

# A Return to Joy

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So much of Scripture is designed to stir faith up in believers which tells us that we are prone to lose faith, not in a salvific way, not in a manner of losing our salvation but we're prone to lose sight of what it is that we believe and who it is in whom we have placed our trust. In the book of Hebrews, it says that we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard so that we do not drift away from it. Well, I'm grateful this morning as I step back into this pulpit to find so many of you here wanting to hear the word of God, wanting to exercise your faith, wanting to honor Christ with your lives, and it's a joy and a privilege for us to go to this Psalm that I read just a few moments ago in Psalm 100. For some of us, perhaps we find ourselves here this morning with a cloud of sorts hanging over our spiritual lives. Maybe it's through sin that we're not really dealing with, through spiritual indifference that has taken over and grown like weeds in an otherwise pleasant garden, a matter of adversity or for perhaps even for reasons that you just can't put your finger on, something is out of sorts. I know I've been in that position, just out of sorts and just can't quite put my finger on why it is like that. Well, Psalm 100 is going to cut through all of the mist and bring light to our souls and, I trust, encouragement to your hearts as we go through it.

Let me read it once more just to set it in our mind afresh.

1 Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. 2 Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing. 3 Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; 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 lovingkindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations.

Well, if we've been in that Slough of Despond, as the great book says, "The Pilgrim's Progress," our feet are clinging with mud because we've been stuck in the Slough of Despond, beloved, here is a Psalm that will help lift us up out of it and point us in the direction, and I think the key to remember is as you see the joyful tone of the Psalm as it speaks of gladness in our hearts, of shouting joyfully, of singing in a joyful way, is to remember that as you read this Psalm, it gives you all the reasons you need to respond in

that way. This Psalm gives us all the reasons we need to change that clinging sense of despair to one of joy, but it's one that takes the engagement of the entire man.

You'll remember from Matthew 22 that Jesus said that the greatest commandment of them all was to, "Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your strength, and with all of your mind." Well, when you read this Psalm, you find that it is addressing the entirety of the man. It addresses all of you in every aspect of your God-created being. In verse 1, it addresses your heart, it addresses your emotions, you could say, "Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth," and extends it broadly, as we will look to in just a moment. It addresses your volition. It addresses your will, in other words, in verse 2 when it says, "Serve the LORD with gladness." So it addresses your heart and says, "Shout joyfully." It addresses your will and says, "Come to Him in a humble submissive spirit and serve Him." And in the midst of all of that, it also addresses your mind, your cognition, your understanding in verse 3 when it says, "Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves." So in the simplicity of this Psalm, I know in our younger days our family read this Psalm many times at the dinner table, but in the simplicity and the familiarity of this Psalm, what I want you to see is it is addressing your entire man at every level of your being and as it does, it holds out for you the prospect of the spiritual response that is included in it, the joy, the gratitude, the gladness that marks the response to Psalm 100.

So we're gonna break this Psalm into two parts and hopefully find that the Holy Spirit uses this time to refresh us all, to refresh us individually, to refresh us corporately. If you're taking notes, point 1, it begins with this call to joyful worship. It is a call to joyful worship and the first two verses set the theme for the entire Psalm. Look at them again with me as the Psalmist says,

1 Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. 2 Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing.

And there's a magnificence to that call in that it comes to us, it comes to you, it comes to me and it says wherever you're at, whatever your state of mind is, whatever your state of life is, it invites you, indeed it commands you, it calls you to come, to come, to leave behind whatever is consuming your thoughts otherwise and to give your attention to the Lord, to Yahweh, to this God who is a covenant-keeping, promise-keeping, promise-honoring God to his people. Come to him, remember him and give him your worship and respond to him for all that he is.

"Shout joyfully" is a phrase that refers to a glad exclamation in response to God, and if you think about it, that means that we've got to know something about who God is. It's not enough to just say, "Come and worship God," and give this general invitation. Why should I respond to him? Why should I worship him? This Psalm gives us the reasons and gives the explanations. Why should I leave behind my sense of clinging despair and set that aside and replace it with an attitude of joy and glad submission to this God? This Psalm tells us why that is the case. This is the shout of triumph when a king enters the

room and what I want you to see is that this is a universal call addressed to everyone everywhere at all times.

