



How to Rejoice and Give Thanks

Psalm 100

December 29, 2024

My name is Bret Hastings. I am one of the pastors here at Grace Church, and it is a pleasure to be here with you this morning on this final Lord's Day of 2024. It's hard to believe 2025 is here already, isn't it? I also think that this is a very poignant time for reflecting on the year past, maybe 'cause the time following the holidays, it's often met with sadness. The holidays are such a joyful time for many, but then following that is often a time of sadness.

Whether the post-holiday sadness is due to the fact that all the fun is over, or maybe because all of the decorations are coming down, and means it's over; maybe the absence of someone in the family still has you down, maybe something didn't go the way you planned for the holidays, unmet expectations. Or maybe



you had a wonderful Christmas. But now all we have to look forward to is a cold dark January.

For many reasons this time of year affects people adversely, and I was shocked when I typed into the Google search engine, "Post holiday," that it just started auto-filling with things like "Blues," and "Depression." And so I was curious. And so I hit the little search button, and I was amazed at how many articles there were online just on the subject of how to get over the post-holiday blues. And my curiosity was piqued. I wondered what kind of answers they had. So I clicked on a few, and I'm just gonna put one of them before you today.

"Psychology Today" posted an article back in January of 2020 entitled, "Seven Tips to Beat the Post-Holiday Blues." Number one out of this article, "Talk to someone verbally, not by texting." That's not a bad idea. It says, "Think about someone that you enjoy being around, talking to, or that you care about. Call that person on the phone and, rather than complaining about your mood, ask them the best part of their

holiday, or the most fun moment that they had." That's not a bad idea.

Number two: "Go out of the house. And better yet, combine that with some human interaction. Try to talk to the mailman, talk to somebody."

Number three: They say, "Read or reread greeting cards," they said, "If you got any," which, at this point I guess if you didn't get any, you might be more depressed. They say, "Especially if you got the boring ones that came with newsletters. Read them, and," they say, "doing so will help you get into somebody else's memory bank for a while, instead of ruminating in your own sad, sorry life." That's my paraphrase of what they said.

Number four: "Get some exercise, instead of binge-watching TV."

Number five: "Look forward, not backward. Contemplate one thing you would love to happen this year."

Number six: "Start cooking something that doesn't remind you of the holidays." I don't know about you, but some, for some people this would not be the, the thing that would get them out

of depression, starting cooking something else right after you get done cooking all that stuff for Christmas.

Number seven: "Slide out of the holidays. So if you're going to watch TV or do any kind of other activity, pick something that has nothing remotely to do with the holiday, so that you won't inadvertently go back down the path of thinking about what you just lost."

So those are seven tips from *Psychology Today* on how to get over the holiday, post-holiday blues. In the intro to the article, the author notes that, "Many people go into the holidays with a sadness already, and the holidays, really, they just distract you from the sadness that's already there. And when the holidays are over, it's just the sadness that returns." And the author then tries to give the readers some hope when she writes" and I quote, "You can find a way to correct it and resolve these unhappy feelings." And then she goes on to give the seven tips for how to beat the holiday blues. But in reality, they're really only seven tips on how to distract you from the post-holiday blues. Because she gives nothing to correct or resolve, as she tries to give the reader hope that they can do. She gives nothing to correct or resolve these

feelings of sadness. There is some behavior modification, even trying to change thinking patterns, but instead of being thankful, for example, she recommends getting into reading the, the newsletters from other people, and getting into other people's lives through their newsletters. In other words, she's recommending that you live in a fantasy world of somebody else's life to escape your own life. There's no real hope of correcting or resolving anything with these prescriptions. There's just more distraction.

Other articles were much the same, though some recommended prioritizing self-care as the primary way to beat the blues. You have to prioritize yourself, cut out anything that adversely affects your mood. And you know how almost every one of these articles ended? They ended by telling you that if you can't kick the sadness by yourself, you need, you may need to go see a professional, and you may need to be put on medication, and you may need to be on it the rest of your life. Where's the hope in that? There is none.

But praise God that there is hope in his Word, amen? From this Word we learn how to rejoice and give thanks even in the midst of the worst situations, or of the mildest feelings of sadness. And we do this not just by changing behavior, though that is part of it. We do this not by turning inward and prioritizing ourselves, but by taking our eyes off of ourselves and turning them upward, and fixing our gaze upon our great God.

