

Guest Preacher- Rev Donald M Macleod

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[0 : 00] Let's for a short time turn back to the book of Psalms and Psalm 100.! The book of Psalms and Psalm 100. It's good for us, I often say this to my own people too, it's good for us to stop for a second.

We're all bad for it, every one of us. We get so caught up in the procedure, in the familiarity, in the patterns of life. We're stopping to think today of what are we doing when we worship the Lord here together.

What does Psalm 100 teach us? What does it show us about the worship, about the service of God? Just a few simple points to help guide us.

First of all, seeing how we serve Him. Then seeing how we relate to Him. Then seeing how we worship Him. And finally, how He loves us.

First of all then, Psalm 100, just taking it verse by verse, how we serve Him. Make a joyful noise to the Lord.

[1 : 29] All the earth serve the Lord of gladness. Come into His presence with singing. I wonder what the first word is that comes into your mind.

If I ask you today, when you think of coming to church, or when you think of serving the Lord, what's the first word? Is it duty, perhaps?

Is it integrity? I wonder if the first word that comes into your mind is joy. That's what we encounter here at the start of Psalm 100.

We're told we're to serve the Lord with joy. Make a joyful noise to the Lord all the earth. I want to ask some questions in our short time together, but only you can answer for yourself.

I do ask you to answer these questions honestly to yourself. When you come together to serve the Lord, to worship the Lord in times of worship, when you seek to serve Him, and however you serve Him in this congregation, in your families, in your community, when you serve the Lord, is joy the first thing that comes to mind for you?

[2 : 50] Or is joy right down the list of reasons or of responses to serving the Lord? Now, if it is duty, we serve the Lord because He calls us to serve Him, because we're called to serve Him, every one of us.

And perhaps we think of service as just being the office bearers or the minister. I hope you don't, and I'm sure you don't, but just in case we've fallen back into that way of thinking, and I was doing Grava for their POV on Wednesday, I was reminding them, the gospel in Barvis does not need a minister.

It's handy. The Lord uses His ministers well, yes, but for the gospel to spread in Barvis, the gospel cause does not need a minister or a church building.

The gospel calls to spread in Barvis. Who or what does the Lord use? Brothers and sisters, He uses the church. He uses His people. He uses you. As we're called to serve the Lord, we're called to serve Him with joy.

But sometimes we're so busy with His serving, aren't we? We're so busy with seeking to serve Him, we lose track of what it is we're actually doing.

[4 : 11] It's very easy for us to be so busy thinking what we have to do and how to do it, coming to church and getting things organized and everything else, that we lose track of what we're here today.

We're here today before the living and true God. This is not just some theatrical performance we're doing. Me up here and you down there. This is not just something we do once a week to get through our week.

Myself and yourselves together, we are before the holy living God in His presence at this very moment. He has called us before Him to worship Him in joy, to serve Him.

We read and we read there in John, the reminder, and we'll come to this later on, that when God looks on His people, He looks on us in love. He loves us as much as He loves the Son.

Brothers and sisters, there is no shame today in being told or hearing or saying to yourself, the Lord who created the heavens and the earth, who sustains all things, when He looks on you, dear Christian, He loves you as much as He loves His eternal Son, because He loves you in the Son.

[5 : 25] That's a different sermon of our different day. You are loved by God, loved eternally by God, in ways we can't begin to understand. If that doesn't induce joy in our hearts today, then we have to stop and take a look at ourselves.

We don't come out of pattern of our week. We don't come out of mere tradition. We come today to worship a God who tells us that He has us, that He keeps us, that He loves us.

We come, at least we should be coming today, with joy. Do we always come to times of worship, public worship, or times of service, whatever they look like?

With joy. We certainly don't. We certainly don't. All of us who know and who love our Savior, we're called to serve Him with joy.

Now we might apply that automatically to ministers who do the public service, or to elders. We're all serving the Lord together. Different roles, yes. Different capacities, yes. Different callings, yes.

[6 : 37] But the service of a praying old lady in our house who prays for community, for example. Is that any stronger than the greatest minister and the widest accredited pulpit in the land?