Look at verse 1 with me again, "Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth." Well, here we are sitting on the earth, standing on the earth, as it may be, walking on the earth, whatever the case may be, wherever you're at, this call goes out and addresses you right where you are and says this is now your immediate cause for attention; this is what you are to turn your mind to, you are to turn your mind vertically to this God and you are to respond to him, and you are to respond to him with your whole man, and the Psalm tells us why that is the natural response of the believing heart.

Now with that in mind, I want to show you something that if you've been with us on Tuesdays over a few months, the past several weeks, that will sound familiar to you. Psalm 100 is coming as a climax to a series of other Psalms, Psalm 93 through 99, Psalms that are known as theocratic Psalms. That's a heavy-duty word simply saying, simply meaning that these Psalms are celebrating God as King, God as the one who rules, God as the one who is sovereign over all of his realm, and I want to show you this so that you get a sense of the momentum, the spiritual momentum that has been built up in the Psalter leading up to this climax in Psalm 100.

So look at Psalm 93, this will not take us long at all, I just want you to bounce on the high points here to see that there is a unified theme in these preceding Psalms. Psalm 93:1 says, "The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty; The LORD has clothed and girded Himself with strength; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved. Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting." God is an eternal King. He reigns over all of his creation and these series of theocratic Psalms open on that lofty note. If you'll go to Psalm 96 in verse 10, you'll see again this phrase "The LORD reigns," and again you see that it is a call that goes out to all nations. Verse 10 of Psalm 96, "Say among the nations, 'The LORD reigns; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved; He will judge the peoples with equity.'"

So these Psalms are laying out before us a universality of God's reign and says God reigns over it all. This isn't simply material that is limited to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament like you might expect, this is asserting the supremacy of God over everything that you can see, hear, feel or touch, and that is an impressive realm and that is what we are in part to declare as we gather together, is that we declare, we assert that there is a God who created the heavens and the earth, he is sovereign over all, he reigns over the realm of his creation, and so it's our privilege corporately today on Sunday, September 29, 2019, it's our privilege to join together and corporately obey this command to say to the nations, "Look, whatever else you're thinking, the God of the Bible reigns over all. He's sovereign over it all," and direct their attention to him. You see, when we gather together like this, we are participating in something that far transcends us in our own little time and space existence. We're proclaiming an eternal God who has reigned throughout the millennia, who will reign long after we're gone, who reigns over every corner of the universe, and we get to proclaim that, we get to assert that over against every false god

that Satan has raised up in opposition to the knowledge of the true God. So as we come together, we have a great privilege to be able to share in that.

Look at Psalm 97:1, you'll see that this same phrase is used again. "The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; Let the many islands be glad." And in Psalm 99:1, "The LORD reigns, let the peoples tremble; He is enthroned above the cherubim, let the earth shake!" You see it, don't you, the universal reign of God being asserted repeatedly in these Psalms? Well, there's another aspect to these theocratic Psalms in that in addition to asserting the verbal form, "The LORD reigns," it also ascribes to God the position as King.

Look at Psalm 95:3 which says, "the LORD is a great God And a great King above all gods." Psalm 98:6, "With trumpets and the sound of the horn Shout joyfully before the King, the LORD." And finally one more in Psalm 99:4 again, "The strength of the King loves justice; You have established equity; You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob." That coming on the heels of the call in verse 2, "The LORD is great in Zion, And He is exalted above all the peoples. Let them praise Your great and awesome name; Holy is He." And so I don't know about you, but I read these things and read this sequence, it's obvious that these Psalms however they were collected and presented in the form that we now have them today, it is obvious that the compiler had an intention of asserting this theme through this series of Psalms. God is King. Israel's Yahweh is Lord over all and he reigns and all the peoples of the earth are to respond to him. He's not simply the God of Israel, he's God over all of the earth which means that all people everywhere are under obligation and call to respond to him in faith and in worship. It's transcendent. This was true before you and I were born, it'll be true long after you and I are gone.

