

# TRUTH COMMUNITY

- TEACHING GOD'S PEOPLE GOD'S WORD -

## **A Call to Joyful Worship**

Psalm 100

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Good morning. To those of you who came expecting Phil Johnson, two things I will say to you. First of all, I am very sorry. I understand your grief. Secondly, Phil is in Florida, actually preaching a special anniversary service for his friend, Steve Kreloff. They are celebrating I think his 25<sup>th</sup> or thirtieth anniversary of his time at his church in Florida and so they asked Phil to come, they were surprising their pastor if I am not mistaken. So I think the pastor may have prepared his message this week and shown up with no opportunity to preach it. And so he has his work done for next week. So that's where Phil is at and that's why I am here and glad to be with you, particularly with what I have to say to you today.

I suppose if we were honest, most of us would all acknowledge that there are times when our hearts grow cold in our relationship with the Lord. Perhaps a new believer would challenge that statement as unbiblical or not necessary or foreign to his experience. A new believer perhaps that has not tasted the storms and trials that come inevitably to everyone who tries to pursue a vibrant Christianity. But most of us who have been Christians for any length of time at all, know something about that to one degree or another, a heart that has chilled a tad from that first love.

The very existence of the New Testament shows the complexity of this problem because so much of the New Testament is designed to stir up faith and stir up confidence in believers in the midst of their trials as the writer of Hebrews has said:

*We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so we do not drift away from it.*

The apostle Peter said more than once in his second epistle that he wanted to stir up his readers by way of reminder. We don't need to stir up people that are already stirred up. The fact that he said I want to stir you up indicates that something had settled a little bit too much.

And so if we are honest, we would say, "Yeah, I know what that's talking about, I know what you're saying." Yet, perhaps through sin, perhaps through indifference, perhaps through life's difficulties, perhaps for reasons that you just can't put your finger on, the cloud seems to hang over your spiritual life. If you don't know that now, maybe you have in the past, if not, you probably will at one point or another.

I want to bring to you a text today that I think will help dispel those clouds and show you how to deal with yourself when you are in the midst of that circumstance. When you are in that circumstance, you are the one who has to deal with that and there is a way, a scriptural method in which to do that and I want to draw your attention to Psalm 100 this morning for that purpose.

Psalm 100, a brief psalm for thanksgiving beginning in verse 1 where it says:

*Shout joyfully to the Lord all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing. 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. Enter His gate with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. For the Lord is good and His loving kindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness to all generations.*

This psalm seems so simple on the surface and in one sense it is; it is filled with seven imperatives about approaching God and worshiping Him with joy and gladness. We have read it many times around our dinner table when I didn't know what else to read, I knew Psalm 100 would be an easy one to go to. And that no doubt explains its popularity through the years—the simplicity and the joyful atmosphere of this psalm. But beloved, I want to tell you something, that the simplicity of this psalm does not mean that it is superficial. Quite to the contrary, this is no superficial psalm, not at all. This psalm presents the microcosm of the entire Christian man, it addresses every part of your spiritual being, it addresses your mind when it says know these things. In verse 3 it addresses your mind when it says, “know that the Lord Himself is God” “Know that the Lord is good” “Know that His loving kindness is everlasting” “Know that His faithfulness is through all generations.” Those are facts of cognition that it calls you to. There is an intellectual content to this psalm that is very significant and is really the foundation of everything that it says.

But it doesn't stop there, Christianity doesn't stop there, Christianity isn't solely about an intellectual exercise, and I pity those who treat it as such. It is not just an intellectual exercise, this psalm makes this clear because it addresses your heart, it addresses your emotions, it addresses your reactions to those truths. Look at verse 1 where it says:

*Shout joyfully to the Lord...Serve the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful singing.*

Joy and gladness permeate this psalm. In verse 4:

*Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him, bless His name.*

This is an overflowing of the heart that is expressed in this psalm that the mere abstract academic theologian may know nothing about. This psalm addresses your mind, and it addresses your heart in a powerful way. And beyond that, it expresses your will and it calls you to submission to this great Lord when it says in verse 2: “Serve the Lord, come before Him...” This psalm makes demands upon you just as it represents the fullness of the God of heaven in all of His

grandeur and all of His glory in the very essence of His person compels all of the earth to come before Him in worship, in submission to Him.

