

Examine: The psalmist calls for offering the LORD thanksgiving (*todab*) and praise (*tehillah*). Some commentators (noting that the superscription can be translated “for the sacrifice of thanksgiving”; cf. Lev. 7:12) think that the former part of this psalm may have been chanted by the presenter when the peace-offering was brought to the altar, and this last verse may have been the response, sung by the whole company of singers, at the moment when the fire was applied to the offering.

Apply: With the coming our once-for-all sacrifice in the person of Christ Jesus, all the Hebrew Old Testament sacrifices were abolished (as mere shadows pointing to the true sacrifice, of which they only represented). However, the sacrifice of thanksgiving remain. We are now called upon to offer ourselves, our bodies, as living sacrifices of thanksgiving to our Savior God and King (Rom 12:1). Worship is primarily a “thanksgiving” feast with our Lord, and our lives are that “sacrifice of thanksgiving” we give back to the One who has given us everything.

Pray: Pray that we would offer ourselves as living sacrifices in obedience to our Savior Lord.

Saturday 8/25

Read: Psalm 100:5

Examine: In verse 5 the God who is present is called “good.” But what does it mean to be “good?” The following measures of verse 5 specify and amplify the goodness the psalmist has in mind. The psalm used the vocabulary of *hesed* and *emuhah*, meaning God’s everlasting loving-kindness and enduring faithfulness. Worship is joyful because, as far as time runs, the future is ruled by the loving-kindness and faithfulness of the LORD.

Apply: In all languages, humans have organized their preferences to what they experience in every sphere of life by the word pair “good/bad,” calling “good” that which enhances existence within any particular sphere. Israel came to know its God as good in an absolute sense in every sphere-in all His ways and words. Psalm 34:8 even says, “O taste and see that the LORD is good!” The Lutheran theologian H. Richard Nieburh said that the two great mottoes of radical monotheism are: “I am the LORD thy God; thou shalt have no other gods before me” and “Whatever is, is good.” The second can be said because the source of all things and the power by which they exist is good. In other words, “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purposes.” (Rom 12:8) Psalm 100 is a hymnic expression of these two great mottoes as praise. It creates a worship that knows who God is and why He is to be praised.

Pray: Use the words of Psalm 100 in your devotional prayers, and meditate on each phrase as we have studied it, praying God’s words back to Him.

All Peoples That on Earth Do Dwell

William Kethe, 1561

All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
Him serve with fear, his praise forthtell,
Come ye before him and rejoice.

The Lord ye know is God indeed;
Without our aid he did us make;
We are his folk, he doth us feed,
And for his sheep he doth us take.

O enter then his gates with praise,
Approach with joy his courts unto;
Praise, laud, and bless his name always,
For it is seemly so to do.

For why? The Lord our God is good,
His mercy is forever sure;
His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure.



Taking Gathered Worship Home

Family and Individual Devotions

Meditations in the Psalms

Week of August 19, 2007

Psalm 100 is a short psalm of only 5 verses, yet it has a rich history in the liturgical worship of the Christian Church. You may recognize many of the phrases in this psalm that have worked their way into the formal liturgy and hymns that have been used by the Church throughout the centuries and even today. Psalm 100 has been called an “introductory” hymn in two ways, liturgical and theological. Liturgically, it is a hymn of movement into the presence of God, the first and fundamental human act that constitutes worship. Theologically, it is a hymn to accompany that movement which gives us the content and basis of our worship, i.e., to “know” the LORD.

In Israel’s worship this psalm was most likely a processional song for movement through the gates of the temple into the temple courts where the LORD was present. The superscription says the psalm is for the *todab*, a Hebrew word which means both the sacrifice of thanksgiving and the act of praising thanks. The psalm itself moves those who sing or read it into the presence of the LORD for praise.

Sunday 8/19

Read: Psalm 100:1

Examine: The psalm without embarrassment, and in a decidedly “politically incorrect” manner, calls for the whole earth, all nations, all cultures, all peoples, to recognize and acknowledge as King and Lord the God of Israel, YHWH, who creates and cares for His people. God came to the whole world through a people He had chosen to reveal His redemptive plan in history. When Israel acknowledges, “The LORD is God,” it is based on the acts of God toward His people, not on some mere general revelation. The invitation to the world to join the people of God in worship and confession shows that the psalmist knows that God’s way with Israel is His way to the whole world.

Apply: In Israel’s day the question was not, “Is there a god?” but “Who is god?” In a profound though culturally different way that is still the question of our own age. Human beings are intrinsically polytheistic. It is near scandal to profess that there is only one true God, and to call others to acknowledge this. It is enough for others to just be aware that “god” exists, in some generic spiritual sense. The identity of the true God occurs in His deeds and words for Israel, deeds and words which ultimately point to and are fulfilled in the life, death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. This “scandal of particularity,” while anathema to the modern mind, is the core focus of worship, joy, and praise for

the psalmist. Worship is the confession of the one true God as revealed in Christ Jesus.