So we are in a transcendent realm here as we enter into Psalm 100, what I want you to see, though, is that where Psalm 100 takes us, while it calls us, yes, to worship, it calls us, it does not call us in what rough hands might expect, in what a carnal mind might expect and to banish us in fear in response to this God. No, this actually is the answer to the condition of the human heart because it tells us that the reign of the Lord is an occasion for joy, gladness and singing, and so how could that be? How can it be that such a transcendent God could produce in us, in his people, and call everyone else to a response that is one of joyful submission and glad adoration? Well, it's tied up in who that God is, isn't it? Don't we need to know who the King is to know how to respond to him properly?

Well, before I left, we reviewed the doctrine of providence, the idea that God reigns over the earth now through his providence, his providence is broad, it's over the rise and fall of nations, it's over the number of hairs on your head; his providence was at work as he knit you in your mother's womb; for those of you, as we heard Emily's beautiful testimony, those of you perhaps abandoned by parents, his providence was at work even then and God was being a Father to you even in that time. God was caring for you even when earthly people and earthly relationships were failing you because that's the kind of God that he is, he's this loving, caring, sovereign, wonderful God who has control over it all. We look to the future, we flash to the future, we realize that Christ will return, he'll visibly reign over all, he'll subdue, he'll conquer, he'll vanquish his enemies so that

righteousness will reign and prevail, and we look at the sum total of these and we're just picking on certain little aspects of it, hardly exhausting the topic, not even scratching the surface of the topic, and realizing that this God is great and yet he is a God of tender compassionate care for his people. Acts 17:28 says that all people live in him so that all people are called to worship. Psalm 100 gathers all of this up and summons us to a response to him, a response of the heart, not simply the outer man; a response of your heart, soul and mind, not simply an external performance of a few duties now and then. This is a God sovereign over all asserting his authority not over the external creation but over your inner man and saying, "Come and worship Me."

That is the right response to who this God is and so it teaches us something, beloved, something that we need to remember, something that we need to practice, something that needs to be embedded deep in our understanding of who God is and what our response to him is, is that worship is more than a matter of attending church on Sunday and tossing a few dollars into the plate, or whatever the case may be, what we see is we recognize who God is and what Psalm 100 is telling us is that worship is – watch this – worship is an entire life matter of a response of the entire heart to the entirety of who God is. That's what worship is. This is the entirety of the response of your entire man to the God who not only made the heavens and the earth but who made you and who calls you and summons you in response, and we see that this great King calls us to respond to him in joy, in gladness, in praise, and in singing. But now that's just exactly the problem, isn't it? Isn't that just exactly our point of failure? Isn't that just exactly where we stumble? We all stumble on just this particular point. We don't go about with a 100% response of joy, praise, gladness and adoration. We are prone to doubt. We are prone to unbelief. We are prone to forget and yet here we are with this summons. Well, when we find ourselves at that, how do you develop joy, how do you come to respond like this when the strength is ebbing out of your heart? When once again that antagonist in your life has provoked you again and again and again? How do you maintain joy?

Well, this Psalm leads us in that direction and it teaches us to go back to the essentials and, beloved, what I want you to see as we make this transition to point 2 here, the reasons for joyful worship, the reasons for joyful worship is that when we say going back to the essentials, we're going to see that this is not calling us to some kind of performance-based activity by which we self-generate a response like this. It's transcendent. Of course it's transcendent. Of course it's beyond us because it's calling us to the God who reigns over all. We've seen that and so we come as we come to this second part of the Psalm, we come with a sense of expectation that the grounds, the reasons for joyful worship must somehow transcend who I am and what my circumstances are, and as we come to understand that, then joy follows as a response.

