

The Gratitude Attitude

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn now to our Bible reading for this morning. If you don't have a Bible with you, we've got plenty available. Just at the side here at the back, do please grab a Bible if you don't have one.

And Stephen is going to be preaching to us a bit later on Psalm 100. So head to the middle of your Bible, Psalm 100. And I'll read that for us.

Psalm 100, verse 1. A psalm for giving thanks.

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come into his presence with singing.

Know that the Lord, he is God. It is he who made us, and we are his. We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise.

[1 : 12] Give thanks to him, bless his name. For the Lord is good. His steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Amen. This is the word of the Lord. Well, good morning, everyone. Please do keep Psalm 100 open in front of you as we go through this together.

How do you prepare for church each Sunday? I don't know if you have a Sunday morning routine or pattern, but what does it look like for you to prepare to come into the Lord's presence as we gather with him and his people?

Maybe the idea of preparing for the Sunday gathering is an utterly foreign concept, or by the time you've got yourself dressed and ready, or wrangled the kids into the car, you've barely had a second to consider it.

Well, this Psalm teaches us that there is a right way to approach gathering into the Lord's presence. It's not something we're meant to do thoughtlessly, but intentionally, as the Lord orients our minds rightly so that we worship him the way he asks to be worshipped.

[2 : 33] And this Psalm does that by picturing Israel being drawn in towards their corporate worship together of the Lord. They're approaching God's house, and they're being given a song, teaching them how they're to go about it.

In essence, they are being given a song to sing on their way to church. But this is no soft, lilting, reflective melody.

This is a full-throated celebration. It's played in the major key as pure praise and thanks-filled worship, as the people en masse made their way to the house of the Lord together.

I think that if in your mind's eye you have the picture of Scotland fans walking in their thousands along to Hampden Park singing, we'll be coming, we'll be coming, we'll be coming down the road, that's the kind of song this is.

It's announcing to everyone, for the Scotland fans anyway, that inevitably a Scott McTominay winner in the 93rd minute is coming. And this is a song to be played and sung at full volume, preparing you and everyone who can hear for what's coming, as we enter into the presence of the God who made the heavens, the earth, and everything in it, the God of the covenant, and we meet with him and praise his holy name.

[3 : 53] It's quite a big thing, isn't it? And it's worth considering how we go about that. And in this psalm we are told to come gladly, giving thanks while we come to the Lord.

You'll have noticed that from the inscription above the psalm, a psalm for giving thanks. And gratitude is a regular command in the Bible. We're told repeatedly to rejoice and be thankful. And that might seem like a strange thing at times, because surely thankfulness can't be commanded or forced. But naturally, if we're honest with ourselves, we do need to be told to be thankful.

And we need to learn how to be thankful. Because left to our own devices, we are quite a grumpy bunch sometimes. Our inclination in our hearts is towards ingratitude and grumpiness.

I remember back to my younger years when there were sometimes presents given to me at Christmas by family members that I perhaps wasn't too grateful for. And so a thank you had to be extracted from me, as though I was being interrogated for precious information from an enemy during wartime.

[5 : 10] Maybe some of you have faced that battle yourselves in the past few days. And reluctantly, I would eventually give in with a grunt, thanks. While evidently not meaning the one word that I said.

We are naturally quite like that, aren't we? We can be grumpy even in the way we thank people. And that can be true in our Christian life too. Because far more important than human gifts, how are we responding to the goodness and care that the Lord has treated us with over our whole existence?

This may be helpful to ask, at this point of the year where we look back and consider how the year has gone, have you been a grumpy Christian or a grateful Christian?

Have you been a grumpy Christian or a grateful Christian? Sadly, Christian grumpiness is a syndrome which strikes us far too often.

We can easily become people who, in our worship of the Lord, are like the grumpy teenager, reluctantly saying thanks for the gifts given to him. Well, Psalm 100 is a wonderful antidote to Christian grumpiness.

