

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
November 21 / 22, 2012
Thanksgiving Day**

Psalm 100

Praise the Lord this Thanksgiving!

- 1. What he has done is gracious and unending**
- 2. So let your thanks be joyful and unending**

Hymns: 610 – 611 – “Praise the Lord with the Sound of Trumpet” – 614 – 233

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

Psalm 100 - A psalm. For giving thanks.

¹ *Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.*

² *Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.*

³ *Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

⁴ *Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.*

⁵ *For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

One of our area pastors wrote a devotion with some interesting comments about Thanksgiving:

“We Americans have a strange way of celebrating Thanksgiving, don’t we? We load the table with food to satisfy double the number of persons present – and then we attempt to make up for their absence by consuming much more than we should. We head off to the couch to sleep off the meal or take in a football game. And the next day, Black Friday, we spend lavishly on ourselves and in preparation for Christmas. Does it seem to you, as it does to me, that our Thanksgiving

has become quite a bit about ourselves, rather than a time to give thanks to God?”

Now don’t get me wrong. I think Christians can keep a proper perspective on what the holiday is about when food abounds around them and they relax with family and friends. (I hope to do so today!) Yet isn’t there a temptation to make Thanksgiving more about ME than about thanks to God? And for the world around us, I believe there are many who celebrate this long weekend with mostly themselves in mind!

Therefore, let’s begin our Thanksgiving Day with proper thoughts about what the holiday is about, so the rest of our day with food and family is regarded with the proper perspective!

Let’s do that by focusing on Psalm 100: *“Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”*

Today, we will see why we will “Praise God this Thanksgiving!”

- 1. God’s blessings have been gracious and unending**
- 2. So let our thanks be joyful and unending**

Some background to this psalm might be helpful:

- Psalm 100 is the only psalm that has the heading “For giving thanks.” Therefore, it’s a very fitting psalm for us to focus on today.
- It comes at the end of a section of psalms (93-100). In that section, much of the material focuses on how “Our Lord reigns!”
- Some speculate that this psalm could have been used when worshipers at the Temple brought the voluntary thank-offering to God. Perhaps as the

cup of thanksgiving was poured out ceremonially, the worshiper could say this psalm of thanks to the Lord. Today, we are using this ancient psalm in our Thanksgiving worship at God's house too!

1. What God has done is gracious and unending

The first thought we can focus on is in verse 3: *"Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture."* Have you ever heard someone call themselves a "self-made man?" Such a phrase means that a person has made their own career or business all by themselves. Perhaps they even built their own house on their own land. Psalm 100 makes it clear that in actuality there is no such thing as a "self-made man." God made us. This is reminiscent of Psalm 139, which says: *"You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."*

God makes it clear that we can't ultimately call anyone "parent-made" either! Often we think we're in control of creating these little ones that look like us and act like us. **However, God is the One who is clearly the Maker.**

When we see what we've "made" many days, we must confess that we've only made a mess of our lives. Our sinful nature has reared its ugly head in anger, jealousy, greed, and more. We have made a mess that required a Savior to be sent for our sins!

In v. 3 the psalmist makes it clear that God has also claimed and gathered us. We clearly see the shepherd picture in this psalm. He has made us his people and his sheep. If he has made us his people, the sad fact is that at one time we did not belong to a people. Did

you know that in Hosea 1, God says to the new father Hosea, *"Call (your son) Lo-Ammi (meaning "not my people), for you are not my people, and I am not your God."* God had the prophet teach the nation of Israel that they were not his people at that time, because of their idolatrous and evil behavior! What a powerful lesson.