What are these essentials that are addressed to our mind? Well, first of all, stating it real simply here: the Lord is God. The Lord is God. Our praise and worship is a response to who God is. A fundamental knowledge of God is the basis for joy. Look at verse 3 with me when it says, "Know these things. Know this. Know that," here's the content of what you are to know and when it says to know these things, beloved, what it is saying is that you are to exercise the faculties of your mind to the best of your capabilities to

understand what is about to follow in this clause that is to come. You are to know this, you are to meditate on it, you are to consider it, to think about it, to rehearse it in your mind again and again and again until it becomes a settled bedrock of everything that you are. What is that knowledge? Verse 3,

3 Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

What are the reasons for joyful worship? How do you move in that direction? Beloved, it's so simple. This is within the attainment of the youngest child. It is within the responsibility of the oldest most mature saint to go back to this and to call truth to mind. As I've said many times, to preach to yourself, to speak to yourself and to not let your emotions take over and speak to you and drive you into doubt, fear and anxiety, but you speak to your heart, you tell yourself truth, you tell yourself matters of fundamental simplicity and yet transcendent importance. You call truth to your mind and you remind yourself that the God of the Bible is the God who reigns. He is the only true God. He is the Creator of the universe.

Look at it there in verse 3 as it speaks to all the earth, it says, "Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves." Part of joy is getting your thinking ordered rightly, recognizing who is sovereign and who you are; who is the Creator and who is the creature; who is holy and who is sinful; who is omniscient and who is of limited understanding. You place yourself, you order yourself in your mental thinking and understanding, you order yourself rightly in response to this God. "God, You made me. God, You own me. God, You are sovereign over all. I am Your creature. I am Your servant. I am under You." This is where it starts and there is a sense of submission that's included in that that says, "Lord, You're sovereign over the details of my life. In some way, Lord, I have precisely the life that You have given to me. I accept that. I submit to that, even though it's difficult, even though it's not what I chose, even though it's not what I planned. As I stand before You today on Sunday morning, O God, I recognize that You have made me, You have made my life what it is and one way or another through Your majestic providence, and therefore I know that, I understand that and, God, I submit to it. I accept it." And then you build from there.

You see, joy starts by seeing where you fit in fundamental relationship to this God and, beloved, let me ask you, let me remind you of that which I know that almost all of you believe and embrace in your heart, let me remind you of that which you already believe: don't you believe in a God who is in providential control of everything in the universe? You believe that, don't you? You believe that God is sovereign over all, right? Don't you believe also that as part of his providence it is the nature of God to sustain his people in all their ways? Did not Paul say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"? Does Scripture not say, "Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication let your request be made known to God and the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"? Isn't that the God that you believe in? Isn't that what you know to be true even though in your weaker moments it's clouded over as we've discussed?

Well, beloved, joy starts by coming back to that and preaching known truth to your heart saying, "I know this to be true. Whatever else, I will set my feet on this foundation. This is where I will make my stand. This is that from which I will not be moved." And as a Christian, beloved, what a privilege we have to recognize that we have a two-fold claim on the way that God is our God. God is our God by right of creation, he made us physically, he is also our God by right of redemption. Christ loved us at the cross. As Ian Murray has said, the cross is the pulpit of God's love. It is the place where God's love is most magnificently propounded by him, himself, as Christ takes on the sins of his people, standing in their place, standing in your place, standing in my place, taking our sins, taking the punishment that we might be forgiven and that his righteousness and reconciliation with God shared with us as a gift. Do you know what that means? God is your God by right of creation, he made you physically, God is also your God by right of redemption, he made you, as it were, spiritually. He caused you to be born again. He, by the power of his Holy Spirit, drew you to Christ to make you his own; drew you to Christ to adopt you into his family; drew you to Christ in order to forgive all of your sins and to reconcile you fully with a holy God.

You see, beloved, in the midst of all of the cacophonous noise of life, we have to push it out of our ears and come back to these fundamental realities that are the substance of everything that we believe and know to be true, certified to us by the witness of the Holy Spirit, guaranteed to us by the utter infallibility and the inerrancy of God's holy word. These things are true? These things are unchanging? Jesus said, "I will never leave you, nor will I ever ever forsake you." Triple negative in the Greek in Hebrews 13. That's who your God is. That's what you are to know. That's what you are to remember.