[6 : 25] The Lord has given us this psalm so that we would be a thankful, a grateful people, not struck down with a case of Christian grumpiness, but being transformed into grateful, glad Christians whose lives are changed by having this attitude of gratitude in our hearts and minds as we come to meet the Lord.

Because gratitude is a truly transforming thing. It's not only in a moment. It's not only seen in the time immediately after receiving a gift or when the thank you card is written.

But it's found in the whole use and enjoyment of that gift. You don't just say thank you and then chuck the gift in the bin, at least I hope you don't, or hand it back into the charity shop straight away. But you use it. You care for it. You treat it with respect because that gift is a vessel for your relationship with that person. And you don't want to damage that.

And the psalmist teaches the Lord's people to be thankful, not simply by telling us to be thankful, but he gives us reasons to be thankful. And he teaches us in this psalm that the antidote to Christian grumpiness is knowing that the Lord is God and knowing that the Lord is good.

[7 : 45] It's not found in looking inwards and dwelling on yourself and your character, but looking outwards to the Lord and all that he has done for his creatures. Gratitude is not found in navel gazing, but in looking to the Lord and being part of his covenant community.

Who the Lord blesses so richly. There's a very obvious lack of the first person in this psalm. There are no me's, no I's, but only the corporate language of all peoples being directed towards the Lord himself.

Now the outline of this psalm is very straightforward. It splits into two halves, verses one to three are the first half, and verses four and five the second half.

Each half is made up of two stanzas, which start with several commands, followed by great truths about God's character that give reason for following those commands in the way the psalmist commands us to.

He's saying, praise God in this way, because God is like this. He's good. He's trustworthy. So you can be grateful and glad to have the privilege of belonging to him and serving him.

[9 : 00] So to see that, we're going to look at the two halves of this psalm, seeing two things that we must know if we are to grow in Christian gratitude. So firstly, we'll see in verses one to three, know that the Lord is God.

We are to know that the Lord is God. And in this half of the psalm, we see that the Lord alone is God, and knowing who he is, enables his people to serve him with real joy and gladness.

You'll notice in verse one, who this psalm is addressed to, make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. This command goes out to all the earth, which might strike us as a bit of a strange thing at first.

If this is a song to sing on your way to church, then why is it addressing other people? We would expect this to be written to Israel alone, to the covenant people of God who knew and loved him.

And as things develop, we'll see the Lord begin to focus on them. But initially, all the earth is to make a joyful noise to the Lord. Every human in existence is invited in to praise their maker, for every human in existence is created primarily for worship.

[10:16] All humanity is made to worship their maker. As Israel made their way into the temple chorus, they were singing in the knowledge that others could hear, inviting them in to worship their maker.

We're going to come back to that later, but keep that in mind as we go through this psalm. This is a song which the Lord wants every person on earth to sing gladly. Now we're going to flip the order of this section on its head so that we can see the motivation for service first, before coming to the specific acts, which are shaped and transformed by knowledge of God.

So verse 3, we are to know that the Lord, he is God. It is he who made us, and we are his.

We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Verse 3 very clearly outlines the reason for such glad and joyful praise in verses 1 and 2.

And this unfolds through the verse as it develops into something more substantial with every phrase that's uttered, with each reason that he gives for praising the Lord. Know that the Lord, he is God.

[11:32] That's the first key truth we need to know if we are to have grateful hearts as we approach the Lord. And this is not just acknowledging that something's true, like it's a piece of trivia, but this is deep knowledge, really knowing him, deep in your bones that he is God.

Know this until it's woven into your very being. The Lord has no rival. He alone is God. There is no other. He is the only one who ought to be worshipped, for he alone is the only real God.

Not Allah, not Buddha, not anyone else, not yourself even, as we tend towards worshipping ourselves these days. But the God of the Bible alone is Lord and deserving of our worship.