So this psalm, simple, yes, beautifully simple, superficial, absolutely not. This psalm addresses every part of your being. This psalm calls for the full engagement of your mind and your heart and your will in these five simple verses. And this psalm, because it is so comprehensive, addresses that lingering, ongoing, repetitive problem that you and I face sooner or later. What do I do when my heart has grown cold? This psalm gives you the cure to that spiritual disease.

I want to say this, the lofty worship of this psalm should be the aspiration of every one of you, this should be what you long for, this should be what you desire. You should not be content, you should not accept a spiritual life that just lets you go through the motions, that just lets you kind of drift from day to day, not knowing the fullness of joy that is expressed in this psalm—God did not save you for that purpose. God did not save you to be a man or a woman who just goes through the motions in life, that punches the time clock on duty without regard to whether your heart is engaged or not—that’s a travesty, that’s an insult to the living God. We need to recognize that this psalm sets up not only the standard for what our spiritual lives can be like, but it also sets up the possibility that it can be like this. This psalm is independent of circumstances, this psalm is independent of life trials no matter what your station in life is, if you engage the principles of this psalm, more importantly, engage the Lord God of this psalm in the way that it describes, you can know this kind of vibrant spiritual life—I want to know that, don’t you? I don’t want to go through life going through the motions. I don’t want to have this blasé attitude when I am walking in perfect union with the Lord Jesus Christ—that’s an abomination. What you need to do is to say “I’m not going to accept that, I’m not going to live on that low plane of life, I want to live in the spiritual environment that is described by psalm 100”. And with the help of the spirit of God, I’m going to lead you down that path this morning. Two main principles that I want to lay out to you from this psalm. First of all, I want you to see that this psalm is:

## 1. A Call to Joyful Worship

This psalm is a call to joyful worship. Look at the first two verses with me again where it says:

*Shout joyfully to the Lord all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; Come to Him with joyful singing.*

In these two verses, we see the theme for this entire psalm, it is a call to joyful worship, it is a call to worship the Lord with gladness of heart that goes beyond simply going through the motions. When it says, shout joyfully, it is referring to a joyful exclamation that is in response to God. This is talking about the spontaneous thrill of a grateful heart that springs up from a true understanding of the grandeur and the goodness of God—it’s spontaneous, you can’t help yourself. There is this instantaneous flow from your heart when you see these things and you say, “Ah yes!” It is a word that is used for a shout of triumph given when a king enters the room to royal subjects, “Ah, there’s the king!”

The closest I ever came to experiencing that kind of shout on a human level was the time when I met Ronald Reagan. It was back in 1980, he was running for president. I was at a campaign

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reception for him in Terre Haute, Indiana. I don't remember exactly where I contacted the Reagan Library and they couldn't remember, so I figured I had no hope of recovering that piece of information. So we were in this packed ballroom and everyone in that ballroom was going to have the opportunity to personally meet Governor Reagan at the time. So they were serving the hors d'oeuvres and cocktails and all of that (I wasn't a believer at that time, so don't get hung up on the cocktail issue and say, "I'm not going to listen to what he said. He was in a room where cocktails were being served." That would be a serious mistake if you tuned it out for that purpose.) But the room was packed and nationally speaking, there was a buzz developing around his candidacy. The country was in the doldrums and things were bad and Reagan was a voice of hope. And so we were gathered around thinking that this man that we were going to meet might one day be the president. And then all of a sudden, the door opened and with that engaging smile he walked in to the room—not a king, not yet a president, but a commanding presence nonetheless. And there was this spontaneous uprising from the people, "There he is, there he is!" And that spontaneous exclamation that came from the anticipation of being in the presence of greatness was just spontaneous, it just blew out from our lips, "There he is!" And I went through the line and shook his hand, I have a picture to this day of that moment. If you think of it, after Ronald Reagan met me, he became the president of the United States. (Laughter) I don't understand why you are laughing. (More laughter)

But that is the idea here in Psalm 100, you are in the presence of the Lord God Almighty. When you approach Him in prayer, when you approach Him in corporate worship, you are in the presence of unparalleled greatness, unparalleled sovereignty, unparalleled majesty. And if you are thinking rightly about that and your heart is truly engaged in that thought and you sweep away the sinfulness of simply taking that for granted because it is familiar truth to you, when you sweep all of that away and recognize the significance of that, your heart should say, "God reigns, hallelujah, hallelujah, I'm in the presence of majesty, praise God, praise God!" That's the joyful shout of the one who understands, the shout that can't be restrained in the believing heart, the shout that should never be apart from your lips.