Do you know what I find encouraging about that, among many other things? One of the things that I find encouraging about what we were just saying is this: you can understand that. You can believe that. You can know that. This does not require a seminary degree to know. You don't need to be a doctor of divinity in order to understand these things. These things are available to the youngest of minds who approaches Scripture with a believing heart, who can understand that God made me, God is my boss, God is Lord over me and God loves me is shown by the fact that Jesus died for me in some way on the cross.

So this isn't difficult. This is within the grasp of every one of you. In fact, although this verse is talking about saving faith, turn over to Romans 10 for just a moment because I want to emphasize to you how close this is to you. I'm using Romans 10 here to illustrate how close and how obtainable this is for the believing heart. Verse 8 of Romans 10, "What does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart'--that is, the word of faith which we are preaching." It's near, beloved. It's right there. It's right on the tip of your tongue waiting for you to confess it, to affirm it, and to respond in joyful worship in response. Jesus Christ is Lord. Jesus Christ died for my sins. Jesus Christ rose again. In him all of my hope resides and my hope will never be disappointed.

That'll turn a heart toward worship and it lays the foundation for the attitude that's expressed next. Look at verse 4. What are the grounds for joyful worship? We're saying

it's the Lord, he is God and he is God in the sense that he's made us, we're his people, the sheep of his pasture, as a shepherd cares for sheep, so God cares for his people, Psalm 23. We are in a place of immeasurable, broad, high and deep blessing no matter what else is happening to us in life. This is your position, beloved, if you are in Christ. This is what belongs to you. This is yours.

So how do we respond to that? Well, verse 4 points the way,

4 Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name.

When you grasp these things, you understand them, you meditate on them, you respond to the God who made them so, to the God who made them true, "God, I thank You that all of these things are true about me. I thank You for the Christ who gave His life to save my soul. I thank You for His resurrection, for His ascension. I thank You, God, that I have a Brother in heaven who is interceding for me effectively before Your majesty. He, as it were, has my name on the jewels of the breastplate of His heart in heaven. He's mine and I'm His. Thank You for that, O God. I'm unworthy but I'm grateful. I know it to be true. I give You thanks. I honor You. I praise Your name. I bless You. I bless everything about You, Father, in response to what I know to be true." And trusting in the work of the Holy Spirit in this hour in what I'm about to say, I trust that even now for many of you, your heart has been turned from the grayness that maybe you walked into, to a sense of the bright sunshine of the love of God and the goodness of God on your soul, and that your heart is responding even now in gratitude and blessing his name.

Well, that's the way it works, the majesty of God calls forth our worship, his love, his care, his majesty make us glad, make us joyful, help us to be content so much so that we start to recognize that even if we could live like a king, it would not mean anything if we did not know Christ. If we had all of the world, if we gained all of the world and yet had not Christ, we would have nothing. What would it gain us? What would it profit us to gain the world in a material sense if these things were not true and we're not our own? Conversely, flip it the other direction, if these things belong to you in Christ by personal faith in him, then the other stuff is not important by comparison. That is how we are to think as believing people. As Christians, we realize the greatness of God over against the transparent folly of this world and we realize his superior worth over anything else that we could set our heart affection upon, and that's why Scripture commands us in the 10 Commandments have no gods before him, have nothing in your heart that is of greater, a greater object of your affection than these things right here, this God right here.

So you start there, the Lord is God, and you start to work it through and you're moving in the direction of joy because the Lord is God. But there's more. There's more and times like this just cause me to adore the majesty of Scripture again and again and again and it never gets old, it's always fresh when we realize these things, what I'm about to say, something about what I'm about to say, is to realize that if we stopped there, it would be enough to fill our hearts with joy and to bring us to trust and faith, that would be enough, that in itself is far more than we deserve, right? I mean, this is far more than you deserve,

it's far more than I deserve. What are creatures of dust, sinful dust at that, what are we doing in a position like this before a great and holy and majestic King, I ask you? But here we are.