You might say, setting our eyes on God as we're gonna see in our text this morning, is renewing our minds with truth as Paul commands us to, to correct and to resolve our sad and wrong feelings. Renewing our minds with truths about God, it gives us what we need to correct our own thinking, which then in turn corrects how we feel. And such truths is what we're gonna find in Psalm 100, if you'd turn there with me now, our text for this morning.

And if you're sitting here this morning and maybe you are more of a resilient person, a positive person, you don't struggle with this as much. This isn't the time for you to check out. You have been given as one of the members of this tur,



church, to this church as a gift to help encourage others who do struggle with this. We all need this correct understanding of who God is and what we're to do in light of it.

In this Psalm 100, we're going to see how to rejoice and give thanks. The psalmist here, rather than seven tips for getting over the holiday blues, there are seven commands for correcting and resolving any sadness you might find in your heart.

So if you would, read Psalm 100 with me. "Make a loud shout to Yahweh, all the earth. Serve Yahweh with gladness; Come before him with joyful songs. Know that Yahweh, he is God; it is he who has made us, and not we ourselves. We are his people and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name. For Yahweh is good; his lovingkindness endures forever, and his faithfulness, generation unto generation."

There are many psalms that evoke thanksgiving in us, call us to thanksgiving, but this is the only psalm that designates

it as, A Psalm of Thanksgiving. This is a model of offering thanks to God as God's people who gather together for corporate worship. It's a corporate call to worship, calling us to rejoice and give thanks.

And as we look at this Psalm and how to rejoice and give thanks, we're gonna break it up into two points. At least in the LSB, it has it clearly broken up into two paragraphs there, two sections. We're gonna follow that, verses 1 to 3, The jubilation of God's people, and verses 4 and 5, The appreciation of God's people. The jubilation of God's people and The appreciation of God's people. This follows the structure of the psalm, which has two sections consisting of three imperatives followed by three reasons.

In the first section there, the first paragraph, you have the three commands, make, serve, and come, followed by three reasons for these commands: Yahweh is God, he has made us, and we are his sheep, his people. In the second paragraph you have the commands, to enter, which is actually the same word as in verse two, Come; same word in the Hebrew, two different words in

the English, translated differently, but same word: Enter, give thanks, and bless.

Three more commands there, followed by another threefold reason for the commands: Yahweh is good, his loving kindness is forever, and his faithfulness is from generation unto generation. So our outline is going to flow from this clear structure of the text. And I'll talk about that seventh command in just a little bit.

But let's first jump into point number one: The jubilation of God's people. Let's read the first three verses again. "Make a loud shout to Yahweh, all the earth. Serve Yahweh with gladness, and come before him with joyful songs. Know that Yahweh, he is God. It is he who made us, not we ourselves. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture." Both of these points are gonna have the same sub-points, A and B, throughout. The commands and the reasons: sub-point A, the command; sub-point B, the reasons. We're gonna have both of those for both these sections.

So the first command in verse 1, "Make a loud shout." Make a loud shout. It's all one word in the Hebrew, and it's a plural imperative. And really, here it is calling all the earth to come and worship God. But it's calling everyone to come and make a loud shout. This word is used quite extensively throughout the Scriptures, and it has actually a wide range of meaning. It can mean anything from, to cry, to cry out with a great shout, to raise a war cry, to blow the alarm with trumpets referring to battle, to rejoice, to cheer, to shout in triumph. And there's clearly no war or battle language or ideas in this psalm, so we can remove those as options, and we're left with a loud cry, a great shout, rejoicing, cheering and I think, based on the fact that the next two lines have something to do with joy, gladness, joyful songs, that's the kind of thing the psalmist has in mind here: a, a jubilant shout.

I think that the word, cheer, is a good description of what the author is getting at. But think of the cheer that you might give when your favorite sports team scores a goal. I don't know if you've ever been to a football stadium when it's packed. It's been about 20 years for me since I was in the Denver Broncos stadium. 70,000 people there. When they make a play that

everybody thinks is worth cheering, there's a huge uproar. The building shakes, the ground rumbles. A cheer in battle over victory, that is the kind of jubilant shout that the psalmist here is calling all the earth, calling all of us to, when we come to worship the Lord. It's calling us to have this excitement about coming to worship God, that overflows in cheers.