No. God uses His people to serve Him as He chooses. What are some ways, then, we serve the Lord, and how can we reclaim joy in serving these ways?

Prayer, then. Prayer. It's a way we all serve the Lord, isn't it? We all come before Him to serve Him in our prayers. I hope we do anyway. We engage in prayer day after day.

Now, however you do it, morning or evening, whatever your pattern may be, or however your prayer life looks like, as long as there's a prayer life, the hows and whens are up to yourselves, I would argue.

What's important is not how or when. What's important is that when we come before the Lord in prayer, we're doing so how? Carefully and joyfully.

[7 : 40] I hope we're never too busy serving the Lord to find time to come before Him in prayer. It's amazing, isn't it, how busy life can be, how quick, how fast life can be.

We're quite a chunk through this year already. This past week, how much time have you spent in prayer? This past year, how much time, dear brother, dear sister, have you spent in prayer?

And in that prayer, how much of it was a joy filled? I'm not saying you're praying because you're happy, but I'm saying joy because you're talking, conversing with the very Lord who made you, who sustains you, who sees you, who knows you.

Every time, dear brother, dear sister, you open your mouth or in your mind you pray, you are granted immediate access before God Himself. Well, if that doesn't give us joy, then what will?

Perhaps our personal evangelism. Our place, we should have joy, but perhaps we have quite the opposite. As you think about, even just now, sharing the good news with your friends or your neighbours or others in this community, perhaps immediately you begin to get a bit shaky.

[8 : 59] Your hands get a bit sweaty. You think, oh man, we all know we should be doing it. We all know we can do it. We all know we're called to do it, to tell those around us about our Saviour, to engage with our friends and family about the good news of who He is and what He's done for us.

When it comes down to actually doing it, how difficult it can be. Brothers and sisters, myself, I am with you here as a fellow servant. And sometimes talking to our family members and those who are closest to us, it is the hardest thing to do.

And rather than come before and serve the Lord in that way, enjoy our anxiety, to our shame, our embarrassment, our nervousness takes over and joy is nowhere to be found.

Brothers and sisters, we are being given the great privilege of sharing the gospel good news to our friends and family, those who are heading to lost eternity.

Mashed full of joy that we have the privilege of sharing with them the only way, the only means of hope for them to be saved. Make a joyful noise, but who are we praising with joy?

[10 : 18] Who are we serving with joy? Make a joyful noise to the Lord. For many here, this is the reminder, but it's good for us to be reminded that when you see capital L-O-R-D in your Bibles, that is referring to the title of God of Yahweh.

We are praising, we are joyfully serving Yahweh. That title of God that reminds us that He is self-sufficient. That He does not need us.

He does not need our praise. He does not, with respect, need our help. But He chooses, in His wisdom, to make use of His people.

He is the one who needs nothing, who needs no one, but who yet calls us to serve Him. But note, our service is one based on gladness and on worship.

Make a joyful noise to the Lord all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come into His presence with singing. Brothers and sisters, at this moment, we approach the living God.

[11 : 27] Friends, you are here too, but brothers and sisters, we approach the living God just now. Not because of our merit, not because of our attitude. We come before the living God because He has revealed Himself to us.

He has made His home, brothers and sisters, within us. How can we not serve Him with gladness? And just now, we are in His presence with singing.

This psalm likely referred to the physical reality of going perhaps to the temple to worship the Lord, throwing near where His presence would be above the ark. We are so privileged, but we aren't needing to travel to get closer to God's presence on earth.

Why? Because He has made His home in His people. At this moment, the very living Spirit of God, He has made His home within us.

Right now, we draw before His presence and worship. That should bring us so much joy. Our times of both public worship, our times as a family or as individuals worshipping the Lord together or by ourselves, there should be times of joy, times of glad service.

[12 : 46] Our lives aren't always joyful and often our prayers are prayers of great distress. I'm not saying we have to be happy, but I'm saying even in our great misery and great sadness and great distress, we come before our Lord who sees us, who knows us, who cares for us.

How we serve Him. We serve Him with gladness. How then do we relate to Him? Verse 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. Know that the Lord, He is God. He is other to us. He's not just different to us.