Oh, it fills my heart with joy as I stand here! But there's more! The Psalmist doesn't stop there. He says, "Give thanks to Him, bless His name," and then he goes on in verse 5, "For." He adds an additional grounds of worship. It's not just that the Lord is God but verse 5 tells us to rejoice because the Lord is good. He's good. And even though I've said this to you 500 times, I'll say it for the 501<sup>st</sup> time as well: this is what you need to remember, this is what your carnal heart constantly rises up against in the knowledge of God. You are prone to question God. You are prone to question his love, to question his goodness, and to question whether he still loves you after your stumbles around, after you've fallen again into sin, in your struggles with unbelief and lack of assurance. "How could God love a heart like mine?" Well, beloved, let me tell you how he can do that. Let me tell you why he does that: the love of God for you was never premised on anything in you. It was never premised on you attaining a certain level of obedience because you sinned and fell short of his glory. That can't be it. It can't be about your performance. It can't be about your efforts at being good. It can't be about going through religious motions because God doesn't need those. God's love for you is not premised in the fact that you are good, because you're not, there's no one good, none righteous, not even one. It's not about that at all. The reason God loves us, the reason God loves you, the reason that you are in this position that you are in is not because you are good but because he is good. He is good.

Look at it there with me in verse 5,

5 For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness [or His loyal love, His commitment to keep His promises] is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations.

So this word "for" here at the beginning of verse 5, "For the LORD is good," because the Lord is good, it gives us the reason to shout for joy, to serve with gladness, to be grateful and to give praise to God. It is so simple but it is so profound, beloved. Why do we worship the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? Why do we ascribe adoration to Jesus Christ alone? Why do we honor the name of the blessed Holy Spirit, the Triune God, three persons with one essence? Why do we do that? It's because God is good. The God who is King, the God who reigns is a good God.

Now what does that mean? Well, look over at Exodus 33 with me and I'll show you how God himself defines his own goodness. Exodus 33. I love this, these two passages that we're about to look at because who is better able to expound and explain and exposit the attributes of God and what they mean, the perfections of God, who is better able to do that than God himself? God explains his own goodness in what we're about to see here.

Exodus 33:18. You remember that Moses prays, he says, "God, I pray You, show me Your glory!" What is your glory? Show me your glory? I want to know it. I want to see it.

I want a knowledge of it, O God. And if, beloved, the things that we're considering here today stir those kinds of affections up in your heart, I want you to know that God is still ever-ready, ever-willing to answer that prayer that says, "God, help me to know You better. Lead me into a deeper fuller knowledge of the fullness of the glory of the Godhead. I want that for myself. I don't want to know it second-hand. I'm not content that others know this and I know them, I want to know it personally, God."

Well, what did the Lord say to Moses? "He said, 'I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.'" Now just stay with me here. This is kind of important. Moses said, "Show me Your glory." God says, "I'll make My goodness pass before you." And as you keep reading the narrative, that's exactly what God does in Exodus 34, beginning in verse 5, "The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD. Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed," remember, he's going to proclaim his goodness and now what does Scripture say that God did as he was proclaiming his goodness to Moses? What was this self-disclosure like and what was it about? Oh, from the mouth of God himself, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished." Oh beloved, oh beloved, we're sitting under a waterfall of blessing and knowledge and goodness as the waters shower down upon us in the light of God's word, we're seeing what the goodness of God means. It means that he is compassionate. He is gracious. He is slow to anger. He is abounding in lovingkindness and truth and he is a God who forgives sin.

My unsaved friend, as you hear me here today, let me tell you that that is how God is disposed to you as Christ is presented to you and you are invited to come to him for your personal salvation from sin. God will receive you. The only lack of willingness is in the heart of unbelieving men because God is full of compassion, full of grace, more than willing to receive everyone who will come to him for salvation. That's what Christ said, "The one who comes to Me I'll in no wise cast out." That's who God is. The vilest offender who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a pardon receives. Beloved, that can be you today if you don't know Christ and you have the assurance from God himself that he looks on you even in your sin with compassion. He looks on you in a spirit that is willing to forgive, gracious, slow to anger. You have not exhausted the grace of God. As long as you are alive and you're hearing the sound of the Gospel, God and Christ through the proclamation of his word extends the promise of salvation to everyone who will believe.

