shepherd tends their wounds and tracks down the lost

The sheep just learn the voice of the shepherd & the shepherd does the rest

We are his people [we fit with him], the sheep of his pasture [he shepherds us]

In v.5 we see the second affirmation, the second statement of faith:

Why do we sing, why do we shout, why do we give thanks?

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

In v. 3 we saw the Lord/YHWH is GOD

In v.5 we see that the Lord is GOOD

His posture toward us is one of enduring love

And he proves himself faithful from generation to generation

So, together we have these two beautiful affirmations:

It is he who made us and we are his
The Lord is GOOD and loves forever.

When we put them together we see a picture of God/ourselves that's so humbling

We belong to the One who made us and the One who made us is good.

Would you read that statement aloud with me? (above)

Let's personalize it this time.

Put your hand on your chest and say:

I belong to the One who made me and the One who made me is good.

Do you believe in your heart of hearts that is true?

That you are the creation and the prized possession of God?

That you are no mistake. That your life has meaning/purpose

That you have intrinsic value apart from anything you could accomplish

Value untarnished by any shameful or secret thing you've done?

B/C you belong to the One who made you and the One who made you is good.

I'll tell you: Meditating on that statement did something in my heart this week

When self-doubt creeps in

When pressure mounts to make something of myself or to figure out life

There's such security in knowing I'm a sheep in God's flock

I'm not my own and I'm not ON my own

I belong to the One who made me and the One who made me is good

So, put together the whole picture of the Psalm:

Shout for joy to the Lord ALL the EARTH

B/C we belong to the one who made us and the one who made us is good

If all the earth internalized this affirmation:

How different a place would this be?

Last week, Emily and I had some friends over after the kids went to sleep
Somehow in the course of conversation
Sep 11th came up & we all recounted where we were when it happened
And the ways that we responded

One friend was out of the country when it happened (& had a unique perspective)
Emily remembers parents picking their kids up from school early
I remember being convinced that this was the end of the world
And very sincerely wanting to warn my friends about the end times
(I was a very zealous teenager)

We all dealt with the gravity of the event in different ways
It's amazing how much it FEELS like the world has changed since that day
I think of it every time I go through airport security

Because we live in the internet age, we hear about every single act of terror
Or tragedy or skirmish that happens around the world in real time
We have the opportunity to hear every quip from every politician
We know about every failing institution

On top of that, we deal w/our own insecurities/fears/self-imposed expectations
And we think about our image and how we'll pay the bills
And we worry about our kids and our future
And we see on social media everyone else's highlight reel
And can feel a pressure to compete & measure up
Throw in some other life stuff like sickness or death or broken relationships

And every now and then it all just becomes too much
It's like we've got stressors in stereo
And if we don't find a way to escape, we're afraid we'll burst

We begin to wonder: Is anyone steering this ship?
Where is this story heading? What's going to happen next?
At a certain point, something's got to give.

Different people handle the grief and stress of it all in different ways:

Some of us:

Deny the reality/tragedy of the world [Person w/fingers in ears saying la la la la]

- We refuse to acknowledge pain
- Turn the station when bad stuff comes
- Experts at avoiding conversations about REAL issues

Detach [Withdraw, tries not to be bothered by anything]

- The posture of Buddhism
- The world stinks, so the secret is to NOT let yourself be affected by it
- Try not to care b/c caring only leads to heartache

Indulge [Person who buries their fears in pleasure/activity]

- Life is awful, so do what you can to feel good while you can
- The hedonism of pop music (“All we have is tonight...”)
- *Women in Recovery* graduation (trauma → addiction)

Make demands [We try our best to control life & manipulate outcomes]

- Only to bump up against the reality that we can only do so much

All of these attempts at finding relief

Are built on an assumption (derived from experience) about nature of world

That the world is ultimately something to be delivered FROM

That the world is corrupt beyond repair and a hopeless case

And our best bet to deal with this crushing reality is to deny it

Or to detach from the pain life can inflict on us

To indulge in behaviors that helps us forget our grief, if only momentarily

Eat, drink and be merry b/c life is ultimately meaningless

Something to escape from

We see this thinking throughout history:

From Plato to Nietzsche to The Beatles to Ke\$ha

And yet, we seen in the Psalm a very different picture of life in the world:

Is the Psalmist exercising his own version of denial/detachment from reality?

Is he trying to butter God up so he can make demands/control outcomes?

Not in the least.

The Psalmist knew pain and heartache and tragedy

The Psalmist was exposed to the same vulnerabilities that we all face

So, how can we make sense of his invitation to joy?

I think the secret is found in the affirmations we discussed earlier:

Know the the LORD—YHWH—is God. Know the the LORD—YHWH—is good.

The significance of this appeal to YHWH

Is that it places all of human history within the context of the story of YHWH

The God who—as we see in Gen 1 & 2—created all things and called it GOOD

Who created a world that was breathtaking in beauty/order/harmony

Who, when humanity unleashed the virus of sin into the created world,

Made a covenant to his people that he would mend what we have broken

That, in his time & in his own sovereign and mysterious way

God would send One who would bring healing to the sickness in the heart

And ultimately bring about the recreation of the heavens and the earth

The appeal to YHWH is an appeal to YHWH's story:

A story of CREATION, BROKENNESS, REDEMPTION (seen at the cross)

And ultimately a story that is leading to RESTORATION (Rev. 21 and 22)

The invitation to SHOUT for JOY, WORSHIP with GLADNESS

Is not a denial of reality; It's not to say there aren't reasons for heartache

Or times when we are overcome with grief

Or repulsed by the depravity of the human heart

To shout for joy and worship with gladness, to give thanks to God

Is to make a statement of faith

It's to raise our fist in rebellion against the tyranny of the status quo

And to say that, despite evidence to the contrary

This story is leading somewhere

That we belong to the One who made us and the One who made us is good

And the One who made us will not abandon his creation, but will restore it

So, to make a prayer of adoration, to give ourselves permission to feel joy
Is to say “I believe there’s a greater story at work & I refuse to give up hope.”

Some of us need to practice the discipline of joy and celebration
We do this by cultivating a deep sense of gratitude
By acknowledging that every good and perfect thing comes from God:
From the innocence of children, to the gift of friendship
From the beauty of seeing the seasons change to the wonder of the cross

We have the opportunity to cultivate joy and gladness when we gather to worship
When we carry into this room all the baggage of our week
And in spite of it, lift our hands in total surrender
Putting our hope in the One who made us
With the confidence that the One who made us is good.

I’m so grateful that I learned to worship, to adore God at an early age
I saw my parents do this—listening to worship tapes in the car
Or even coming home seeing mom/dad sitting in living room
Sitting/listening to music/worshipping
My family & my church was in the habit of worship
And so, from an early age, my affections were stirred for God

Because now I’ve learned & am learning to find such comfort in presence of God
And it happens so frequently—for me, especially listening to music
That the truth and beauty of God’s story just strikes me
And I feel compelled to raise my hands, in worship and trust
That what I’m singing is true
And this action does something within me, tears stream down my face
And the Spirit of God works within me to bring peace and assurance
That he is good

[Preach]

Let’s pray.