That's the headline truth that the psalmist wants us to grasp as he seeks to shape our worship of the Lord. The rest of the truths he shares of God's character, both in verses 3 and 5, that really just teases out that one truth alone, that God is God and why he is so worthy of grateful worshippers.

So what kind of God is he? Well, continuing in verse 3, he is the God who made us, for he is the great creator.

[12:54] All people are made by him, fashioned by his hand. We are not the product of chance. We are not creatures who answer to no one. But we have a maker and creator who is fearful and wonderful.

And being made by him gives great dignity to all his creatures and plenty reason for thanks. We as his creatures depend on him and he grants great purpose for the lives of those he has made.

Not only have we been created by him, but we have been created to belong to him. Continuing through verse 3, and we are his.

The Lord hasn't created humanity so that we would be mere servants of him, slaves that he can use to fulfill his objectives in a transactional, functional relationship. But he has made us to belong to him, to flourish in life lived under his rule as we know and love him.

As the Lord acts towards his people in salvation, he makes them belong to him, part of himself, part of his family, adopted in.

[14:08] That threefold repetition of his in verse 3 is really quite emphatic. We are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. And there's a wonderful freedom in knowing that we are indeed his.

We are not our own. We don't belong to ourselves. We're not in charge of our own destiny, our own bodies, or our own souls. But we belong to another, one who is far greater than us.

We belong to the one who has made us and cared for us, our great shepherd. That's why we're to know that he has made you his sheep.

We are the flock of his pasture, the flock he loves to feed, which emphasizes the provision that the Lord gives his people. As God, he provides everything we enjoy, from the air we breathe, to the food we eat, and everything in between.

But this seems to be speaking of more than just providing for our physical needs. For the shepherd and sheep illustration in the Bible is always used in a covenantal sense. Not only does God provide all we need, humanly speaking, but he provides for our greatest spiritual need, salvation, and being brought into his family.

[15:31] So this speaks of his tender care that he gives to the sheep. We are, after all, his flock. And he is our covenant shepherd.

And we, as the Lord's people, need to know and grasp firmly these truths. We need to acknowledge who God is, because not doing so turns our worship and service of him into joyless, grumpy servitude.

Realizing the grace by which you have been saved, it fuels true, joyful, cheerful service of the Lord. It saves us from obligatory drudgery, and it frees us up to enjoy praising and blessing God in heart, soul, mind, and strength.

That's what the psalmist is saying in verses 1 and 2. He's saying that because of the great reality of who God is, because the Lord of Israel is God alone, it's only natural that people should praise him joyfully with genuinely glad and thankful hearts.

That's why in verses 1 and 2 there are three imperatives which come to us. Firstly, verse 1, make a joyful noise to the Lord all the earth.

[16:49] We are not to be like the teenager who grumbles out a thank you, but we are to be effusive and enthusiastic in our praise and have it directed only towards the Lord.

Secondly, verse 2, serve the Lord with gladness. It is our duty as humans to serve our God, but not doing it as though it's something we have to do, but it's something we get to do as the privilege of belonging to him and serving our king.

Thirdly, again, verse 2, come into his presence with singing. And that singing is the proclamation of joy, not lament, being delighted to come to the Lord in worship, praising him.

The common strand of all these commands is that of joy, making a joyful noise, coming in with gladness and singing. They're not necessarily about the specific actions mentioned, but the attitude with which we praise and serve the Lord.

The psalmist is commanding his readers and all people to be joyful in their praise and service of the Lord. Because if you take away joy from the praise we offer to the Lord, well, it just becomes a different thing entirely, doesn't it?

[18:08] It's reluctant praise given out of duty rather than love. If you take gladness out of your Christian service, it becomes drudgery, slavery, really, just doing things because you think you should, you feel like you have to.

If you come into his presence without joyful singing, well, you're dragging yourself out of bed on Sunday mornings. Maybe even feeling like God owes you for the great blessing that is your presence at his gathering.