He is holy. He is eternally other to us. In Tolstair, we spent some time over the winter months looking at the Trinity in our prayer meetings.

And again and again, you very quickly, when you study the Trinity, run out of words to describe just how different God is to us.

[13 : 53] and the word different, it's a useless term. He's not just different. He is holy other. We are created. We are in time.

We go minute by minute, day to day. We live in time and space. He is outside of all that. We can't begin to understand how different He is to us. He is without change.

He is without age. He is without days. And if left as it is, if He does not move towards us, He is completely unknowable in a personal way.

He alone is God. He is totally unknowable to us. But thankfully for us, the psalm continues past the first part of verse 3.

He is Yahweh. He is God. He is other. But He has not, friends, remained distant, has He? The verse carries on, verse 3.

[15 : 02] This God, this Yahweh, this unknowable God who is outside of time and space. It is He who made us and we are His.

And look how He talks about us. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. He doesn't need us.

We don't complete Him. He is complete outside of us. He does not require our worship. He does not require it to be whole.

But yet, He, out of His love towards us, He has created people. Yes, He doesn't need us. But He, out of His love towards us, He is the one who is close to us, who does not remain distant, far away, uncaring.

But look at the wording. He talks about Himself, He talks about Himself like a shepherd to beloved sheep. He leads and He guides.

[16 : 09] Of course, the imagery here is clear and it draws our minds, I hope, to the great shepherd of the sheep, the Lord Jesus Christ. I think of the words, the great words of John 10, verse 11.

I am the good shepherd. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

Friends, are you still at the start of verse 3 today, perhaps? Is God still far off for you? Is God still just unknowable to you?

You can't relate to Him. You can't understand Him. You can't quite grasp what He is or who He is. And you certainly can't grasp what He has to do with us. He is there.

And today, you still feel very much you're under His judgment. He is far off unknowable. But you know He sees and you know He knows. And you feel yourself under the heavy burden of His judgment, the heavy burden of His righteousness and your unrighteousness, His perfection and your imperfection.

[17 : 22] You need today, dear friends, to come to know the One who came from the Father, to make the Father known to us. We read there at length in John 17, and again and again we're told in John 17, if by knowing Jesus we then know the Father, by knowing Jesus we know the One who sent Him, there is no way, dear friends, today, to make God, as it were, on your side.

You can't win Him over. You can't bargain Him by your good living, by your niceness, by your community-mindedness. God is not so small.

He is not so human to be bought over by our attempts. There is one way to the Father. How is that? Or really, who is that? By knowing the One who is the shepherd of the sheep, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's carried on really in verse 4, as we're told, and as the psalmist writes, that He enters, probably speaking of the temple, but He enters the gates with thanksgiving. He approaches the courts of God with praise.

There's drawing nearer and closer to where God is. There's access to a place that only God's people have access to. Again, friends, you perhaps have tried every way to get close to God.

[18 : 51] You try and read your Bibles. Good. You come to services. Good. You perhaps try and think through things. Good. Good. But no amount of church attendance by itself, no amount of Bible study or reading by itself, no amount of holy family members by themselves will save any of us.

We all, at one time, made the grave mistake of doing all we can to serve the Lord, to somehow try and impress God, apart from the one thing He actually asks or tells us or commands us to do.

There is no service God accepts from those who first don't actually know Him. We first must come to know the one He has sent.

You must first come to know and love and serve Jesus. And then the rest flows from that. Brothers and sisters, verse 4 speaks to your souls today.

Brothers and sisters, today, you and I, we have full access to worship God in spirit and in truth. Now, in ourselves, we might feel so small this week.

[20 : 12] You think our witness is so rubbish this week. We've been very, very poor servants this week. We've been poor witnesses this week. Our hearts, our thoughts, our words haven't been in the right place this week.

Brothers and sisters, we're called here to come before Him, to enter the gates with thanksgiving. We think, well, I can't be so bold. I can't be so presumptuous to think I have access to God.

Brothers and sisters, you do. Not because of anything we've done, but as we read in John 17, but because of all our Savior has done, He has purchased that access for us.

