

OH GOD, MAKE US THANKFUL! Psalm 100

Jack Kerns was a major league umpire in the mid-twentieth century. Every umpire and every referee who's ever called very many games has been accused of being blind, but the tag took on a new meaning for Jack after one particular game.

Back in 1950 Jack was the home plate umpire in a game that was finishing late in the afternoon. There were no lights back then, and it was getting so dark some thought that Jack should suspend play, but he refused to do it. So the game came down to the last out, and the batter had two strikes, and it was really dark by now. And the pitcher and catcher were ready to go home, and so the catcher called time out, ran to the mound, and the two of them hatched a plot to end the game. The pitcher secretly gave the catcher the ball, and he trotted back and took his position behind the plate. Then the pitcher went into a fake windup and went through the motions of delivering a pitch. Then the catcher slammed the ball into his mitt, and Jack Kerns yelled, "Strike three", and the ballgame was over. And to top it all off, the batter turned around, called Jack an ugly name and declared that the ball was way outside! But you see, Jack and the batter were blinded to the truth.

Beloved, there is a blindness that is much worse than not being able to see. And that is spiritual blindness. Most of the world is blinded to the truth of the good news of Jesus Christ. Paul writes that the devil has blinded the minds of those who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them (2 Cor. 4:4). And unless by His grace God removes the blinders and draws them to Christ they will spend eternity in Hell.

But there is another type of spiritual blindness, and it is not just a lost man's disease, for it can and does affect many Christians. And that is blindness to the blessings of God. Paul says that in the latter days men would have all kinds of evils in their lives – they would be greedy, boasters, proud, blasphemers, unforgiving, slanderers, brutal, and several other vices, one of which was the sin of ingratitude, not being thankful (2 Tim. 3: 2-4).

Are you a thankful person? Most of us without hesitation would say, "Of course". But are you sure? What are the unmistakable signs of a person that God would say it truly thankful? And what makes a person truly thankful? And why is thanksgiving so important? Let's see what God has to say it.

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Psalm 100. Psalm 100 is the crest of a great swelling tide of praise to the Lord that began in Psalm 95. All of these psalms were probably written by the same author, for they all are a part of an overarching theme of the sovereign rule of Jehovah. Three times from Psalm 95-99 the Holy Spirit inspired the writer to exclaim, "The Lord reigns!" (96:10; 97:1; 99:1). Ch. 95 says that Jehovah is the great God, the King above all gods (95:3). Ch. 98 says that all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of God in the deliverance of Israel from her enemies (98:3). And ch. 96 says that He is coming again to judge the earth in righteousness (96:13). Now, that's a comforting truth, beloved. As much as the wicked have prospered and the righteous have suffered in this old world, one day the wicked will be judged and righteousness will be restored forevermore.

But in light of the greatness and sovereignty of God upon which he has expounded, the psalmist also gives the only proper response. Look at 95:1-2, 6-7; 96:1-2; 98:1; 99:9. And now we come to Psalm 100 where he puts the ribbon and bow on the entire section, where he gives his closing statement, a summary of all He wants them to remember.

And it comes in the form of three charges. The first one is, **be joyful!** Look at verse 1&2. “Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands. Serve the Lord with gladness....”

Beloved, this is so very critical in the practice of our faith. That we serve our God joyfully, with gladness and not sadness. Let me tell you why. Because when your life is filled with joy and gladness you are reflecting the nature of Jesus, the one for whom you are an ambassador to a lost and dying world. The night before Jesus died He told His disciples, “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be made full” (John 15:11). Think about that! Jesus was about to be crucified, nailed to a cross to suffer, bleed and die the most painful death known to man. He was about to enter into a place that was terrifying to Him, the realm of the dead, and somehow suffer the horrors of eternal hell compacted into less than six short hours. And yet He is talking about sharing His joy with His disciples. Hebrews 1:9 says that Jesus had the oil of gladness more than His companions. More than anyone who has ever lived, Jesus had gladness in the depth of his soul. And beloved, it is this gladness in the midst of troubles and trials that make Jesus’ followers unique above the followers of every other religion on earth. That makes unsaved people want to know Christ. And yet many, many Christians don’t have any more joy than they do, and sometimes even less.

Years ago a preacher friend of mine told me about a man who was a patient in a hospital he in which he was visiting. My friend did not know this man, but he happened to see the form he had filled out concerning his religious preference. And here is what the man said. “Don’t want to see no preacher. Got enough troubles already”. Now, beloved, how did this man form this opinion about preachers? About Christianity? I’ll tell you. He probably had never seen the real deal. He probably had never met a Christian who radiated the joy of Jesus, who had more gladness than all of his friends. Oh, but

that's the kind of joy and gladness you and I are to have. Joy that makes us want to shout! Gladness that makes us want to sing!