None of us wants that. None of us wants to be grumpy Christians dragging their heels as we come into church. We all want to naturally find joy in the Lord and be a grateful, glad Christian, gladly bounding into his service.

So the obvious question is, how can we be like that? And the answer here is by knowing that the Lord is God. If you want to lose your Christian grumpiness, know that the Lord is God.

we are not coming into the presence of someone who just makes a list of demands, who wants to work us to the bone, who pays us the minimum wage, gives no holidays, and is waiting around for us to do something that he just can't be bothered to do himself.

[19:31] He's not like the poor bosses and leaders of this world that we know so well. No, the Lord ministers to us as we come to him. He is the one who made us.

He is the one who sustains and feeds us, who provides for us in every way we could ever need. And even more than that, the Lord is the one who has made us his.

He has given us his son and filled us with his spirit that we might be his forever. And knowing that we are his, that we belong to him now and forever, that we are his by his grace and his initiative, will it freeze us up for joyful service in his name.

It liberates us to be grateful and glad Christians who delight in worshipping our Lord, who love to make a joyful noise to him, who serve him with gladness and are delighted to come into his presence.

We don't have to be dragged to church, but we are bounding in, thrilled, to be coming to worship the God who has made us and made us his, his people, the flock of his pasture.

[20:47] Because he is God and we as his creatures and particularly those who submit to him in faith should be overflowing with gratitude that he has made us his.

Some Sundays we can very easily slip into thinking that, well, we ought to be thanked or praised for what we do for the Lord, that we are doing him or his people quite a big favour by turning up and doing what we have been called to do.

Or sometimes, if we're honest, we think that we should only sing heartily if the music is to our liking, whether we think it should be more traditional or more contemporary or whatever our preference may be.

That the joyful praise the Lord demands is only given when it suits what we like. And that attitude, friends, is Christian grumpiness.

And very sadly, it probably describes us more than we would care to admit. We only worship the Lord when we like it, when we feel like it, or when it's entirely suited to our preferences.

[21 : 53] But the psalmist would tell us that in whatever situation you find yourself in, you are coming to worship the Lord who is God alone. You're singing for him.

Because the joyful noise you make, it's to the Lord. It's not to you. It's to the Lord. So as you come into church each Sunday, you should approach that with the heart of being thrilled that you should approach the Lord, the living God of Israel.

Because our worship isn't primarily about us, after all. The chief member of the congregation sitting in the front row with the best seat in the house is the Lord God himself.

And our praise as we sing of his mercy and grace each week should be sung knowing that we are singing first and foremost to him, the God who has made us and made us his entirely by his own goodness and love.

That's our first point, that we are to know that the Lord is God. Now secondly, we'll see from verses 4 and 5 that we are to know that the Lord is good.

[23 : 02] Know that the Lord is good. And here we'll see that knowing the Lord is good enables his people to come to him in trust and in real gospel-shaped gratitude.

We're again given a series of commands which picture this large group of worshippers coming into God's temple as they keep singing on their way to church. But we'll go to verse 5 and see the reason for those commands first.

So verse 5, for the Lord is good. His steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations.

Why should we be a people who come in to worship the Lord heartily and gladly every week?

Because the Lord is good. The Lord is good.

He treats his people with steadfast love and faithfulness which endures forever. It goes on throughout all the generations. And these phrases bring up particular reference to the covenants that the Lord has made with his people.

[24 : 14] His hesed, his unending steadfast love is a word drenched in covenantal significance. As this is how he has treated his people, he has loved them steadfastly.

And this looks forward but it also invites us to look back, to look back in history at the reality of how God has acted in goodness, to always have reason to praise him.

The Lord is not asking us to muster up any particular feelings as though we could artificially grow this in ourselves. He's simply asking us to remember him, to look at how he has treated his people over all the generations.

look at how he has treated his people in the past and take comfort of how he will treat his people in the present and future. He's the God of reality and he wants us to look objectively at reality in the redemption history we have in the Bible we hold in our hands and see just how good he is.