Now, look at verse 1 with me again where it says:

*Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth.*

This is a universal call to worship. This goes out to all the nations. This call in a sense goes out to believers and unbelievers alike because it is premised not on whether the person has a believing heart or not, it is premised on the greatness of God and His greatness commands that response whether one believes in Christ or not, His greatness commands it, compels it. The fact that not all people respond in that way is a reflection on them not on the majesty of God, not on the appropriateness of this call.

Now, the term "earth" here, I need to support that understanding just briefly. The term "the earth" that is used here could either refer to the entire earth as a planet or it can refer simply to the land of Israel, depending on the context. Some good commentators, far better than I look at this as directed only to the Jews who were living at the time that this psalm was written. Admittedly, it is sometimes hard to interpret this word with that nuance intended in any given context. But here in this verse, the psalmist uses the "all the earth." When the biblical writers

use that term “all the earth” they are usually referring to the entirety of the whole earth rather than just the whole land of Israel. And that is significant here because it means that this psalm calls all men everywhere to bow the knee to the living God, not simply those who belong to the covenant community of Israel, they would be included in the call, but it extends beyond them.

There is another reason to understand it this way. Turn back to Psalm 93 for a moment. Psalm 100 comes at the conclusion of several psalms, it is a climax to a series of psalms beginning in Psalm 93 that praise and magnify God for His sovereignty over all, and that sovereignty goes beyond the people of Israel and extends over all of creation. And you can see this theme develop in these series of psalms. I’ll just point out a few of the key verses for you so that you can see this in its broader context and also so that it would fill in your thinking about the greatness and majesty of God that Psalm 100 calls us to worship. Psalm 93:1 for example, and notice as I go through these, the universality of His sovereignty, the vast expanse of His greatness, there are no limits put on it in these series of psalms. Psalm 93:1:

*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.*

Psalm 95, beginning in verse 3:

*For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods, in whose hand are the depths of the earth, the peaks of the mountains are His also. The sea is His, for it was He who made it, and His hands formed the dry land.*

Psalm 96:10:

*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.”*

Psalm 97:5-6:

*The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole world. The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the peoples have seen His glory.*

Psalm 98, beginning in verse 7:

*Let the sea roar and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy before the Lord; For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and peoples with equity.*

And then the first two verses of Psalm 99:

*The Lord reigns, let the peoples tremble; He is enthroned above the cherubim, let the earth shake. 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 in the arrangement of the psalms, Psalm 100 was placed at the climax of this series of psalms that is exalting the great majesty and the matchless sovereignty of the Lord. And so in this psalm, we see a call to people throughout all the earth to worship the Lord with joy and gladness, to rejoice and shout triumphantly at the righteous and sovereign rule of this God who reigns over all the universe, before whom every nation will bow the knee. In the words of the apostle Paul in Philippians 2:

*...the one before whom every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.*

This is an incomprehensibly majestic call to worship because the fullness of the grandeur of God has been put on display and all the nations are called to bow the knee.

And that in itself would be a great topic to just run with, to tie it in to the New Testament Great Commission, go in to all of the nations, make disciples of Christ, but I'll leave that for another time. I struggle with exactly where to go because as a preacher, there is a few different ways you can go here. But ultimately, I did not want to leave this great call to worship in Psalm 100 out there, out there for the nations when I'm speaking in here to you. To leave it out there will just be too generic, would be too third person, because after all, you are included in this, you are part of the earth, aren't you? So when the psalmist says:

*Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth...*

He is speaking to you too. So I want to help you, to encourage you and challenge you maybe to bring these things home to your own heart.