Let me ask you something. Why do people shout or sing? Why do you shout or sing? Because something good has happened in your life. When high school and college students graduate they throw their caps into the air and shout because they are glad to be out of school. When the results of a big political election are announced there are shouts galore from the winning side. And I promise you, there will be a lot of shouting going on next Saturday afternoon about five or six o'clock either in Tuscaloosa or Lee County, just because twenty two college boys could hit a little harder and run a little faster than twenty two others. But we shout because of something good that has happened in our lives. And that's also the reason we sing.

Do you know one of the most vivid memories I have about being in the high school band? It is singing on the band bus. And I'm kind of ashamed to tell you the only song I remember that we sang. I guess it was an old barroom song or something. But the name of it was Beer on the Wall. Now, I've never had a beer in my life, but I could sing that song with the best guzzlers in America. But we were just a bunch of kids having fun together. But when I got a little older the singing **really** got serious on the football bus. When we'd win a big game on the road we'd get in that bus on the way home, start singing our Lineville Aggie fight song, and you could hear us all the way back to Lineville. And nobody thought anything about how they sounded. Nobody sat there in silence because they said, "I can't sing and I don't want to make the song sound bad. NO! We didn't care how we sounded. We all sang because we were all happy. And do you know what? If anybody couldn't sing well, you couldn't tell it. Because of all the people who could sing who were singing to the top of their lungs. Singing is just a natural outpouring of the gladness that is in your heart.

So beloved, God has made you to be a shouting and singing machine. It's in your DNA to express your joy in an outward way. And as a believer in Jesus, your shouting and singing should be from a wellspring of His joy more than any other thing in your life. Do you have this kind of joy today?

Well, if you do not there is something else that the psalmist charges us to do that will give it to you, or if you do, it will make it even better. And that is to **be knowledgeable**. Look at verse 3. Now, beloved, this one verse speaks volumes and volumes about the One that you and I worship today. He is God! He is the one and only God. He has no equal, no competitor, no rival. He says in Isaiah 45:18, "I am the Lord, and there is no other", and He repeats Himself in verse 21: "And there is no other God besides Me..." And by the way, the name LORD in all upper case letters is the name Jehovah, which in the Greek language is Jesus. Our choir has a song we sing during the Christmas season that I dearly love, All Other Kings Bow Down. The premier angels of the spirit world, Gabriel, Michael, and Lucifer, and all other angels and demons bow down to King Jesus. All the great kings of this world, the pharaohs of Egypt, who claimed to be gods, the Caesars of Rome, who also claimed to be gods, Buddha, Mohammed, Napoleon, Hitler, Gandhi, Gladstone, Obama, Elvis, Trump, Gates, you name them – all other kings will bow down to King Jesus. Ps. 115:3 says that He is in the Heavens. He does what He pleases. Rom. 9:19 says that no one resists His will.

I want to see just how great and mighty our Lord Jehovah is today. Turn back to Psalm 93. Let's begin reading in verse 1. The psalmist says, "The Lord reigns!" The Lord is ruler over heaven and earth. And then he begins to tell us just how God reigns. Write these down in your margin or in your memory. First of all, the Lord reigns majestically. "He is clothed with majesty". Have you been noticing some of the sunsets we've had recently? A store clerk and I were talking about the goodness of God the

other day, and he mentioned a recent sunset that another customer had spoken about, and the man had said, "Ain't no man could ever make that!" But all of those sunsets point us straight to the majesty of their Maker.

Now look at verse 2. The Lord also reigns eternally. It's not that the angels had an election and God won a majority and began to reign a few hundred years ago. No, our God has been on the throne from the infinite past. Never has there been a time when He was not on His throne. But He not only reigns majestically and eternally, He also reigns mightily (verse 3-4). We all saw footage of the recent typhoon in the Philippines, and the tsunami that devastated Indonesia a few years ago. And we marvel at the destructive power of wind and water. But, friend, our great God is the One Who turns that power on and off like a faucet. The disciples saw this power of God first hand. When Jesus calmed the angry sea they marveled and exclaimed, "What manner of man is this? For even the winds and the waves obey Him" (Matt. 8:27).

But there is yet another way that our God reigns. He reigns faithfully (verse 5a). God's promises are not good 99% of the time, not even 99.9% of the time. They never fail! If God said it, it will come to pass as surely as He is God. So God reigns, **majestically, eternally, mightily, faithfully**, and God reigns **righteously**. Our God has never made a mistake, never had error in judgment; never, ever has He treated us unfairly. Never can we blame God for tragedy in our lives. To the contrary, God is a God whose mercies are great above the heavens (Ps. 108:4). The psalmist was spot on when he said, "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. His greatness is unsearchable" (Ps. 145: 3). One translation puts it, "There are no boundaries to His greatness".