We are to taste and see that the Lord is good. And we can consider what the Lord's faithfulness to all generations meant to the Israelites as they were the first singers of this psalm.

[25 : 30] The Lord was faithful to them through the patriarchs picking them out of obscurity and placing his blessing upon them. He was faithful to them through Egypt hearing their cries for salvation.

He was faithful to them as he led them through the wilderness and into the promised land. He was faithful to them through many threats to the kingdom and even through the unfaithful behaviour of his people and his anointed kings.

The Lord was faithful to them even as he sent them out of the land into exile as their future generations would find out. Throughout all history the God of the covenant has proved himself time and time again that he is a God who can be trusted.

The psalmist is expressing a similar sentiment to that of Sam 23 that through everything the Lord's goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our lives.

Israel could claim that and so may we. We can testify that the Lord's goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our lives. And even more so today because we stand on this side of the cross.

[26 : 43] So we have plenty more that we can add to that list. of how wonderfully gracious and steadfast the Lord has been to us particularly in the life, death and resurrection of his son.

We of all people cannot question the absolute intrinsic goodness of God. He didn't even hold back his own son for us.

Throughout all history God's goodness is beyond doubt. need. So in all seasons the covenant people of God are called to rejoice in him for he is our good God who is faithful forever.

Which is key because in life we all face situations which make us feel like worshipping the Lord is hard. We all have stuff going on in our lives, disappointments, regrets, desires that go unfulfilled, grief that still feels like an open wound and the lift could go on, couldn't it?

But even in those moments the psalmist is teaching us that we have great reason to trust and praise our God. I think that's why this verse focuses so much on God's goodness and his faithfulness because that's exactly what you need to know when you're facing a real struggle.

[28 : 08] There are some periods in our lives where we find it very difficult to come to church. And when we do, we may find the thought of praising the Lord joyfully even more hard. The pains of this passing world cut very deep.

But the psalmist is saying that even in our distress, even in our pain and difficulty, we always have reason to praise the Lord. Why?

Because he is good. God, we can trust him with our darkness. He loves us and he knows what he's doing.

We know him. We know what he is like and how he acts, so we can trust him. We know that God's goodness doesn't mean that bad things won't happen to the Christian, but that we can trust him and his purposes through it.

for the Lord is not a grumpy God. Instead, he is the God of all goodness, of steadfast love and faithfulness, who acts out of generous love for his people.

[29 : 16] He always has more goodness to draw upon. His goodness and love cannot be spent. They're not finite things which can ever run out or be drained or used up. It's never hitting the low fuel line, but his goodness is constantly, perfectly, full.

There is always more for him to give, always more for him to draw on as he acts in goodness towards his people, who he made, who he provides for, and who he loves because we are his. Even when we feel cut down by the Lord, if we have been deeply humbled because of our sin or our shame, and we struggle to see ourselves belonging as part of his people, we can still come into his courts and his house boldly and gladly, because we know he is good.

That's why the commands in verse four say what they do. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him.

Bless his name. As Israel's group of worshippers were drawn in closer and closer to the temple, you would be able to hear the song become louder and louder.

[30 : 37] The shouts of praise and thanks would be echoing around the city as they got closer and closer to the temple gates and then the courts and then finally into the temple itself where the presence of the Lord rested.

As they drew in to praise their God, they were doing so gladly, delightedly even, as they came to worship the one who is good, whose steadfast love and faithfulness cannot be measured.

They go on forever. And the two key notes the psalmist stresses are those of thanksgiving and praise. Enter with thanksgiving, give thanks to him, and enter his courts with praise and bless his name.

And those elements should be he in all our worship, thanks and praise. Whatever may be going on in our life as a church, even if we are struggling or times become lean for whatever reason, we always have good cause to thank and praise our God, because he is always acting in goodness towards his flock, the sheep of his pasture.