Some might consider this odd for this to be the first line of the psalm. It would make more sense to some if there was something to base this jubilant shout on. I mean, we don't, haven't even gotten to any content yet, which is true. And the, all of that content comes in a couple verses, in verse 3. But it's important to note that this psalm is also, as I mentioned earlier, the capstone to the five preceding psalms of enthronement to God. The five preceding psalms have been declaring Yahweh as the king who sits on the throne, who is deserving of all of our worship and praise.

And this psalm, it's the final exclamation point on all the inhabitants of the earth being called to worship that God, that

king, the King of kings and the Lord of Lords. All creation is called and gathered by this call for cheers and jubilant shouts of victory for the king. Long live the king. But this is the kind of excitement that we should come to gather together to worship with. That's the first imperative, calling us to come worship with excitement.

But then the next imperative is found in verse 2. He says, "Serve Yahweh with gladness." This word translated as, serve, here is, also has a wide range of meaning. Some Bible versions translate this as, worship, worship with gladness. But the word means, to toil, to till the ground, to work for someone, to serve someone as a slave, to serve in order to acquire, to accomplish, to perform service, or to serve God in, in the Temple and to honor him. Many commentators as well say the best translation of this word would be, to worship.

But I think to translate that as, worship, it loses the emphasis, the force that the psalmist wants to make upon our hearts. The psalmist wants us to think of work, the service that was going on in the context of worship. I think this is very

important for us as twenty-first century Americans to understand, that worship and service are not mutually exclusive. It is not, You are either worshipping or serving. Rather, you are worshipping with your service. With your service you are worshipping.

Do you often think of that as you, many of you, serve in the church, in the context of this service, even those in the coffee shop, the people back here watching, caring for little ones, are you considering that an act of worship? Part of this, I think, is due to the fact that we as Americans, we swim in this consumerism culture. Everywhere we go, companies and peoples, they're trying to appeal to us to get us to buy their product, watch their video, and we enter into church and we can tend to think that the worship service is a service to benefit us. It's a service to us.

We can tend to think that the service here is a product for us to consume like everything else. This call to worship, it turns that notion on its head. We are here, we are called to serve and worship. This worship service is not unto us. It is

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unto the Lord of Heaven. All that we do here on a Sunday morning, we do benefit from it. It is a service to our souls. But it is first and foremost a service to worship God because he is worthy of all of our worship and praise. He is the object of it, not us. It is to lift our eyes up to see the glory of God, to set our minds on who he is and what he has done; to get it off of earthly and mundane and common things in our life.

But in order to do what we do here every Sunday, it takes a lot of people serving, just as it did long ago in the Temple, in the sacrificial system. We have a lot less blood to deal with. Our service is much less messy, at least most of the time. The ushers have to deal with stuff sometimes, but most of the time it's less messy. But there are many things to do in order to do a service well. And I want to commend you, Grace Church, because when it comes to serving, I think you are an exemplary church. Right now we have just over 250 members. And as I went through the directory, just based on my knowledge of who was serving where (so I could have missed some), there are over 200 members serving in some kind of regular ministry.

Most of those have to do with preparation for the Sunday worship service. You've probably heard that the typical church operates on a 20 to 80 ratio: 20% of the people do 80% of the work. That's true. I think we have a, I think we're, I don't think we're there. We have a better percentage than that. And of the 50 remaining people, many of those, so 200-plus members serving in a regular capacity somewhere, the 50 people remaining, many of those have physical limitations that keep them from serving, though many of them desire to. If we removed all of those people who have reasonable limitations keeping them from regular service, there are really only about 25 people not serving anywhere. And again, that's just my knowledge.

So Grace Church, if you're in that 80% of the church doing the work of the ministry, I just want to commend you, and I want to encourage you to ex, excel still more. And if you're in that 10% that has physical limitations that keep you from regular ministry, then be in prayer and continue. I know many of you are. Continue in prayer for those who are doing those things that you cannot. Uphold that other 80% with your prayers, and the Lord will be pleased with that service to his church.

And if you're in that 10% that isn't serving anywhere regularly, I just first challenge you to examine why you aren't serving anywhere. If you lack the desire to serve God or your fellow church members, then you need to repent of your lack of love for God and your neighbor around you. Maybe you need to repent of thinking that you come to church every week to just consume.

This is first and foremost an opportunity for you to worship God and serve him. And if you refuse to serve him, I have a hard time believing that you are here to truly worship him. Moreover, you, when you entered into a church membership covenant, you took the commitment upon yourself to serve regularly as a part of the body of Christ.

