

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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Restoring Your Soul...with Thanksgiving
Psalm 100

At 89 years of age, Chuck Swindoll recently stepped aside as Senior Pastor of Stonebriar Community Church in Frisco, TX. There are many things I respect and admire about Chuck Swindoll and his 60+ years of pastoral ministry. One of those things is his continual and contagious joy. Though he has navigated more than his fair share of trials and difficulties, he has somehow maintained a joy-filled spirit in the midst of the ups and downs of life.

Listen to his explanation of where his joy is found:

Deep, contented joy comes from a place of complete security and confidence [in God] - even in the midst of trial. – Charles Swindoll

There's no doubt that we are living in trying times. It's appropriate for our hearts to be grieved by what we see occurring in our nation and the world. But we do not have to live without joy. As a matter of fact, we aren't truly experiencing the life Jesus died and rose again to give us until we have a kind of joy that is present in spite of the sadness and grief that are part of life in this broken world.

And Chuck Swindoll is absolutely right, there's only one way to restore your soul with joy: cultivate a heart that is secure and confident in God Himself. That's where joy is found. That's exactly what we'll see in our text for this morning.

Psalm 100

A PSALM FOR GIVING THANKS.

1 Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!

2 Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!

3 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.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!

5 For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Let's begin with a couple of quick observations. The first thing I want to point out is that God is glorified in our joy and thanksgiving. That's the primary point of this psalm. Notice how the psalmist clarifies that:

1 Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!

2 Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!

God is praised and His name is blessed through our joy and gladness and thanksgiving. Let me say that another way: negative, grumbling, murmuring, complaining people don't display the glory of God. That's the first thing we see.

The second thing we see is that joy and thanksgiving are connected commands. Verses 1-2 are commands to praise God with joy. Verse 4 continues the thought with a call to praise God with thanksgiving. Joy and thanksgiving go together. When you are thankful, you are joyful. And, vice versa, your joy or enjoyment of something should cultivate gratitude in you.

For instance, I've shared with you many times that Emily is an excellent cook. Recently, she has been making this salmon dinner that is unbelievably good. She coats the salmon with honey and brown sugar...c'mon, man. It's fabulous. It brings me joy. And I thank her for it. We are thankful for things that bring us joy.

That's how God has designed us. Joy and thanksgiving go together. And that helps us understand a little more about joy. Joy isn't always a celebration dance or a loud, exuberant laugh. Sometimes, it's a quiet and steady whisper of gratitude. Sometimes joy is what happens at the bedside of a loved one who has just passed away when we whisper through our tears and in the presence of grief, "God, I'm glad you've given us life beyond this world. I'm glad I can trust you with my loved one. Thank you for Jesus and that He changed EVERYTHING about life and death." That's glad gratitude in the midst of grief.

So, joy and thanksgiving go together. They're connected.

Another way they are connected is that they are both responses to something. We don't get joy from joy. We get joy from something that brings us joy. And we don't get gratitude from gratitude. We get them both as a response to something. Salmon dinners aren't joy and gratitude. Salmon dinners are enjoyable and spark gratitude. Joy and thanksgiving are connected because they are both responses to something.

That's why they are continually linked throughout the Bible. For instance...

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Rejoicing always is directly linked to giving thanks in all circumstances. They go together. And what is in between? Ceaseless (always) prayer to God. A heart that is focused on God without ceasing. Joy and Thanksgiving are responses to God, responses that fuel our worship of Him in prayer.

And that brings us back to the structure of our psalm. The calls to joy and thanksgiving are connected, not only to one another, but to reasons we have to rejoice and be thankful. The psalmist gives us two major reasons to rejoice and be thankful – The LORD God is great, and the LORD God is good. When the psalmist wants to stir up joy and gratitude in God's people, he focuses their attention on God – His greatness and His goodness.

When you become confident in the greatness and goodness of God, joy and gratitude will automatically flow from your heart through the power of Christ's Spirit to the glory of God the Father.

And that gives us our Big Idea for this morning.

Big Idea: We glorify God as we are renewed in joy and gratitude in response to the greatness and goodness of God.