He has, as a word, opened the gates of the court. We can enter in and know that we are before God's presence. Here, as John 17 says, we can know because the Father loves the Son and because we are with the Son and in the Son, the Father loves us as He loves Jesus.

What access does Jesus have to the Father today? What access does Jesus have to the throne room of heaven today? He is there at the right hand of the Father. Well, if He is there and we are in Him, where are we in an access?

[21 : 38] We are right there beside Him. Dear brother, dear sister, the Son, He came to save.

He came to save those He had set His love on before time. You were loved and known before time and space and creation. In time you are saved and you are His for all of time.

We come today, perhaps, the great words of that hymn in our minds. Nothing in my hands I bring simply to thy cross I cling. Naked come to thee for dress.

Helpless look to thee for grace. Foul I to the fountain fly. Wash me, Saviour, or I die. How do we worship Him?

We worship Him, brothers and sisters, with knowing we have full and open access for the finished work of our Saviour. Finally then, how He loves us.

[22 : 45] For the Lord is good. His steadfast love endures forever and His faithfulness to all generations. You've probably had this Hebrew lesson before, but I think most times I've come I've given a Greek or Hebrew lesson, but it's only fair that we put us through four years of Greek and Hebrew.

It's only fair we subject our congregations to a few minutes of Greek or Hebrew. The Hebrew word there for steadfast love. You've probably heard this before, but to remind us, the Lord is good.

His steadfast love. The word there is *chesed*. *chesed*. For us it would be *chesed*. The word doesn't matter. But what does matter perhaps is what the word means.

Now steadfast love is a great translation, but when you try and translate things like Gaelic to English, something, you lose words. You lose meaning.

What is the love of God towards His people? Well, the word there for steadfast love. That is, in fullness, you could say, this is His covenant making, covenant keeping, full of mercy, full of care, love.

[24 : 00] It's not as catchy as steadfast love, but it takes in all of us. This is the love of God who says, I saw you, I knew you, I had you in my mind before creation.

I set my heart on you, but I would one day make you, then in time and space save you, and keep you for myself for time without end. But I would send my Son to come and live and die and rise again for you.

The Son would come out of love and obedience to His Father, out of love for us. He would live that perfect life, die the horrifying physical death on the cross, the physical reality of the thorns jamming into His nerves, the physical reality of slowly suffocating to death as fluid filled His lungs on the cross.

Never mind, not even touching on the wider reality of His Son being made sin on the cross, of all the sins of all His people, and all the wrath of those sins being poured out on Him as He was on the cross.

All of that summarized here with the love of God that endures forever towards His people. for the Lord is good.

[25 : 28] Brothers and sisters, this is the love of God towards you today that causes us to serve Him with joy, with thanksgiving and everything else we've heard today. The steadfast, unending love of God that is not dependent on you or I, but is dependent on the finished work, the completed work of our Savior who is at His right hand, who will one day come to collect us home to be with Himself.

We serve Him joyfully. We come before Him boldly. We worship Him with praise and joy and that is all founded on His unending love for us.

We can bow our heads now. A word of prayer. Thank you, Lord our God, for the gift of Your Word. We thank You that in it we are reminded that the reasons we have to worship.

The ultimate reason being we worship because You have given us a Savior. You have and You did not leave us as we were. You provided for us in the glorious plan and scope of Your plan.

[26 : 55] Help us then to come before You joyfully. We bring before You all the distractions that steal our joy, all the distractions that steal our peace. Pray, Lord, for us as we come before You seeking the assurance to know that we are Yours.

Lord, You look after them and keep them. You bring them to a saving knowledge of Yourself, that they too would enter the same joy that we have as we worship our Savior.

Christ's precious name's sake. Amen. Let's conclude then with singing the psalm that we had in the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 100.

Psalm 100. All people that on earth to dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice, and serve with mirth His praise forth tell. Come ye before Him and rejoice.

O doubt it did us make We are as long it does us make A forest ye pit of us take O and our
land as gates with praise Approach with joyous courts unto Praise Lord and bless His
name always

[31 : 24] And the love of God the Father And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Both you now and forevermore. Amen. Thank you.