

THEOLOGY MOTIVATES JOY AND FAITH: PSALM 100

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Joy is elusive to our world. Our non-Christian friends grasp for joy but never attend it. Of course, they'll catch a moment of happiness, maybe even often, and have a good laugh occasionally, but joy is foreign to them because of what joy is. Joy is the feeling produced from the gospel truth that all is well with our soul because of Jesus. Unlike most feelings that come and go, joy does not. God gives us joy as a gift; we do not manufacture it (Romans 15:13; Galatians 5:22), and since God gives it to us, we possess it even amid trials (2 Corinthians 7:4) and can even consider terrible moments of pain as joy (James 1:2). It characterizes our life now because the gospel is a message of joy (Luke 2:10) and will characterize our condition one day soon when we see Jesus face to face (Luke 15:7; Jude 24). **The truth that we are accepted and safe with God produces the lasting feeling of joy,** and joy always expresses itself in worship. Words and acts that express the glory of God displayed in our joy!

The main idea of this sermon is that God's character moves God's people to worship him joyfully. Notice the two ideas here – what motivates our worship is God, not us, not our feelings, and not our circumstances. God motivates our worship. Notice also what kind of worship God produces in us – joyful worship. The quality of our worship is not chaotic or uncertain. Biblical worship is joyful. This is the main idea of Psalm 100: knowing God motivates joyful worship.

Now, as we explore these ideas, I hope that we will be transformed. This is my hope every week: that we would leave here different. I hope, today, that we would be committed to reflecting on God's past and current kindness to us. I want us to develop the habit of recognizing and rejoicing in God's kindness in good times, and in bad times.

Let's now explore these ideas together.

Joyful Worship: Psalm 100:1

The first section of Psalm 100 describes the nature of our worship. It is joyful. Let's explore several glorious aspects of this worship together. First, the setting of this psalm was Israel's three annual festivals. Notice the verbs "come into his presence" in verse 2 and "enter his gates" in verse 4. The occasion is pilgrims flooding to Jerusalem for worship, and this happened three times a year at Israel's annual festivals (Deuteronomy 16:16; 2 Chronicles 8:13). These celebrations include Passover which was celebrated at the same time as the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Firstfruits, the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), and the Feast of Booths, and what we need to know about these festivals was that they were about celebrating God's kindness. You see, each of these festivals in their ways, functioned to remind them of how God saved them from slavery in Egypt. Still, each of these festivals involved the people bringing crops and animals to Jerusalem to sacrifice, and this act reminded them of God's current kindness. God provided them with the rain for these crops and the right soil pH. Thus, at these three celebrations, God's people entered Jerusalem being reminded of God's past kindness and looking at his current kindness. This reality produced joyful worship in Jerusalem and strong faith for future trials.

Second, the command to worship God in this psalm is for all the nations, not merely Israelites. Look at verse 1. The speaker commands all the earth to make a joyful noise to the Lord (1). Imagine the glory of this idea. All nations are invited to see in the OT, not just the story of Israel, but their story. We are invited to see every story of God's grace and kindness in the OT as kindness toward us since the stories of the OT are accomplished not simply for the joy of Israelites, but for the joy of Koreans, Mexicans, Chileans, Burmese, Filipinos, Indians, and Americans. Joyous worship flows from seeing God acting on behalf of the joy of all people, including you and me.

Third, the command to worship the Lord is a command to have immense joy (2). Notice the language of this psalm. The speaker commands the people to raise a joyful shout to the Lord, to serve the Lord with gladness, and to come into his presence with singing (1-2). We are accepted and safe with God because of Jesus and this reality produces within us joy which expresses itself in external activity such as shouting (1), serving (2), and singing (2). True, biblical worship flows from hearts that know that all is well because of Jesus. Therefore, we sing!

Fourth, our worship is based on facts about who God is and who we are (3). This is significant since it indicates that joyful worship is motivated by theology. To put it more specifically, the speaker commands his audience to know two things about God and two things about us, God's people.

Joyful worship flows from knowing that the Lord, is God (3). The phrase, "The Lord, he is God" indicates the uniqueness of the Lord.

It means that the only God is the Lord. There is no one else in that category but the Lord, and thus, there is no threat to God. He alone is God. There is no other.

Joyful worship flows from knowing that God made us (3). Our God is the creator. He is the one who created all things out of nothing; he simply spoke and everything good came into existence from avocados to oceans to sunsets. Our God created everything. He not only created everything as if his creation is distant to us; he created us. We owe our existence to God.

Joyful worship flows from knowing that we are God's people (3). The language here is covenantal. A covenant establishes a new relationship, one that is based on love and loyalty, and this is how God interacts with us. He calls us his people and ensures this relationship with a covenant – a permanent agreement based on loyal love. (For a discussion of covenant, see *Kingdom through Covenant* by Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum).

Joyful worship flows from knowing that we are the sheep of God's pasture (3). The image of God being our shepherd is a royal image (as pointed out in the *Hermeneia psalms commentary*) and communicates that our God is our royal protector.

The fears that tempt us to quench our joy are banished by these truths: the only true creator God declares that we are his people, and he is our protective King! Joy flows at this fount, church family.

Fifth, God's people worship in God's presence. The speaker commands us to enter before God with "thanksgiving," "praise," and "blessings" (4). Let's focus on one truth here. God's people get to be

in God's presence. The idea here is in his city which is remarkable. Let's not forget that Adam and Eve were exiled from God's presence because of their sin. In other words, their sin made interaction with God very, very dangerous! Now in this psalm, this speaker calls God's people to enter God's presence with thanksgiving, praise, and blessing. Of course, the idea here is not direct – face-to-face – interaction with God, but in his presence, namely his city. What a glorious image eclipsed by the even greater image that God promises to never leave us or forsake us! Church family, we have access to God always because of Jesus and this interaction is safe. That is why we have joy! All is well, church family, because of Jesus.

The Reasons for Worship: Psalm 100:5

The speaker of Psalm 100 calls all the nations to enter God's presence for a joyful worship service. This worship is not based on feelings but based on specific theological truths about who God is and who we are (4). Now, in verse 5, the speaker gives us the reason for this joyful worship. He tells us three things about God: God is good, his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness is for all generations.

Church family, these three doctrines summarize God's interaction with his people and as these nations journeyed to Jerusalem at these three annual festivals, they celebrated these characteristics. They were reminded of God's past goodness and loyal love: he saved them from Egypt. They saw God's current goodness and loyal love: they had gifts to offer God. Still, they were encouraged to trust that God will always relate to his people this way. The speaker reminds the people that God's loyal love has no expiration date (5).

Thus, God's character – his goodness and loyal love – motivates joyful worship and faith for future trials.

Application

Church family, joyful worship, and strong faith flows from beholding God's character. Therefore, let's commit this week to the following.

1. Let's reflect on God's past and current kindness to us as individuals, as families, and as a church family.
2. Let's renew our commitment to study God's word: the place where we learn about our gracious God.

Church family, would you commit to these activities this week?

Perhaps there is a non-Christian here. Would you come to Jesus today? His loyal love is forever. Would you come to trust in that loyal love, today, by turning from your sins and trusting that when Jesus died, he died for you? If so, please reach out to us that we might care for you as you begin this amazing journey.

Prayer

God, help us to recognize your kindness in our lives, and let this recognition produce in us joyful worship and strong faith amid trials. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.



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