Friends, I know the attention of our nation is fixed on the awful event at the Trump Rally in Pennsylvania. In the coming days, I'm certain that most of us will be watching the news for more

information. We will listen to the reports and opinions of various leaders and news sources. And I don't believe that is wrong. But I do believe there is a warning for us in it. If we spend our days fixated on the darkness and wickedness of our culture, we will find our joy ebbing away.

Again, I'm not saying it's wrong to be aware of what is going on in our world. Not at all. I'm saying if we don't look at the events of our world through the lens of the greatness and goodness of God, we are living out a recipe for joyless anger and worldly sorrow...and our response will not glorify God.

There's only one source of true and lasting joy that will stir your heart to be thankful in every circumstance of life to the glory of God. That source is our Great and Good Father in Heaven, the Lord God Almighty. He is worthy of joyful and thankful praise...no matter what is happening in our lives or the world around us.

So, in the time we have left, I want us to look at Psalm 100 and see what we learn about the greatness and goodness of God.

1. God is Great.

3 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 is emphasizing the greatness of God. It starts with the words, "*Know that the LORD, he is God!*" Notice that the word "LORD" is all capitalized. That indicates that it is translating the word "*Yahweh*." That's the proper name God told Moses to use to distinguish the One, True God from all the little 'g' gods of the nations. Those false gods aren't gods, at all. Only *Yahweh* is God. And, the psalmist is saying, "Know this without a doubt. Be confident and secure in this fact. The LORD/YAHWEH is the One and Only God. There is no other God but Him." He alone has the authority and power of God – meaning, He is greater than all other so-called gods.

Then, he says, "It is he who has made us." This God is the Creator. He made us. He made everything.

Think about the power of the Creator. How much power does it take to heat a gigantic nuclear furnace like our sun? Its light and heat come from an unimaginable number of nuclear explosions occurring every second of every day from the beginning of time until now. Current estimates say there are 300 billion trillion stars like our sun. That's 300 billion trillion nuclear furnaces burning like our sun every second of every day. God, as the cause of it all, is greater in power than the sum total of 300 billion trillion stars producing immeasurable nuclear explosions every time you take a breath. And how did He create that staggering amount of power at the center of this universe? He took a breath (with less effort than it took you to take a breath) and spoke, "Let there be light." And, BANG, there was light. He didn't even break a sweat.

But don't stop there. The psalmist continues in verse 3 with, "***and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.***"

We belong to God. Now, in a minute, I'm going to connect this with the truth about God's goodness. But, for now, I want to simply think about the fact that we belong to God means He is greater than us. He is in authority over us and all the things in our lives. He isn't just ruling the universe on a cosmic scale; He is ruling the universe at the level of your life. Your circumstances are under His power and authority.

Here's what that means: no matter what you might face, you can always confidently say this phrase - "My God is greater than that."

- Cultural Chaos? You can confidently say, "My God is Greater than that."
- Cancer or Alzheimer's or debilitating pain? You can confidently say, "My God is Greater than that."
- Broken relationships? Addiction to drugs or alcohol? Financial hardship? Uncertainty at work? What about death itself? You can confidently say, "My God is Greater than that."

If you really believe that God is greater than those things, does it make you glad that He is greater? That gladness is just another word for joy. And when you realize God is the source of that joy in you, it produces something called thanksgiving. You say, "God, I'm so glad and grateful that you are greater than all these things." And that glad gratitude is praise that glorifies Him as the Giver.

But I'm kind of skipping ahead. I told you that I would come back to that phrase "We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture."

The Bible reveals something that is essential for us to understand about that phrase. Namely, we have rebelled against God. We haven't lived as though we belong to Him. We've lived as though we belong to ourselves.

Isaiah 53:6

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way;

In our sin, we have chosen to do life our own way, not God's. We've strayed from God like sheep from their shepherd.

Romans 5:10

For if while we were enemies [of God]...

Because God is God and ruler of our lives, when we rebelled against Him in our sin, we were essentially declaring Him to be our enemy. And being the enemy of God is no small thing...

