

**Why Praise**  
**Psalm 100:1-5**  
**Everton Hills**  
**11 June 2017**

**It might come** as a surprise to you, but I am NOT the model husband. Anne-Marie could tell you many stories (which she won't) of my failures as a husband... Let me just say that I had certain expectations that were unfair and unfounded. And I think it was only out of Anne-Marie's graciousness, that she put up with me.

One of the things that I had to learn early on, was to step aside from my own expectations, and be thankful for what was reality. And one way in which we did that, was to end every day by sharing three things with each other, for which we were thankful. That simple activity changed my perspective; and even as I say this, I am reminded of how powerful and important it is to regularly think about and share with those you love, things for which you are thankful.

It is into that context that Psalm 100 was written.

But first, I want you to turn to the people you are gathered with today, and share three things for which you are thankful!

Today begins a five week series on the Psalms. I will be sharing this week and next, and then for three weeks in August!

Walter Brueggemann, an Old Testament scholar, has suggested that the Psalms can be understood as functioning within the life pattern of moving from **"orientation" through "disorientation" and then to "new orientation."** That is, the Psalms can confront us to reflect on what life is really all about, and challenge us to renew our perspective, so that we can live life and live it to the full.

In essence, the Psalms are actually about witness! Witnessing to ourselves – which changes us. And witnessing to others – which changes them.

And this is the first thing I want you to understand about Praise. We don't Praise God, for God's personal sake – sort of like God being some narcissist who demands our constant attention. We praise God for two reasons. By praising him, we give ourselves to God fully... and that is about growing in our relationship with God. And second, by praising God to others, we give God away to others – through praise, we witness to them who God is and what God has done.

Essentially that is what happens when we notice the good things that others do – and you say thank you to them... it changes you (because you notice them) and it changes others – because they hear it.

Alex Haley, the author of "Roots," had an unusual picture hanging on his office wall. It was a **picture of a turtle on top of a fence post.** When asked, "Why is that there?" Alex Haley answered, "Every time I write something significant, every time I read my words and think that they are wonderful, and begin to feel proud of myself, I look at the turtle on top of the fence post and remember that he didn't get there on his own. He had help." To notice those around you who help you to be who you are is what brings joy, but also keeps you grounded!

That is the attitude of the Psalm – to notice all that helps to lift us up.

***“Shout with joy to the LORD, all the earth! Worship the LORD with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy. Acknowledge that the LORD is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.” (Psalm 100, NLT)***

Psalm 100 is about helping us to maintain an attitude of gratitude for all that God has done.

Note how Psalm 100 begins ...

***“Shout with joy to the LORD, all the earth! Worship the LORD with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy.” (Psalm 100:1-2, NLT)***

This isn't a personal Psalm – not like the Psalm we will look at next week. This is a Psalm for all people.

The Psalmist wants all the earth to shout for joy. The Psalmist wants all the earth to worship with gladness. To sing with joy!

The word “shout” is the same word used for a war cry. The purpose of a war cry is to build confidence and strength. After Joshua and his army marched around Jericho seven times, they blew their rams horns and shouted – and the walls of Jericho fell to the ground.

When we shout, powerful things happen. When we shout out loud, when we declare with confidence and boldness all that God has done, our relationship with him grows closer and more intimate.

The word “worship” isn't about singing praises to God. It's about living all of life with a heart of outward focus. That's why the apostle Paul tells us in Romans 12 to...

***“give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.” (Romans 12:1, NLT)***

See what is happening here. The Psalmist is imploring us to, with boldness and fervour, notice God's presence and respond with action.

And that leads to the third thing that Psalmist says...

***“Acknowledge that the LORD is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.” Psalm 100:3, NLT)***

To acknowledge that the Lord is God is a dagger to our ego. To realise that the world is not about me. To realise that I am not the centre of my universe. This is the disorientation phase of this Psalm. Because deep down I want the world to be about me. I want my needs to be met. I want to people to honour me, to not look down on me, to value me.

And to acknowledge that the Lord is God, is to take our eyes off ourselves.

Notice what the Psalmist says. *“We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.”*

To a society that likes to be in control of themselves, recognising that you are just a sheep, recognising that you are reliant on someone else, can be do disorienting. It can lead to real discomfort. Because I want to be in control of my own life, of my own destiny.

But in a strange sort of way, that is the gift that God is offering here. The freedom to not have to feel the burden of being responsible for everything in life.

You see, that is why Jesus describes himself as the good shepherd. A good shepherd only has the best in mind for the sheep. A good shepherd knows that a sheep needs to be fed, and protected. And so Jesus, in describing his relationship to the sheep says,

***“My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.” (John 10:10, NLT)***

***“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.” (John 10:11, NLT)***

***“I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me,” (John 10:14, NLT)***

And in Psalm 23

***“The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need.” (Psalm 23:1, NLT)***

There is something profoundly comforting in knowing that one greater than me, is looking out for me, and providing me with all that I need.

And so in response to this promise and provision and of the good shepherd, our lives and attitudes are re-oriented...

***“Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.” (Psalm 100:4–5, NLT)***

Now there is a nuance here that I want you to understand. While we enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise, the word Hebrew word used for ‘courts’ there can also imply a place without walls.

In other words, as we enter into God’s presence, we encounter a freedom that a world of expectation, and rules, and regulations, and responsibility can never understand. Because in this court, in this space, we encounter the reality that the Lord is good, his unfailing love continues forever.

You know, in all of my work with people, if there was one thing that I wish people could get excited about, is the freedom and the hope that is ours, because of God’s unfailing love. It is only as I discover that I am loved no matter what, that my heart is reoriented to being outwardly focussed with a freedom that brings lasting joy.

And that is what is significant about Psalm 100. That is why we can “Shout with joy to the LORD.” Because “For the LORD is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.” (Psalm 100:5, NLT)