So I would just encourage you, get off the bench and get in the game. There's such a joy to serving alongside one another. Confront those reasons in your heart why you are not serving. Don't be that guy. Last week, I don't know, I read this in an article: A football player, the coach went to put him into the game, somebody got hurt and he went to put the guy in the game.

And when he called him up to put him in the game, instead of going in and playing his position, you know what he did? Walked off the field. Don't be that guy. We are commanded to serve God as an act of worship. So I commend you if you are, and I encourage you if you're not, to serve him.

We're commanded to serve him as an act of worship, but there's also a particular manner in which we are to serve him, and that is with gladness. Maybe some of you are serving, but do you think God is pleased with service and worship when it's done with a heart of sadness? God looks upon the heart and he commands our hearts to be rejoicing and filled with gladness when we serve and worship him. God commands our emotions to be in line with reality, that we ought to serve with gladness. He's not pleased when we serve with sadness, a grumbling attitude, a discontentment. He is not pleased with our worship when we are at the same time murmuring in our hearts about something else.

So there's this feeling of gladness. There's the emotion of it that we need to have right in our hearts. But there's another aspect to this word, gladness, that we have to consider.

Gladness is a word that refers to joy or jubilation, and it refers to the feeling, but also the display of the feeling. So this is for all you folks out there who are maybe, like me, more stoic. And you don't display the gladness that you feel in your heart upon your face.

I am almost always glad to be here on a Sunday morning, but I don't always display that well on my face. So whether we're on stage or just, you're a church member greeting someone else in conversation, we should be glad in our hearts, but we should also display on our face that we are glad to be here. We ought to put a joyful countenance on our face to match what's in our heart.

You may remember the account of Nehemiah, who was the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. And one day he entered the King's presence and he was sad because he had heard a report of the sorry state of Jerusalem. And the king noticed his fallen countenance. And Nehemiah, when the king asked him about the sadness of heart that was on his face, Nehemiah immediately, actually, the text says he was fearful, but he immediately

apologized for the sadness of heart, because this was not acceptable in the presence of a king. It was an unusual event, because even to be in the presence of an earthly king, it was an insult to have a sordid, sad countenance upon your face.

Now, if that's true of earthly kings, how much more so should we have a glad heart and a glad face when we come in to worship our God, the Holy One of the universe? Is there any more joyful place to be than here to worship him, other than in Heaven in his very presence? But if we don't have glad hearts when we walk in on a Sunday morning, should we fake a smile? Most certainly not. We must correct our wrong emotions. But we'll get to that in just a moment.

First, we have one more imperative. The third command is, Come before him with joyful songs. A joyful song could also be translated as, a song of jubilation, rejoicing, exaltation. The obvious theme throughout this section is joy, gladness, jubilation. Joy should be what marks the life of the Christian. Though grief at times are appropriate, this is what should mark our life. It is one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit out of

Galatians. Our lives should be marked by joy, and this is manifest in worship as we joyfully sing, as we rejoice in God for who he is and what he has done for us.

Our singing should be marked by joy. If you sit there or stand, you don't sing with joy, or worse yet, you don't sing at all, and worse still, you sit with a glum countenance while everybody else sings, then you really need to check for a spiritual pulse. You may have reason, as Nehemiah did, to have a sad countenance upon his face, but that was an exception, and that should be an exception for us. That sad countenance upon Nehemiah's face would not have been tolerated very long in the presence of an earthly king.

We need to make sure our regular habit is to come here before the Lord and worship him, and serve him with rejoicing, and in particular in our songs, singing them with great joy. I love how Chuck was exhorting us to sing with gusto. That's exactly what this psalm is exhorting us to do.

But what if we do come and we don't feel like it? I mean, aren't our feelings dictated by our circumstances? That's what our, that's what we hear in the world. Can't change your feelings. It's dictated by life circumstances. What if we are sad coming into church, upset about something? Well, that's exactly what the psalmist deals with next. These three imperatives are followed up by three reasons for obeying these commands.

So we've talked about the commands. Let's talk about the reasons. Three reasons to rejoice in our worship and service. Or you might think of these as three truths to renew our mind with, in order to repent of those sad feelings and obey these commands. And you might be wondering, Well, why didn't the psalmist lead with those? Well, there's a, another grammatical feature of this psalm that must be pointed out at this point.