Even in our darkest moments, we always have plenty reason to keep on praising our God, the Lord, our great shepherd. You know, John Calvin has a wonderful comment on this psalm as he speaks about the Lord.

[32 : 01] He says, we can never be at a loss for constant cause of praising him. We can never be at a loss for constant cause of praising him.

You could spend every waking moment until the day you die praising the Lord, and you would still have more to say.

You wouldn't have completed or finished his praise. You wouldn't have plumbed the depths in full. You wouldn't find yourself with nothing to say after 50 or 60 or 70 years, because he is an inexhaustible fount of goodness.

And our worship-filled lives should reflect that. We should be a people whose faces light up at the opportunity to praise and serve our maker and savior, who look forward to joining in with his people in praise of our shepherd together.

prayer. He can never ask too much of us, never command us too much, because he deserves more than everything we could offer up ourselves.

[33 : 11] That's why the psalmist can command us to worship in this way, to come to church with a song of praise in our hearts, because the Lord is good, and he is more than worthy of the praise we give.

As we close, let's finish with one last thought, one last thing to note about this psalm. As we saw at the beginning, this psalm is addressed to all the earth.

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. The Lord wants everyone in the world to sing this song on their way to church. And that's not disconnected from the rest of the psalm, but is the result of the rest of the psalm, shaping us as the Lord's people.

As we become a people marked more and more by praise of our God, knowing that he is God, and knowing that he is good, we will become a people more likely to draw others in in praise of our God. For if we are to be a light to the nations who will proclaim the Lord's excellencies so that all nations will want to come in and worship him, then the most attractive kind of people are those who are thankful and cheerful in heart, who serve the Lord gladly.

[34 : 32] The most appealing kind of Christians are those whose service doesn't even remotely have the whiff of obligation about it, whose praise is not given reluctantly, whose whole spiritual lives are not functional, joyless experiences, who don't give the impression on Sunday mornings, that there's somewhere better they could be.

But if we are to be an attractive people as a church who will win Glasgow for the gospel, and we want to do that, don't we? Then we are to begin by being a people who love the Lord with our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Being renewed by him as we come to him in the word, week by week, sitting under his teaching.

We're not putting on a show. We're not just pretending to be glad and joyful.

But we are so moved by the goodness of the Lord that we are eager to serve and praise him every chance we get. The churches that will have people coming in to worship the Lord will be those who are delighting in him week by week as we remember his covenant goodness as we remember his tender care for us as people, his faithfulness that stretches through all the generations.

If we are a people like that, then the earth will come in and all nations will join in with our song because that is inherently attractive.

[36 : 09] A people delighting in the reality of the God who has made them and made them his. That kind of heart, that kind of attitude is inherently attractive to the outside world.

We have this unbelievable privilege of being his, of being plucked out of isolation and darkness and brought into the Lord's flock, of being redeemed, united to the Lord Jesus, filled with his spirit and knowing the Lord's faithfulness and love every day of our lives.

So we should be a people whose delight is in him because we are his and we will know it week by week as we are constantly reminded in word and song of his goodness, his care for us, his provision for us and his majesty above all others for he is God and he is good.

A grateful people will be an attractive people to the world we live in. So make it your goal to know these truths, friends. Don't be a grumpy Christian, but a grateful Christian.

Why not resolve this year to know that the Lord is God and know that he is good. Get those truths deep into your bones, into the very fiber of your being by serving and praising him, always growing in the love and knowledge of our God and Savior.

[37 : 45] Let's pray. Our Father God, we praise you for how good you are, for your steadfast love and faithfulness which you have treated us with, which we do not deserve.

We bless you that you treat us with such love so gladly that you don't give reluctantly, but generously, entirely by your own initiative and desire as you delight to bless your children. help us to respond in faith by making a joyful noise, singing the song of your people. We ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen.