

Victory of the Lamb – How to Talk with God – Psalm 100 –

March 5, 2023 – Pastor Ben Sadler

Psalm 100

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.

The emotions we feel are not good or bad, right or wrong. In fact, all emotions have their place in our lives. It is appropriate to feel anger when someone or something we care about is threatened by injustice. It is appropriate to feel sadness when we lose someone we love. It is appropriate to feel afraid when we are in the middle of a crisis so that we stay alert to the possible danger. Emotions are gifts of God and they all have their place in our lives.

The problem happens when one or more emotions overwhelm us, making us unable to do the work we want to do. Now each of us might struggle with one of these emotions because of our unique personality. Some of us in times of stress or unhealth might get overwhelmed by anger. We can't seem to stop being angry. Some of us might struggle with fear. When we get stressed or are unhealthy we might not be able to shake our fear. Some of us really struggle with sadness. We get caught in a pit of sadness and we just can't seem to get out.

Well, there is one practice that psychologist, therapists, and even Christian theologians talk about that has a way of breaking us out of those unwanted emotions. It is thankfulness. This is not a silver bullet. And this is not a quick fix. But overtime, the practice of being thankful has a way of tsunamiing all our other emotions.

But that doesn't mean it is easy. Sometimes we just can't think of a reason to be thankful. We are so frustrated by how life is going or we are so worried about the challenges we are facing or we are so sad about our loses that we just can't seem to find any reason to give thanks.

Well, today we are continuing our sermon series **How to talk to God**. This sermon series is all about how to pray and prayer is really just talking with God. And that can be hard for a number of reasons. And so in this series we have tried to simplify prayer down to a few phrases:

Wow!

I'm sorry.

Thank you.

Last week, Pastor Bob talked about saying “I’m sorry”. This week we want to focus on the phrase “thank you.” Although thankfulness is so good for us for a number of reasons, it can be really hard to do. And so in this sermon I want to answer the question: **How can we cultivate a prayer life full of thankfulness?**

And to answer this question, we are going to look at the Psalm 100. I don’t know how much you know about the book of Psalms, but it was essentially the Hebrew prayer book and song book. There are 150 prayers and songs in this book. And today we are going to focus on Psalm 100.

Psalm 100 begins with these words:

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

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

The writer of this prayer wants us to shout for joy! And worship with gladness! And come into God’s presence with joyful songs. This writer seems to be excited and happy to be alive.

He reminds me of my dog on the day we take her to doggy day care. Tuesdays are long days for our families. Usually, I have meetings throughout the day and there are a number of activities at night. And so we have our dog go to Brentwood for the day. And when we take her to Brentwood day care, I always use the same leash, the purple leash. When our dog sees the purple leash she starts to spin around jump up and down. She wags her tail and jump up on my and run to the door. And when she gets to the door she can hardly contain herself. When I open the door she goes dashing to the car. And when we get her to Brentwood her tail wags so hard that it looks like it could just fly off.

That’s what this writer is like. He is having a purple leash kind of day. He is shouting for joy, worshipping with gladness and entering into God’s presence with praise.

I think we all want to have a purple leash kind of day. We all want this kind of joy and gladness. We don’t want to live in our sadness or grief or fear forever. So how do we foster this type of joy?

Well, one clue is to understand that this is Psalm 100 and not Psalm 3 that says

**¹ Lord, how many are my foes!
How many rise up against me!**

Or Psalm 6 that says,

**My soul is in deep anguish.
How long, Lord, how long?**

**All night long I flood my bed with weeping
and drench my couch with tears.**

Or Psalm 22 that says,

**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?**

**² My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.**

You see, the book of Psalms is organized very intentionally to tell the story of Israel. The Israelites had a long history of trials and pain and suffering and confusion. After being rescued from Egypt and being tested in the wilderness, they struggled to establish themselves in the Promised Land. They suffered under oppression from foreign nations. Many of their kings fell into idolatry and corruption. And eventually they were captured by Babylon and taken into exile.

And so, the book of Psalms reveals that struggle of faith in God as you walk through these prayers. They express their anger, fear, and sadness with God and with themselves.

But that is not only Israel's story it is our story. So much of our faith journey is filled with fear, anger, sadness, and regret. Like the Psalmists, we cry out "How long God?! Where are you? Why have you forsaken me?"

But as you keep reading the Psalms you will notice that the tone changes as you keep reading. Yes, there continues to be laments and anger and fear, but they are less frequent. As you keep reading there are more prayers of rejoicing and thanksgiving.

Eugene Peterson put it this way:

"All true prayer pursued far enough will become praise...It does not always get there easily...But the end is always praise."

That's what the editor of the Psalms is teaching us. The Psalms don't begin with shouting for joy and giving thanks and rejoicing. They start with lament, anger, and fear. But if you keep praying, if you keep walking with God over a lifetime:

Your pain will eventually turn to praise.

Your anger will eventually turn to adoration.

Your worry will eventually turn to worship.