Ephesians 2:1-3

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

The human race has willfully chosen to do life in disobedience to God. That's why this world is in the shape it's in. People have rebelled against God's good design for their lives and this world. And that rebellion will not be unpunished. That's why Ephesians 2:3 says we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. That's a reference to the fact that God will pour out His punishment, His wrath, on our sin.

And, when you understand that, it makes the greatness of God something that doesn't produce joy or thanksgiving. I mean, how could you possibly enjoy anything in this life if you knew that you are the enemy of an all-powerful God and His eternal wrath awaits you in your death? It's like enjoying the music on the deck of the Titanic while it sinks.

What are we to do? Well, what we are to do is thank God that Psalm 100 doesn't end with verse 3.

God is not only great...

2. God is Good.

5 For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

God isn't just great in power and strength and authority. God is great in goodness and love. The Hebrew word that is translated "steadfast love" can also be translated "lovingkindness" and "mercy." This reference to God's goodness isn't just acknowledging that God is good in that He always does what's right. It's a reference to the fact that God is good and kind and faithful to us even though we haven't been good to Him.

We need to finish the passages of Scripture we read a couple minutes ago about our sin and rebellion.

Isaiah 53:6

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

That's talking about Jesus. Though we rebelled against God, He sent His own Son to die in our place and endure the punishment of our sin. Though we haven't been good to God, He has been gracious to us. He made a way for our sins to be punished in Jesus so that we can be completely forgiven and completely restored in our relationship with God.

Romans 5:10–11

if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

We are reconciled to our Great God through the work of Jesus Christ. We are right with God through faith in Jesus. That means the great power of God isn't against us as His enemies, His power is used for us as His children.

Ephesians 2:1–5, 7-9

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins... and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—...so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Friends, behold the goodness of God. He has chosen to love us in spite of our sin. He has chosen to save us from His wrath. We don't have to earn that salvation; we simply have to receive it as a gift of His grace through faith and trust in Jesus.

And, when we trust in Jesus, we become reconciled to God in a way that not only makes us His people, it makes us His children. Ephesians 2:7 says that God saves us so that in the coming ages, that's all of eternity, He will show how immeasurably rich He is in grace by being kind to us over and over and over again forever in Christ.

That's what Psalm 100 means when it says, "We are HIS people". That's what it means when it says He loves us with steadfast love that never ends. That's what our Psalm means when it says His faithfulness endures throughout all generations. God is so good that He has chosen to use His great power to forgive our sin and restore us to Himself as our Heavenly Father so that He can show us immeasurable kindness forever and ever. We are HIS people in Christ.

This week is Vacation Bible School. There will be hundreds of kids in this room tomorrow morning. I plan on coming to those opening sessions like I do every year. I love to see this room filled with kids. But there's something that happens when I scan this room filled with kids. There are three kids who are no longer kids that have been part of VBS for a long time. And, every year, as I scan the room filled with children, I look for those three kids. I'll do it tomorrow. And when my eyes fall on one of MY kids, as much as I love all those kids in this room, there's something special that happens when I see MY kids. I see them and I think, "That one is mine." I smile as Mia and Andi lead the songs and dances. I smile when Logan does his skits. And I feel a kind of love that says, "I'd do anything for that one. I'd used every bit of my strength, every last breath, every last drop of life to take care of that one. That one is mine."

And that's just a shadow of what is going on in the heart of God our Father. As we trust in Jesus, we don't just say that God is greater than every circumstance of life. We can confidently say that God will be good in every circumstance of life. Even in our death, He will usher us into paradise where He will pour out eternal kindness toward us. In Christ, He has used every bit of His power and poured out His very blood to bring us eternal life and immeasurable kindness.

So, rejoice and be glad and grateful today. God is great and God is good. And, as you trust in Jesus, when God looks at you, He says, "That one is mine. I'll use every bit of my power to take care of you."

- Trust in Jesus
- Give thanks to God...
 - He loves you
 - Jesus died for you
 - Heaven is your home
 - All will be well...He will make all things new.