How have you lived out your life this past week? Was your heart filled with this kind of spontaneous joy and gratitude to God? Was there gladness in your mind as you contemplated Him? That's a challenging question, isn't it? You say, "Well, I had that cloud over my head as you were talking about." If the truth was told, you would have looked yourself in the spiritual mirror, if there were such a thing, boy, it would be nice to see that, wouldn't it? Actually we have that in the word of God, that which searches our hearts and minds and exposes the intentions of the heart. But if the truth were told, we may be drifting a bit spiritually, spiritually blasé, indifferent, grouchy, anxious, going through the motions, withdrawn, angry, bitter, complaining, engaging in outright sin. Some of you perhaps have a life pattern of leaving those attitudes in your way.

If that's you, when that is you, you have to realize something very important. Even if it is not manifested itself yet in external sin that other people can see, those kinds of attitudes, that indifference, that anger, that anxiety, that bitterness, that complaining spirit, beloved I say this to help you, those attitudes are the warning signs, they are the symptoms that you are starting to drift spiritually and it should be a major concern to you because the reality, the objective fact of

the matter is that whatever causes that in your heart, the objective reality is that this great God of the nations, this great God of glory reigns. If you are in His presence, and if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, this great God has set His affection upon you forever. And you have to realize that indifference and coldness to that kind of majestic sovereign goodness is absolutely unacceptable. You must demand more from your heart; you must demand more from your soul because it is not worthy of God.

As we study Psalm 100, as we go through it together, what I want you to see, we titled it “A Call to Worship” but it is a call to joyful worship. The psalmist here is not calling you to bring your physical presence in to a locale so much as he is telling you to come with joy, a joy that transcends meeting times, that transcends, in our day, Sunday morning. Beloved, this psalm sets forth a mirror of what your heart should look like, a mirror of joy and gladness and thanksgiving and praise and blessing. You see, the Bible sets forth joy as a duty, joy is commanded here. This is in the Old Testament; it is in the New Testament. “Rejoice in the Lord Always” the apostle Paul said, “Again I will say, rejoice”. And I say this tenderly, I’ve said it to myself a lot these past few days as I had to deal with my own heart, when you are not joyful beloved, you are disobedient. The lack of joy is sinful and it reflects sinfulness in your heart. Disobedience calls forth for confession and repentance—that’s right. You need to repent of your cold heart if that’s being you. You need to get in line behind me at the throne of grace and bring your confession to God and say, “God, after all of your goodness to me, in light of all of the great majesty of your being, the greatness of your goodness, and I would be cold and indifferent to that.” There wasn’t one of us in line to meet President Ragan, Governor Ragan at that time, who wasn’t excited to be there, who wasn’t just filled with joy, “Good to see you, Governor, God bless you.” How much more, the King of the universe, how much more, the God of your salvation.

You see beloved, here is what I want you to understand about this, it is a moral obligation, this is only right to respond to God that way, this is only proper, this is the only way that it could be, to be in His presence with anything other than joy is incomprehensible. And the fact that the opposite is so often characterizes us does not justify it at all. Don’t worry about the guy that is sitting on your left or on your right, I’m talking to you.

Now, that’s all searching, welcome to what my life has been like the past few days. Here is the question and it is a very important question that arises out of our understanding of Psalm 100. How is it that I cultivate joyous attitude when I do not have it in my heart? How do I go from point A to point B? How do I go from spiritual indifference to this kind of joy? Man, listen, that is a really important question because it goes not only to how you can experience joy, but more fundamentally, it goes to how you approach to question life altogether. Is it just the matter of pulling ourselves up by our boot straps? Some people would act like it is, some people say that it starts with your will, it starts with you making a decision. They would say, if you are like that, you have to choose to be joyful, after all, the Bible commands it. So if you are discouraged, go, be joyful.

Well, if that’s all the person says to a discouraged heart, they might as well just leave the room because that is not helpful at all, that is not the biblical model at all. You might as well tell a rock to turn in to bread as to tell a cold heart to simply turn on a joyful heart through the mere exercise of the will—it does not work that way. If you are going to go to someone dealing with

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serious life issues, who is weighed down by that with a cheery, chirpy smile and say, “Be joyful,” man, they will kick you out of the room and I’ll open the door for them when they do it because that’s the wrong approach. It is not just the matter of exercising the will, the will is involved, but if that’s all you say, you missed the point.