That's good, isn't it? Isn't that gracious? Isn't that great? And yet we realize that this is not a God to be trifled with. It says there in verse 7, "He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished." The one who turns away from the Gospel of Christ is asking for doom to come upon his own head because while God is gracious, ultimately sin must be addressed.

So beloved, going back to Psalm 100 now, why do we shout joyfully to the Lord? Serve him with gladness? What are we to know? That he's God. That's he's good. That he's like that. And do you know what? We are in a better position than Moses was to know the goodness of God. You say, "How could that possibly be true? God in his immediate presence was right there speaking directly to Moses, proclaiming Him?" We're in a better position than Moses was, beloved, because we are now on this side of the cross of Jesus Christ. You want to know how good God is? He's so good that he came down, he stepped down out of heaven, stepped into this earth, stepped into human flesh and went to the cross as your representative, as your substitute, as the one who, though there was no sin in him, gladly invited the wrath of God upon himself in order to lay down his life in love for your soul. Beloved, I want to tell you something: that's good. That's more than was revealed to Moses at the time. How greatly privileged we are not only to have a fuller revelation than was given to Moses, but we're in a position to know Christ in this way, as the suffering servant, the one who served his people by laying down his life for them even though he himself was God over all. There are no human words to comprehend the majesty of that kind of goodness.

How good is he? How good is Jesus? Good enough to go to the cross for you. How good is Jesus? Good enough to love you even in your sin. How good is Jesus? Good enough to lay down his life for you, to willingly suffer to such an extent that he cries out, though he was the sinless Son of God, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Why would he do that? It's because he's good and it's because that's the depth, the measure, that's the pulpit of his love, his pulpit proclaiming from the cross his love for his people.

That's good and, beloved, here's the thing: because Christ is like that, you should worship him like this, shout joyfully, serve him with gladness, come before him with joyful singing. Any other response is obviously less than what he deserves, right? Doesn't he deserve that in light of what he's done for your soul? Everything flows from that fundamental reality, beloved, and so if you're like me and you have at times been a joyless Christian in recent days, let me encourage you to look at things differently. Forget about your circumstances. Forget about the politics of this world. Forget about life and health and relationships. Forget all of it and lift your eyes solely up to heaven where this Christ is, and even more, this Christ who has come to us in the Holy Spirit and now indwells us with his personal presence. You have to look at your circumstances differently. Life is difficult but God is great, God is God, God is good, and you have the life that he has given to you, and Christ has given not only has Christ given you the life as troubled as it may be that you now have, he's given you something even better, hasn't he? What has he given you beyond the life that you have? What has he given that matters even more, I ask you? He's given himself and that was all part of the eternal plan of a good God. Behind you, around you, above you, below you is the sovereign wisdom and goodness of God.

So beloved, I ask you, I call you, I invite you to put your circumstances aside, put earthly considerations aside, set them aside and look to the eternal and look to the absolute. Look to the eternal King. Look to unparalleled goodness and then in a joyful, quiet, submissive

heart, give him all of your worship and all of your praise for that is what this great King is worthy of.

Let's pray together.

Well, if you are not a Christian, I'll say one more time: the King summons you to believe in Christ. My friend, he was crucified for sinners just like you, raised from the dead for the salvation of sinners just like you, and he's good. He will receive you as you come to Christ in repentance and faith in his saving work. Won't you come to Christ and add another voice to the hallelujah chorus to this great and good King?

*Our Father, we rest on Your word. Our Christ, we respond in joy. We quiet our hearts and we honor you as a good and sovereign King. We give thanks to You. We bless Your holy name. Through the person and work of Jesus Christ our Lord, we pray. Amen.*

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