So that helps us begin to answer our opening question:

How can we cultivate a prayer life full of thankfulness?

Keep praying until your prayer turns to praise.

But that is not the only message of this Psalm. The Psalmist goes on:

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.**

One reason we struggle to pray prayers of thankfulness is that we can't see anything to be thankful for. When we are angry all we can see is what we are angry about. When we are sad, all we feel is our sadness. When we are worried, all we feel is our anxiety. And the more we focus on these feelings, the bigger they get.

That's how it always works. Whatever you focus on gets bigger. The pain gets bigger. The sadness gets bigger. The fear gets bigger.

And so the Psalmist want us to redirect our thoughts away from ourselves and our problems back on to the truth of who God is and what he has done.

He says, **Know that the Lord is God.** We are to recognize and remember that the God of the Bible is the only true God. He is over all and in charge of all things.

And this God who is over all is our Creator. The Psalmist says, **It is he who made us.** We are not an accident. We were formed and molded by God. God painted every freckle. He folded every wrinkle in our brain so that we would have the unique talents and skills. He designed our hands and feet so that some of you are athletes. And some of you are mechanics and builders. Some of you are doctors and caregivers. Some of you are teachers and counselors. God made us. And so we always have a reason to thank God. We can thank him for making us who we are today.

Unfortunately, we often forget we were designed by God for his purposes. In fact, we are inclined to actively rebel against our Creator. Like a wild dog, we are tempted to bite the hand that feeds us. And yet, God decided to pursue us and choose us. That's why the Psalmist says, **and we are his...**

When it came to the nation of Israel, God chose them out of all the nations to be his special people. He rescued them from Egyptian slavery and brought them into the Promised land so that they could bring the Savior into the world.

God did something similar for all of us. God chose us and rescued us out of the slavery of our regret and shame and guilt. He adopted us and calls us his own.

I know a number of people who have been adopted. And each of them have a different story and different struggles. But I know of at least one person who is very proud of being adopted. This person would say, "Most parents love their kids because they are their kids. But my parents have a special kind of love. They knew me and all my struggles and they still chose to adopt me." That is what God did for us. He chose us and we are his. So we always have a reason to thank God. God chose us to be his own.

Then finally the Psalmist says, **we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.** In other words, God is guiding us like a shepherd guides sheep. God is not only our Creator who made us. He is not only our Savior, who saved us. He is also our counselor who guides us. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. He is guide us in the way he wants to go.

Why are you here? Why have you overcome so many challenges? Why are you still following God after all these years? Because the Holy Spirit has been guiding you in the way he wants you to go. And so we always have a reason to be thankful because we have been guided by God.

And so I think this helps us answer completely our opening question:

How can we cultivate a prayer life full of thankfulness?

- 1. Keep praying until your prayer turns to praise.**
- 2. Meditate on all the wonders God has done.**

And that really how this Psalm ends. When the Psalmist meditates not on his problems and his pain but on the goodness of God he closes this prayer by saying:

**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.**

When the Psalmist considers all that God has done from the beginning of his life until now, all he can do is give thanks. Yes, the Israelites have faced their share of adversity and pain. Yes, as Jesus promised, in this world we will have trouble. But when we keep praying and meditating on the goodness of God, when we talk to God in prayer, we will keep saying Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

It makes me think of something my Grandma Sadler taught me and I want to teach it to you. My grandparents lived in a small ranch house that my grandfather built just south of here in the town of Raymond.

When I was younger I would sleep over at their house. And I loved to sleep over at my grandparent's house. My grandma was a baker, so she would make the most delicious cookies and treats. And she would keep a stash of presents in her bedroom closet, so that whenever we played games the winner would get to choose a prize. And we would keep playing until everyone got a prize.

My grandma seemed to always be so positive and joyful. And from the outside, you might not find a reason for her to be so happy. They didn't have a lot of money. And her health was not that great. She had bad legs so she struggled to get around. But I remember her being so joyful. And I think it was because of one practice that she did every day.

Every morning she would say to me, **"It's a beautiful day to be happy in the Lord!"** And then she follow it up by saying, "And I always say that even when it's raining." In other words, she found a reason to be thankful to God no matter what the situation. She believed that God made her and saved her and was guiding her life and so she had a reason to be thankful. She had a reason to be happy.

What if we all started our day like that? What if the first thought that came to our mind, the first words out of our hearts were thank you God! It is a beautiful day to be happy in the Lord. Even if it is raining out today, I have a reason to be happy in the Lord.

We are all going to experience a variety of emotions today and that is a good thing. But sometimes, maybe even today, our emotions will overwhelm us. The anger, sadness, or fear might become all-consuming. And yet, as Christians we have one practice that has a way of moving us through those unwanted ruts: a prayer of thankfulness. To tell God all the reason we are thankful. This is not going to be easy. Like the Psalms show us, it might take a lifetime to truly cultivate a thankful heart. So keep praying and don't give up. Eventually the pain will turn to praise as you thank God for all the good things he has done. Amen.