Some people would say as their response to this dilemma, better men than me, would say, you need to pray that God will make you joyful. That’s a little closer, it brings God in to the picture, but I think even that leaves something out because what that leaves out and what it misses, what an appeal to your will misses in all of that is that your mind has to be engaged in order for you to know joy. If you have lost out on joy, something is missing in your thinking. And I say that not to rebuke you, but to help you see where the issue lies. How is it that you cultivate joy when you are not joyful? Psalm 100 teaches us that you have to use your mind, your thinking, your rational capabilities and go back to some simple essentials. The restoration of joy in your heart as a believer begins by consciously engaging yourself in right thinking. If you are not joyful, I want to be careful how I say this, let’s think about this more in terms of long-term joy or maybe better yet, if you are not joyful, there is a process of going to restore joy. I’m not saying you can turn it on and off like that, but the process of restoring joy begins by engaging your mind in right thinking. And that leads us to our second point from Psalm 100 that I’ll show this to you. We have seen first point, the call to joyful worship, now we are going to see the second point:

## **2. The Reasons for Joyful Worship**

Why is it that you should be joyful? Why ask a question that is addressed to your reason, is addressed to your mind? If you are here and discouraged, I wouldn’t blame you if you say, “Why should I be joyful?” If you ask that out of a teachable spirit, I won’t mind that question at all. I’ll tell you exactly why you should be joyful. Look at Psalm 100:3 where it says:

*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.*

Why should you be joyful? Two sub points to this. Why should you be joyful? What are the reasons for joyful worship?

### **A. The Lord is God**

Joyful worship must be intelligent, informed worship. There must be a fundamental knowledge of God before true worship can take place. And beloved, for the sake of what we are talking about today, listen to me very carefully. You must have a conscious meditation on truth to move you in the direction of joy, truth that transcends your life, truth that transcends your circumstances, truth that would be true if you had never been born—that is where you plug in to find true and lasting and permanent and transcendent joy. It is not about you, the source of joy is not about you beloved, it is all about who the Lord is. Notice what he says again in verse 3, the key word here is “know”. What he is saying is this, he says, for you to be able to shout joyfully, for you to be able to serve the Lord with gladness, for you to come before Him with joyful singing, you need to know something, you need to think about this, you need to appropriate this, you need to call to your mind and remember that the God of the Bible is the only true God.

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Know that the Lord Himself is God, He is the one true eternal Spirit, The God of the Bible is the one who reigns over the universe, who spoke it into existence, who sustains it by His providence, who will bring it all to conclusion where Christ is glorified—you need to know that. You need to remind yourself of these fundamental principles that have nothing to do with you or your circumstances beloved. You have to pull the switch down on your thinking and your anxiety and your concern about what is happening to you. Even though it is difficult, you have to turn that switch off and turn on the switch that says, “What about God in this?”

You talk to yourself and as I have said many times from this pulpit, and as long as they give me opportunity to speak here I will say it a thousand more times, you have got to preach to yourself. You have to preach to yourself and say, “Wait, wait, wait, God, my God, is the creator of the universe. My God rules over all in unchallenged supremacy.” God is in providential control of every circumstance of life, He sustains His people in all their ways. He has set His affection on us, we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. I owe my existence to Him, I didn’t make myself, it depends on Him. Where the gladness and joy begins? Why do they start here? Beloved, in order to know joy, you have to be thinking correctly, you have to be thinking straight. You have to see where you fit in relationship to God. You belong to Him by right of sovereign creation. If you are a believer in Christ, you have the added privilege of belonging to Him by right of redemption, He created you and then He bought you out of sin through the blood of Christ. You are the special object of His care and that truth is not contradicted by anything that is going on in your life right now, it is independent of your circumstances, it is independent of your difficult relationships, it is independent of everything. This is a first principle of right thinking. And what you have to do is you have to think and you have to work out the implications of that great truth that the Lord is God. And you say to yourself, “Okay, why is it that it isn’t working out the way I want it to?” The key to joy is to recognize that your circumstances are secondary to a greater reality, an unchanging reality and that is that the Lord is the God of the universe, He is in charge, and as your creator, He has sovereign right over you.