Pray: Pray for mission work of the Church, the evangelists and missionaries who are taking the good news of the Gospel to a hostile world. Pray that God would lead you to be a witness and blessing for your neighbors and coworkers.

Monday 8/20

Read: Psalm 100:2

Examine: The psalm calls for a worship that is joyful. This is not a mere “emotional high” or contrived “pep rally” form of excitement, both of which can be created and soon fade away, swallowed by the realities of everyday life. The joy the psalmist calls for has a foundation, a foundation based on the God to whom the psalm directs its praise. First, and foremost, is that God is present. It is possible to enter the very presence of the LORD through His gates and into His courts. In the view of the psalm, the LORD by His own choice and condescension is “there” in the most real way.

Apply: Do you yearn for the same exuberance, enthusiasm, and mirth in your worship experience that the language of this psalm invokes? The psalm testifies to the importance of “presence” for authentic and enthusiastic worship. How would you act, feel, dress, etc. if you knew you would be in the presence of your favorite celebrity, or a foreign king or emperor? How much more so in the presence of the King of the Universe? It is the exciting anticipation of being in the “presence” of God that fuels the joy of praise. It is also knowledge of God that brings joy: yes, theology and joyful experience go hand-in-hand. There is no heart-head dichotomy in Scripture.

Pray: Pray that God would lead you into a renewed sense of His presence, not only in our formal worship on Sunday, but each time we seek Him. Pray that His presence would be manifest in our worship experience, and transform the way we assemble as His people and His Church.

Tuesday 8/21

Read: Psalm 100:3

Examine: The God who is present is the shepherd of His people. In the Old Testament, the term shepherd was applied to the rulers of Israel. It was sometimes a derogatory term, for both shepherds and Israel’s kings were not always the most upright and honest of men. That is why the coming Messiah, the future heir to the Davidic throne, was referred to as the “good” shepherd, the one who would fulfill the true offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. In Christ Jesus would come a shepherd so “good,” he would even lay his own life down for his sheep. That is something not even the best of Israel’s shepherds, or kings, would dare do!

Apply: The LORD we worship is both shepherd and savior. Worship is inherently evangelical, it is about the good news of our salvation. To move in worship into the presence of God is to move into the presence of one who is “for us.” The basis of our worship and praise is the knowledge of what God has done for us, His acts in redemptive history, and the giving of His only-begotten Son who, through his life death, and resurrection, has brought us from estrangement into His very presence. God brings us to Himself by giving Himself; He is both gift and giver!

Pray: Give thanks to God for all His has done on your behalf, for His grace, mercy, and goodness that has brought us into His glorious presence.

Wednesday 8/22

Read: Psalm 100:3

Examine: The psalmist acknowledges that it is the LORD who made us, and we are His. While certainly we must acknowledge that we owe to God our very existence, the phrase “God made us” is not speaking of creation in general, but is an abbreviation for the salvation history of election, deliverance, and covenant by which Israel was brought into existence as the people of the LORD, the flock that He tends as shepherd.

Apply: John Calvin notes, “every man makes a god of himself, and virtually worships himself, when he ascribes to his own power what God declares belongs to him alone...Believers are the persons whom the prophet here declares to be God’s workmanship, not that they were made men in their mother’s womb, but in that sense in which Paul, in Eph. 2:10, calls them the workmanship of God, because they are “created unto good works which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them.” When the psalmist praises God, the one “who made us, and we are his,” he is praising God for that spiritual regeneration by which He creates anew His image in His elect.

Pray: Thank and praise God for all we are and all we have. Let all of your life be thanksgiving for and in praise of God’s workmanship in you.

Thursday 8/23

Read: Psalm 100:4

Examine: The language of the psalmist, is political in character, i.e., it involves a call for actions that belong to the approach of a king and for being in a king’s presence. In Israel’s day, one “came into the presence” of a king by entering his precincts (gates and court). The subjects and court greeted the appearances of the king with a shout of acclamation and a promise to “serve.” To serve the LORD is to have Him as sovereign, as King. To call oneself a “servant of the LORD” is to acknowledge dependence upon and subjection to Him. To worship means choosing between alternative servitudes: human rulers and other gods, or the Lord God of Israel.

Apply: In Roman times the early Christians said, “Jesus is Lord,” in their worship in an empire that required people to say, “Caesar is Lord,” and they paid for the choice with their lives. Because worship is the direction of trust and obedience to a power whose will and way make a difference in our lives, it is always an activity with practical consequences in the way we live. If it makes no difference in the way those who worship set themselves in relation to other powers (human or spiritual), it is not the worship that Psalm 100 inaugurates.

Pray: Pray that our lives would show a servant’s attitude toward our Lord God. Pray that the way we worship would transform the way we live.

Friday 8/24

Read: Psalm 100:4