You maybe noticed, I mentioned earlier that there are seven imperatives, and I only talked about six of them. There are seven imperatives, and the six I noted at the beginning; there's one right in the middle of all of them. The central imperative

of this psalm is in verse 3, and it is, know. It is a command to know something. The fact that this is the central, that's placed at the center of the seven commands, it's also bookended with the same Hebrew word, to come. And so this sets this apart.

One commentator says, he structures it a little bit differently, he says that there is a triple imperative call to worship. Then there's this central call to know that the Lord is God, followed by an triple imperative call to worship. This, the psalmist is setting apart as central, essential truths for us to know in order to worship, in order to rejoice and give thanks. This is important because we must understand these truths in order to truly worship him, in order to have joy in thanksgiving.

All of our worship and joy in thanksgiving, true worship, joy in thanksgiving, centers not on us, as the world tells us, but on the person and work of God. If our thoughts, if our life, our actions, if they're centered on anything other than the work of God, then we will be given over to every kind of sadness and sin, because worshiping ourselves, it doesn't satisfy our souls.



The foundation of true worship, the central feature of worship, is knowing the truth about God. Who God is and what he has done is at the center of true worship.

So look at verse 3. "Know," these are essential truths to know, "that Yahweh, he is God. It is he who has made us and not we ourselves. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture." So this fourth imperative, know, it indicates knowledge that is, in itself, essential for us to have joyful worship and service. We need to know these three things which will help correct and remedy any wrong feelings in our hearts when we come to worship.

First, know that Yahweh is God. Again, partly because of the consumerist society we live in, we are so used to others clamoring for our attention, trying to please us. The first reason we ought to come into the presence of God, to worship him with joy, is because he is God and by implication, we are not God. If you wake up feeling like not going to church, you don't feel like going to church, you don't follow your feelings. You know that this day, the Lord's Day, is about God, and it's not about you.

God has given you six days to do what you want, and asks you to set apart this day to worship him. He is God and you are not. Need to repent of any thoughts or feelings that tell you otherwise. He is God, and that makes him worthy of all of our worship. Contrary to what the world tells us, none of us are really that important. God is infinitely more important and more deserving of your time and energy than even your self-care. This is where the biblical prescription deviates from secular psychology.

Secularists tell each person that they are the center of their own universe, and to achieve happiness we must please ourselves. Look inward. The Bible tells us we must know that to achieve true happiness and joy is not to look within, but to look upward, to fix our eyes on the King of heaven and to seek to please him; that he deserves, and we owe him, all of our praise and worship with the greatest degree of joy. So that's reason number one: God is, Yahweh is God, and you are not.

Reason number two: "It is he who has made us, and not we ourselves." If you have an ESV in your hands, an ESV version in your hands, the last part of that verse is a little bit different. It says, "It is he who made us, and we are his." The reason for the difference in those two translations is an alternate reading, a marginal reading of the original text. But it's really a difference between the Hebrew word *low* and the Hebrew word *low*. *Low* and *low*.

It's easy to understand if I am reading a portion of a text out loud, and you are copying as I read, it's easy to consider how you might make a mistake when I say *low* and you write *low*, when actually I meant *low*. You understand how that kind of thing could happen. It's just the difference between one Hebrew letter that can make the same vowel sound as the other.

I am going to agree with the LSB translation, 'cause I don't think there's a reason to reject the primary reading. It agrees perfectly with the line that it's in, and to avoid giving you any more boring details regarding that, I'm just gonna agree with the LSB. It really changes nothing whichever way you go. It

either agrees with the second line or the first line; that "he made us," or that "we are his." But it changes nothing of the text, the point either way.

But reason number two that we are to worship and serve God with joy; another correction to our wrong thinking and emotions so that we can rejoice is, "It is he who made us, and not we ourselves." There are eight verbs in this whole song in the Hebrew.

The English supplies some more, but in the Hebrew there's only eight, and the verb, he has made, is the only one that's not a command. He has made us. Of all the things that the psalmist could point to that God made: the majestic mountains, the powerful seas, the great beasts of the earth; of all things that the psalmist could draw our attention to, he wants us to draw our attention to the fact that this one made us, to indicate, to point out that we owe him everything.

We owe him our life, much less all of our worship. He knit us together in our mother's womb. He gave us life, and he

sustains our life every day, because he sustains all life. Every breath we take, we only take it because he holds our life together in his hands. None of us are self-made men and women; not from the womb, nor from what we have done with our lives since then. He is God, he is the self-existent one who holds all life in his hands, as all life derives their, our life from him.