And so instead of indifference or grumbling, fear or anxiety, you recognize His supremacy and you come and bend your knee before Him and say, “God, I am submitting to you as the one who made me. I did not make myself, my life is completely derivative of your sovereign decision to create me, therefore, whatever comes in my life comes from your hand and I accept that. It is not my prerogative oh God to challenge your wisdom and your goodness in my life.” And you submit to that because you know, because you are thinking that God is God. “He made me and I line myself up on to that.” And when you begin to think rightly about your place and the order of things and the order of God’s design and the order of God’s universe, you set the stage for joy.

This is a side point, but since that right thinking about your creator is necessary to joy, I’ll just allude to this. You can see why the whole drive to evolution, the whole philosophy of evolution undermines any possibility of true joy because it destroys God as the creator, it turns this verse upside down so that it is not that God has made us, but we made ourselves, that’s the road to spiritual disaster, but it’s the side point.

So you start to work these things out about God’s role, God is God, the Lord is God, then you can start to have the attitude that is expressed here in verse 4:

*Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name.*

You say to yourself, “I wouldn’t even be here if the Lord wasn’t God. I’m a sinner, yet He made me one of His children through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. At the very least, I can give thanks for that.” If you are a Christian, you are never without reason for thanksgiving. You can always say, “God, my mind has been so mixed up here, I’ve been so cold and indifferent to you that at the very least Father, I give thanks to you that I have been born in to your family and one day I’m going to see Christ face to face.” You can give thanks for that, can’t you? You can find grounds for thanksgiving and joy in that, can’t you?

But there is so much more, it is not just that the Lord is God that you can worship with joy. A thinking person might say, “Okay, so the Lord is God, but what’s He going to do with me?” Stated a little more spiritually, and maybe going after a couple of holy grails in the way you have responded to trials in the past, I am encouraged and sometimes a little concerned when I hear people that are going through trials when they say, God is sovereign. I have made a lot of people nervous by what I said, I understand that, but hear me out and see what I mean by that. Yes, God is sovereign, yes, God is in control of all of our circumstances, absolutely without question, we’ve already been talking about that in our exposition of Psalm 100. But here is what I want you to see. When you are counseling people or when you are preaching to yourself, here is what I want you to see—you have to say more than that. I can remember when my dad and brother were killed in a plane crash, my immediate response to that was, okay, God is sovereign. You know what? That didn’t really do much to comfort my heart because my unsaved family that I had been praying for years were suddenly rotting in hell forever and God was in charge—that’s the dilemma.

Here is how you unravel that dilemma. It is not just that the Lord is God, but, the next sub point here, that is so crucial:

### **B. The Lord is good**

Look at verse 5 with me:

*For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations.*

God’s sovereignty is not an abstract, austere, unfeeling sovereignty. He is a good sovereign, He is a faithful God, He is a God full of lovingkindness. He is not arbitrary in what He does, He is not arbitrary in your circumstances. He is good and loving and faithful. And to know joy, you have to stir your mind up. In some ways the most important word in this psalm is found right there in the beginning of verse 5, look at it with me. “For...” here in verse 5, with that word, “For” the psalmist is giving you the reason why you can shout for joy, why you can serve the Lord with gladness, why you can sing joyfully, why you can be thankful, why you can praise the name of this God. “For”, notice this beloved, this is the key to unlocking the full wisdom of this psalm. This psalm does not end at verse 4. The psalmist doesn’t just say, “Shout joyfully to the Lord and serve the Lord with gladness, amen.” No, no. He tells you why you can do that. He

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addresses things to your mind to understand that when you take them in and appropriate them and meditate on them, then it moves your heart in that direction. That's why it is not enough to simply say to somebody, choose joy. The biblical model of making that command is to give people reasons that their mind can understand so their heart will respond with the attitude that you desire.