But verse 3 tells us more than simply Jehovah is the God Whom we worship. Look again. "It is He Who has made us, and not we ourselves". Friend, you do not sit here

today because you willed yourself to be born. You had nothing to do with it. You are not here as a product of the physical union of your parents. Countless couples have tried and tried and have not been able to conceive. And you do not sit here this morning as a product of a big bang billions and billions of years ago. Psalm 139 says that the Creator God personally handcrafted you while you were still in your mother's womb. And then God called you forth on the day that you were born. The Bible says that the voice of the Lord makes the deer give birth (Ps. 29:9). Would He not do as much with those that He has created in His own image? Oh, friends, you are not an accident! It was God Who gave you life and breath, with a high and holy purpose for your life. And that should bring joy to your soul. But it also should bring to you a great sense of responsibility. This life of mine is a gift from God! I may have five talents, two talents or one talent. But I better use my talents wisely.

But beloved, if you are saved this morning, God not only made you, but He owns you. "We are His people" (verse 3b). Paul writes that the saved have been adopted. You were not a child of God, but a child of wrath, destined for eternal wrath. But God adopted you as His son or daughter, and the purchase price was blood, the blood of His only unique Son, Jesus. Who would dare to suggest the price tag that God placed upon you, if the only sufficient payment was the blood of Jesus? But Peter does say that you are God's special treasure (1 Peter 2:9).

But the psalmist tells us something else. Those whom God owns, God **nurtures and protects**. And look again at verse 3. We are the sheep of His pasture. And just like David, when the Lord is our shepherd, we shall not want. We will be in need of nothing, and we will be in fear of nothing, not even death. For our Shepherd is always with us to protect us from all enemies!

I want you to let all of this soak in for a few moments. If you have trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, then the God Who reigns alone in this universe is your perfect, all mighty Heavenly Father. He loves you so much that He gave up His Son to die for you, and He has committed Himself to protect you from all evil and provide for your every need. And the psalmist also says, “No good thing will He withhold to them who walk uprightly (Ps. 84:11). And then when you draw your last breath on earth He will take you by the hand and escort you through that foreboding door of death as if you were walking into the next room. And you will live in Heaven with Him forever and ever. I ask you, what greater position could you have in all of life? What could give you greater joy and peace? Would you agree with me, nothing at all?

So why is it that so many of God’s children don’t have this joy and peace? I’ll tell you. We do not live in the sweet knowledge that the Lord is God! We don’t really believe that His power to save is just as sufficient to give us this day our daily bread and to deliver us from evil. We’ve shrunk-wrapped our great God into our cosmic buddy and now He is just too small to meet our needs. But beloved, He is not too small! He is the same great God that He was when He spoke the worlds into existence. And if you want His joy and peace to keep your heart and mind each day, then fix your mind on His greatness every day. Meditate upon it throughout the day. Think about God more than your favorite hobby or what you hear on the sports talk shows or what you read on Facebook. Psalm 104:34 says, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet. I will be glad in the Lord”. And beloved, if you will meditate upon the Lord, then you will know the joy of the Lord. And you’ll make a joyful shout to Him, and you’ll serve Him with gladness.

We have seen that the psalmist has charged us to be **joyful**, and that the pathway to being joyful is to be **knowledgeable**. Oh, but there is one more thing that we cannot miss! And that is, after being knowledgeable and being joyful we must be **thankful**. God

says that you and I are to come to church every week with a heart bursting with thanksgiving for all of His blessings, praising His name with our shouts and songs. Now, some might ask, "But if you are joyful in the Lord, does not that automatically mean you will thank the Lord?" No, it does not. In Luke 17 we read where 10 lepers were cleansed. Wouldn't you say that all ten of those lepers were joyful for being cleansed? I'd say so. But only one of them was thankful. Only one of them went back to thank Jesus for healing him.

Beloved, all sin certainly breaks God's heart. But for a believer, one who has been washed in Jesus' blood, set free from the bondage of sin and death and given the free gift of eternal life, I cannot think of any sin that grieves God's heart more than the sin of ingratitude. Does it not grieve our own heart when our children take us for granted? We love them and we would do anything for them, but does it not hurt when it seems they do not appreciate what we do, when they rarely come to our house, when they never say "thanks?"

Have you been forgiven for your sins by trusting in Jesus? Then give thanks! Give it by your songs of praise in His house. But don't just give thanks, **live** thanks. Paul wrote to the Colossians, "And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks** unto God and the Father by Him." Let every word and deed be an offering of thanksgiving. You will be satisfied, and God will be glorified!

"Thou who hast given so much to me, give me one more thing—a grateful heart!" ~ **George Herbert**