He has made us, and we are his creatures, and we owe him everything. We are totally dependent upon him every day. And he has been faithful to you, has he not, every day of your life, to bring you thus far? Is not this God deserving of all of our praise, all of our worship with great joy? So, reason number two, "He has made us, not we ourselves."

The third reason is found at the end of verse 3. "We are his people and the sheep of his pasture." This is a marvelous truth. Yahweh is God, he has made us. And more than that, we have this unique privilege of being brought into the fold of the Good Shepherd. We have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his blessed light. We have been

transferred from the kingdom of darkness into his blessed love.
We were once his enemies.

We were once children of Satan, enslaved to Satan, in the power of sin. But God has rescued us and adopted us and made us his own. He saved us from the eternal judgement in Hell. Beloved, there's nothing that provokes a greater sense of joy than to dwell on this reality, to think about what we have been saved from and what we have been saved to. God has not only saved us from slavery to sin and Satan, he then makes us his sons. We don't even deserve to be slaves in his house. And he makes us coheirs with Christ.

And while we live on this earth, he personally shepherds us. He cares for us. He protects us, provides for us for all of our days. He sets his love upon us, and he keeps us until the end. That's essentially the message of Psalm 23. So beloved, meditate on this truth often, and in doing so, you'll be able to endure a lot of hardship with great joy, because this is an unchanging truth regardless of our changing circumstances.

One commentator says, to end this section, he says, "When faithful people fully know and acknowledge that Yahweh is God, that he has made them, and that he is their Shepherd, their response will be jubilant praise." So how do you rejoice even when you don't feel like it? You renew your mind with these truths: that he is God and you are not, that he has made you, that he sustains you, and that you are in the most blessed position in all the universe as one of his sheep. Renew your mind with these truths, and then obey the commands by shouting to him, cheering him for what he has done, serving him with gladness, coming before him with joyful song.

But that brings us to point two: The appreciation of God's people, in verses 4 and 5. The appreciation of God's people. This section, as I mentioned, it follows the same pattern. We have three commands, followed by three reasons for the commands, or three reasons to obey the commands. Let's start with the imperatives, the commands, Enter, Give thanks, and Bless. The first is, "Enter his gates with thanksgiving." We are to first come into his gates. Come into the gates of the worship center. Come to the corporate place of worship.

If we don't feel like it, beloved, it is imperative that we come into the congregation of the people anyway to worship. Sitting at home isn't going to help fix anything. Moreover, we're told to enter with a couple of things. First, we're told to enter with thanksgiving. The noun here is a term that was employed uniquely as a reference to the sacrificial system of Israel, and it referred to a thank offering, something that you would bring into the Temple to offer thanks to God, typically for delivering you from some life circumstance, oftentimes from a sinful circumstance, could also refer to a confession offering.

But obviously in this context, it's, of, a context of rejoicing. It's a thanksgiving offering. But I think what's important for us to note is that we are commanded here to enter into his gates, having already prepared something to offer God. We are commanded to enter into the gates with something. That thing, for Israel, it took some forethought, some preparation.

I think many of us, we come to church without having put a whole lot of forethought into anything before we get here. We

are not entering the front doors of the worship center for corporate worship with something ready to offer him. Maybe, if you still do this, you put some forethought into writing a check ahead of time, bringing that and putting it in the offering.

But beyond that, we ought to come through these doors having prepared something else, and that is a great deal of thanksgiving; a heart set right ahead of time by much meditation on what we have to be thankful for before we ever even reach the front doors, so that we get here with hearts bursting with thanks, ready to enter his gates.

And that leads right into the second thing we're supposed to bring in: Praise. Praise and thanksgiving, they're synonyms that could be both translated as Praise. But the term, thanksgiving, that we just talked about tends to stress the recognition aspect of it, so we recognize what God has done. But this word stresses the act of boasting of it.

So you put all of this together. We are to enter into the gates having already recognized things that we have to be

thankful for, that God has done for us, and then we enter in ready to boast in it. Or, as one commentator puts it, "to give an enthusiastic, glowing report of what God has done in our life." We're to come ready with hearts bursting to praise him as we walk in the gates. And if you, maybe you're on your way here, you're struggling with coming up with things the night before, on your way in the morning, preparing to come to church, your house, struggling with things to give thanks for because life circumstances are not going well; well, then you go back to verse 3. There's much to give thanks for in that.