Shout joyfully to the Lord because He is good. This sovereign God who is under no obligation to you whatsoever and His goodness has set His loyal love upon you as a believer in Christ and He is going to be faithful to you through the end of your life and beyond your life to all generations. This God who reigns in might and supremacy is good, He is good. And that means the fact that He reigns and the fact that He is good means that everything comes out right in the end. Everything else, even a plane crash is details to the overarching principles that God is God and God is good. Everything else lines up under that in the end. And that is why the believing heart can rejoice. That is why the believing heart can say, hallelujah, God reigns, hallelujah, God is good. The dirt and the crud of this life and all of the things that weigh me down I'm not going to win out in the end, hallelujah.

Beloved, that is good. When the Bible talks about the goodness of the Lord, let me give you a verse that you can look up later. In Exodus 33:18-19 and in Exodus 34:6-7, it talks about what the goodness of the Lord is. And in that passage, when God made His goodness pass in front of Moses, He declared things about His character. In Exodus 34:6 it says:

*The Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "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..."*

That's the definition of the Lord's goodness. This God who reigns is compassionate and gracious. This God who reigns is slow to anger against sinners. This God who reigns abound in lovingkindness and truth. This God who reigns forgives sin. Every spiritual mean that you could ever have, you can find it at His throne and you find in Him and you come to Him through faith in Christ, you find Him willing to dispense all of these blessings upon you.

Beloved, that is good, the universe, the earth and all that is within it is under the perfect control of a good God who overflows with lovingkindness, a God who will forgive sin, and yet a God who will not sacrifice justice and righteousness in the process. When God is God, things will be good and things will be right—Hallelujah. I don't have to figure it all out, I don't even have to worry if none of my dreams and aspirations were ever met. In the end, I know this Lord who is God and this Lord who is good and I trust Him.

And beloved, here is the point, here is how you work it out in your mind, because He is like that, because God is who He is, you should serve Him with gladness. You should be happy to be under the lordship of a God like this because He will do good to His people in the end. So if you have been a joyless Christian in the past few days, past few weeks or months, you need to think through all of these things and tell yourself something like this, "I must look at my circumstances differently. My life flows from a God who created and redeemed me. My life and all that is in it

comes from this God who is good and faithful and merciful forever. I am part of something that is bigger than I am, I am part of an eternal plan of a good God and somehow this is all going to come out for my good in His glory in the end. My trust in Him will be vindicated and shown to have been wise and proper and right.”

When you work through it like that beloved, when you have engaged your mind in that kind of meditation, you come out in the end and say, “That makes me glad, that makes me joyful. This is really, really good. God has set His affection upon me, never to take it away and I can be joyful. I can sing with all my voice, I can bless His name for His goodness and thank Him for ever for all of His blessings.”

So you look behind you, you look round you, you look ahead and in all of it you see the sovereign good God doing His work and you put your circumstances aside and say, “Those things will not ultimately control my heart response to God because my heart response to God is depended upon something that is inherent in in himself and independent of me.” And so you look at the eternal, you look at the absolute, you look at unparalleled goodness and you rejoice in it and you rejoice in Him. And then you say, “Yes, ‘Serve the Lord with gladness’ ‘Shout joyfully to the Lord’ ‘Come in to His presence with thanksgiving’ I’m there, not because somebody has exercised their will upon mine, but because my mind understands, my heart responds in gratitude, and now I’m ready to go forward to serve this great King with joy.” Let’s pray.

*Our Father, we rest on your sure word. We are in awe of your Godhead. We proclaim your matchless sovereignty over the nations and recognize O God that in your sovereignty, intrinsic to your sovereignty is your goodness, your love and your faithfulness. You so transcend our thinking, our ways O God that you can express these things in five simple verses three thousand years ago and yet see it endure to this day. O God, we feel the joy which is commanded in this psalm in the strength of your goodness, your lovingkindness and your faithfulness. We come in to your presence even now in obedience to this psalm. We declare our gratitude and with spontaneous joy flowing out of our hearts we say thank you God and we declare your majesty of your name. May you sweep up all the things that distract us, all of the trials and all of the bad relationships and all of them, you sweep all of them and cause us to see them dissolve in the midst of your greatness and your goodness, satisfied with transcendent joy, and serving you in the midst of those distractions rather than seeing those distractions pull us away. Joyful worship is your rightful response O God, we give it to you now and ask for your grace to carry it forward in the days to come. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*