This is a sad thought. Everyone wants to be part of a group or family. In fact, down through time stock words for a group of people have been coined, such as "Volk" or "community." People want to belong! But at one time, we were not part of God's people. He had to gather us, and it is clear who did the gathering – It was the grace of God. Could Abraham ever say that he made the first move to be in God's family? Look at how God called him and blessed him. He made him into a great nation with its own land and a Messiah to come! **It was the grace of God that gathered him.**

Look at how God in his grace even called back his exiled people from the land of Babylon, so the Savior could come into the world. **Despite their evil behavior, God in his grace re-gathered them back to their homeland.**

It has been the same with us. For many of us, we were baptized as infants, claimed and gathered by God because of his grace. How comforting! **And how gracious God has been in making us his people because it cost the life of his Son, the Good Shepherd. What a reason to be thankful today!**

Psalm 100 tells us one more thing about God to be thankful for. Verse 5 said, *"For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations."* There are some special Hebrew words in this verse that are hard to catch in translation:

- 1) Love – HESED: Eternal, active love; kindness for one inferior
- 2) Faithfulness – AMUNAH: firmness, steadfastness, fidelity, faithfulness, trust

Isn't that welcome news for us today? In an age that rues the fact that integrity, reliability, and faithfulness is gone, isn't it wonderful to hear that our God is not unfaithful and unreliable?

Isn't it a blessing to know that he does not change in his constant love?

These words are part of that well-known prayer we often pray: "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his love (mercy) endures forever." We often pray that at mealtime. Part of this prayer is all throughout Psalm 136, as God's OT people recounted his faithful love to them. It was a prayer prayed at the dedication – and re-dedication – of the Temple. It's a prayer that we pray after Holy Communion in one of our liturgies. **God has given us gracious and unending blessings!**

2. So let your thanks be joyful and unending

Therefore, it's no surprise that our psalm describes the response of believers who know these facts about God. Verses 1, 2 described how the psalmist felt: *"Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs."*

The word translated "worship" in those verses by many translations is actually the Hebrew word meaning "to serve." Do you see the implications of knowing that? Serving God doesn't just refer to our worship life, but to our whole life! In Romans 16 Paul wrote, *"You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life."*

Paul referred to his life now as "slavery to righteousness," and even gladly claimed that fact! He was determined to serve his God

faithfully. And why? Because *"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* Because of the sacrifice of his Savior for his sin on the cross, Paul gladly considered himself a servant of Christ with his whole life. We also serve our God daily in this way.

Psalm 100 also speaks specifically about our worship life. Verse 2 says, *"Come before him with joyful songs."* Verse 4 also says, *"Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name."* Some people wonder why Christians would go to worship God in his house. Why spend a good part of your Thanksgiving Day and your Sundays here? But is it really a mystery? Don't the things we've mentioned give us a natural reason to come to the Lord's house with "joyful songs?" With "thanksgiving and praise?" To "praise his name?" Psalm 100 gives us the distinct feeling that our worship is not only natural, but is not a "mumble." It is not something a believer is self-conscious about. It's a reason to cheer and sing!

This sound of worship is beautiful in our Lord's ear. He loves to hear his children call on his name and praise him. Think about how earthly fathers like to hear their children call to them. How many earthly fathers here have not been delighted to hear their little child finally say the word... Daddy! You might even prompt them to say it again! "Daddy!" It is a sweet sound. It also is sweet to God's ears, not because of an ego trip, but because it is what he has created us to do. Adam and Eve were not originally created as animals, but as creatures in God's image to walk with him and converse with him and to have communion with him. It is only natural that his people desire the same today. And our praise for him is unending, just as his grace to us is unending in its blessings, which will last forever in heaven.

Finally, on this Thanksgiving Day we can recognize that our praise and thanks to God come at a very fitting and meaningful time of the Church Year. The second part of the Church Year is coming to an end, where we focus on the life of God's Church. (The first half is about

the life and works of Christ) In this “non-festival” part of the Church Year, we see how the Holy Spirit builds up our Christian faith and life. Today, as the end of this part of the Church Year impends we gather for a big “thank-you” to God in his house.

So **“Praise God this Thanksgiving!”**

- 1. God’s blessings have been gracious and unending**
- 2. So let our thanks be joyful and unending**

May the Lord lead us to be truly thankful for who he is and all that he has done! Amen.