Those essential truths for worship: He is God, he has made you and set his love upon you by making one of his sheep, making you one of his sheep. But we're to enter into the gates with hearts ready to praise, bursting with praise.

The second imperative in this section is, give thanks, and it's the verb form of the one we just talked about, thanksgiving. What I want to emphasize here is just the object of our thanks. We are to enter into his gates with thanksgiving for him. The whole psalm, it's obvious that Yahweh is the

object, the Lord is the object of all of this. And contrary to what we hear in the world today, modern secularists who don't believe in God, many psychologists, they say that we have reason to give thanks to ourselves, which is just an absurd notion.

I heard that in a commercial over Thanksgiving from some therapy outfit, that we ought to spend time thanking ourselves. And in case it isn't immediately obvious to everyone, you are a creature sustained by God, and you have nothing that was not given you by God. Therefore you have nothing to thank yourself for. What draws our eyes up, out of bad life circumstances, is to set our eyes on God, the worthy object of all praise and thanksgiving, not to set our eyes on our own hearts. Doing so draws our eyes up, it sets our hearts on God, and it draws our minds and our thinking out of our own sadness and into the joy of our God.

Because God is perfectly blessed within himself, in him is perfect happiness and joy. And when we meditate upon him, we enter into his joy. We have no joy in and of ourselves, just as we have no life in and of ourselves. We have nothing to give

thanks to ourselves for, but in God we have every reason to give thanks. And when we turn and put our eyes on him, and we think about all the things that we have to give him thanks for, when we meditate upon him, we're actually entering into his joy.

And that is a hope that the world does not have, turning inward. Inside of us is sin and sadness, and to turn inward is only to meditate upon sin and sadness. There's nothing in that that's going to draw our hearts out of that. But when we set our minds upon God, we enter into his perfect blessedness, his joy and happiness. So we set our hearts upon him.

The third imperative in this section is Bless. Bless his name is the command. Bless is another synonym for praise, but in particular this, according to one commentator, is "a public praise that elevates and enhances the Lord in the minds of the people." To bless God is to lift up God and to elevate God in the minds of all those who are around.

If we gather together and our praise is quite glib, we seem downcast and gloomy as we're all worshipping, that really isn't

elevating God in the minds of anyone. God is high and lifted up. He is worthy of all of our praise, and we are called to praise him in such a way that communicates that reality. Our praise should exalt God in the minds of those who are here listening. We ought to be so thankful and so joyful that others around us are lifted into that kind of joy and thanks. That's what it means to bless God, to draw others into the same kind of joy and thanks.

All of these commands, they're all plural. They're for the whole congregation. It takes all of us to have this kind of joy and excitement and effect on those who come and attend. And if you sit there glumly, you're not obeying this command to bless God. Rather, you're having the opposite effect. Maybe you don't like to sing. Well, I'd refer you back to the previous point. You're not God. You're not, you're not here for you. He is God and you are not. He is worthy of your praise, and his holy character demands it.

So that brings us to the end of those three commands. They're heavy with the theme of thanksgiving and praise. And the

psalmist then gives us three reasons for these commands. The first reason to give thanks and bless God is the first line of verse 5, "For Yahweh is good." There is an entire sermon that we could preach, in fact, many, many sermons that we could preach on the goodness of God. The fact that God is good is the central tenet of our faith.

In my opinion, Hebrews 11:6 on faith explains this or illuminates this. Hebrews 11:6 says, "He who draws near to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him;" that he is good to those who seek him. To believe that God is good is the foundation of faith in God. And from one, this one simple reality overflows a myriad of applications. And I'm just gonna mention one to you, but it has a myriad of, of things to it as well.

But Peter Van Mastricht in his systematic theology, he notes seven applications from the goodness of God. I'm just gonna talk about one. But, "The goodness of God," he says, "should stir us up to seek the remedy of every evil in the goodness of God." "The goodness of God should stir us up to seek

the remedy of every evil in the goodness of God." He says, "In the infinite goodness of God is the remedy for every evil. And from this he is called a 'healer,' Exodus 15:26." And he is the one who heals all our diseases. He then notes varying ways, evils that we are pressed by. He says, "Therefore, if we should be pressed by evils of fortune, by poverty; he, through his goodness will be for us our portion and inheritance."

He goes on and says, "Should we be pressed by the wickedness and ferocity of our enemies, he, by his goodness will be our stronghold, our high place, our shield and strength. Should we be pressed by evils of the body, by disease, he, by his goodness may heal all of our infirmities. Should we be pressed by evils of the soul, by sins, he forgives all of our iniquities and does so according to his goodness. Should we be pressed by impotence, that is, a lack of power in resisting sins, his grace will be sufficient. His power will be made perfect in weakness. Should we be pressed by spiritual desertions, the Lord is faithful to the end." And he concludes by saying, "Indeed, in all evils entirely, however many and whatever sort they are, the remedy is supplied for us from the infinite goodness of God."

That is to say, the Lord is good. All of that is summed up in this one little phrase. "The Lord is good." Whatever evils befall us in this world, even the mildest of sadnesses or the greatest of griefs, the remedy is meditating upon the goodness of God. Knowing how that overflows into our life, we must think and meditate upon these things, as, as a remedy. Bernard of Clairvaux put it well when he said, "Just as there is no moment in which we do not enjoy the goodness of God, thus there should be no moment in which we do not have him present in our memory."

That is to say, we enjoy his goodness all day long. If we meditate upon it all day long, we will be able to obey these commands to rejoice and give thanks. And when he is not present in our memory, and the reality of his goodness is not at the forefront of our minds, then every sort of sadness and evil will be present in our memory, plaguing us, nagging our conscience. Thus, knowing the goodness of God is essential to the Christian business of rejoicing and giving thanks.

The second reason we have to give thanks is because his lovingkindness endures forever. Lovingkindness, here, is the Hebrew word *chesed*, which refers to God's covenant love for his people. It refers to a loyal love. This loyal love was demonstrated to Israel when God remembered his promise to Abraham and brought the Israelites up out of Egypt. This loyal love was demonstrated throughout Israel's history when God protected them, when he didn't wipe them off the face of the earth because of their unfaithfulness.

And we as Christians are now the recipients of this loyal love in the New Covenant. This is made known to us in verses like Romans 8:1, where Paul writes "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ." He goes on later to explicate that in verse 35. He says, "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or turmoil or persecution, or famine, or nakedness or peril or sword?" He goes on in verse 38, and he says, "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

This is nothing less than that lovingkindness described in these verses; the particular love that God has set upon us as his children. This love that God has for us as believers, it is the same special love that endures forever. Nothing can thwart it. And when we consider that we were once his enemies, that while we were his enemies he died for us to make us his children, his sheep, we have every reason to give thanks, do we not?

Psalmist gives one more reason. Reason number three in the second section: His faithfulness is from generation unto generation. This is very similar to the last one, but it calls to mind God's faithfulness, which is forward-looking. But it's also looking back to see all that God has done, to encourage us to trust him for the future. If we look backwards with a gaze upon ourself, we often see sin and mistakes and regrets of our life. But if we look backwards to set our minds upon God's faithfulness, to think of all of his goodness towards us in the past, then this backwards look also encourages us to trust him as we continue going into the future. He will continue to be faithful.

When we look back and thank God for the many blessings he has given us, then it settles our hearts regarding tomorrow. He has been faithful to us up to this point, he is faithful right now, and he will continue to be faithful, generation unto generation. We can trust him, and we have much to give thanks to him for every day. And as we continue to give thanks to him, he will continue to be faithful, generation unto generation.

So, beloved, let us end this year by looking back and giving thanks to God for another year of his faithfulness towards us, all the ways that he has been good to us. Let us give thanks and praise to him, but also let us look to the new year as an opportunity to rejoice with all of our heart, all of our mind, all of our soul, all of our strength, seeking to serve him and worship him with the greatest degree of gladness and jubilation in our hearts, with all that we are. Let's seek to do that together. Amen? Let's pray.

Father, were we to recount all of your works that we have to give thanks for, as John wrote in his gospel, we would drain

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Grace

every pen, we would use up every piece of paper. As we end this year, Lord, we thank you for your faithfulness to our church; that you continue to save and sanctify, you continue to draw our eyes upward, you continue to be faithful, the immutable God worthy of all of our praise and worship. We rejoice in that, Lord. And I pray, Lord, that as we enter into the new year, we seek to serve you and worship you with a renewed vigor, with a renewed joy in who you are and what you have done for us. We pray all of this in your son's blessed name, Amen.