

Over the next few weeks Adrian and I are going to be leading us through a study of some of the psalms.

In one sense the book of Psalms is simply a hymn book. But there's nothing simple about it.

It is made up of 150 separate songs that were written over a period of time that is almost equal to the entire Old Testament: from the time of Moses to the Babylonian captivity.

The Book of Psalms is actually divided into 5 books and the theme and order of those books seems to correspond to the five books of Moses.

Some of them were written to be sung as corporate worship, to be sung by choirs of Levites in the tabernacle and temple, to be sung during specific festivals, to be sung by pilgrims as they made their way "up" to Jerusalem for the festivals. And some were written as individual prayers.

They also contain almost every topic covered elsewhere in the entire Bible.

Many are simple songs of praise but others contain profound prophecy, theology and history.

Psalms 22 gives us the most intimate insight into how Jesus experienced the crucifixion with amazing detail, but was written 1000 years earlier.

Psalms 23 is probably the most famous poem of comfort in human history: "The Lord is my shepherd."

Psalms 51 is David's confession to God when he is confronted with his sin of lust for Bathsheba that led the nation to shame and ruin.

Psalms 83 lists a group of nations that would unite against Israel, except never before have those nations ever united against Israel unit now. Today they are the group of Muslim nations that surround the state of Israel, many of which have called for Israel's annihilation.

Psalms is said to be the most-read book of the Bible, and it's the one Jesus quotes from more than any other.

And Adrian and I are going to cover it all in four weeks - or maybe not.

But our task this morning is to look into Psalm 100.

It is one of the more recognizable psalms. It is now of the most read psalms and is used in Jewish, Catholic, Anglican and Protestant liturgies.

It's a rather short one so let's take a look at it.

[Psalm 100

1 Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth!

2 Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy.

3 Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name.

5 For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.]

Now that is from the New Living Translation and that is the text we're going to unpack this morning but in case it sort of seems familiar but you're not quite sure, let's read the King James version.

#### Psalm 100 KJV

- 1 Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.
- 2 Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing.
- 3 Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
- 4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.
- 5 For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

"OOOOOH. That one."

That's closer to the wording we're familiar with from hymns and camp songs.

Okay back to the wording we'll look at this morning.

#### Psalm 100 NLT

- 1 Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth!
- 2 Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy.
- 3 Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.
- 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name.
- 5 For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.

You'll notice it's 5 verses but for our study we're going to break it into 4 parts.

1. Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth! Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy.
2. Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.
3. Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name.
4. For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.

[Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth! Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy.

A call to worship]

[Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, [the sheep of his pasture.

A reason for worship]

[Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name.

A call to worship]

[For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.

A reason for worship]

## The Farmer's Folly

You may have heard of the old farmer and his wife. They're sitting eating breakfast like they've done a million times. Finally the wife makes a comment that she has been rehearsing for several months now.

"You never say you love me."

The farmer lets out a long sigh and without looking up says, "I told you I loved you when I married you. If it changes I'll let you know."

Those two people give us a typical look into how God made some of His characteristics stronger in Eve and some stronger in Adam when He created them.

Let's not argue about who is right here. That will only ensure a very awkward ride home from church for many of us. So let's take a different angle.

We'll just look at the farmer. If he decides to tell his wife, on a regular basis that he loves her - and he's a honest man so he's telling the truth - every time he gets ready to say those words he will kick start in his brain a chain reaction of thoughts about why he loves her, what he loves about her. By saying "I love you" and meaning it, he has set his thoughts to acknowledge the good things about her and the good things she brings to his life. The result is a happier farmer.

[Praise God.]

The Bible often tells to praise God. It's a command.

And I admit that I was once one of those people who looked at that and said, "God is selfish. He says He loves us but He just wants us to bow down to him and worship him. How selfish is that."

I don't think so. God doesn't need my praise. He has choirs of angels. He hears stars singing. Some of the finest composers and greatest singers the earth has even known is His presence. He has no need of my squeaky little voice. There are only two reasons why He would want me to praise him. One is that He loves me. It's like the feeling you get the first time you're holding your new-born child. They can't really see you, they don't know you, but for some reason that tiny little hand grabs your finger for the first time and that's it, you're bonded, your connected, they're yours and you are theirs. There's love.

The second reason is that I need it. I need to know that I belong, that God knows me.

And just like that farmer, when I set my mind to worship God, I am reminding myself of all the good things I have in Him. I am better for it.

[Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth! Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy.]

When you have a new job and a new boss, one of the most important things is figuring out how the boss wants to be treated. It tells you a lot about them.

If they want you to be fearful of them, they probably live in fear. If they hint that they're like to see you working through your lunch and putting overtime that keeps you from your spouse and kids, well...

This is how God wants us to treat him: with gladness and joy. If our praise is a sacrifice, a duty, boring and bitter, it's not God's fault.

And so we

[Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.]

We acknowledge, we remind ourselves that He is:

The Supreme Being  
The Creator  
The Keeper  
of US.

And this is where it is so easy for us to stumble. We have a stubborn streak that goes right back to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. In fact it goes past that to Satan, the enemy of God and his fallen followers: This inner voice that tells us we need to be strong and independent, and look out for number one.

We like it when God teaches us and empowers us and cheers us on as we work for Him and for us.

But we avoid words like submission and obedience. They don't feel right.

So Let's look at an amazing aspect of God's character.

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, all through the old testament there are hints and examples of the ONE God being a triunity, a trinity of persons. But when the SON of God also becomes a son of MAN in the person of Jesus Christ this understanding of God becomes much more vivid and specific and we get glimpses of how the Father, the Son and the Spirit actually interact.

One thing that is obvious is that Jesus - the Son of God - the fullness of God - God in human form - prayed to his father and worshipped His Father. We often read about him going off by himself to pray to the father. And we know he went to the temple a lot and even though we aren't given a lot of stories about him offering sacrifices and performing rituals, we do know that the religious leaders who were looking for any reason to discount his claims of messiahship never bring it up. They never question his religious fervour in fulfilling the laws and traditions of a Jewish male.

Jesus prayed to the Father and worshipped the Father.

But we're told much more about the interaction of the Triunity like:

When Jesus tells us to pray to the Father in Jesus' name.

When Jesus says his words are not his own, he only says what the father tells him to say.

He only does what the father tells him to do.

That his followers have been given to him by the father.  
And Jesus says he will send the spirit.  
The spirit will do what Jesus tells him to.  
That the job of the spirit is to point people towards Jesus so we can know Jesus because he points us to the father.  
That the Father loves the Son.  
The Father raises the Son to the highest place of honour.

And we find in this Divine Family constant examples of following and obeying and preferring-others-over-themselves and mutual submission and love in action.  
And WE were created in THAT image.  
And we know it.

We crave belonging.

Just about everything we do is an attempt to show that we belong to one group or another. The clothes we wear, our appearance, the car we buy the kind of house we choose to live in or wish we lived in. The sports teams we cheer for, the music we listen to, the authors we read, the movies we choose to see. There's an element of each of those choices that is us belonging to a group.  
Our tv shows have laugh tracks because we'll enjoy them more if we know that other people have the same twisted sense of humour as we do.

It's good to belong. It's a God-like quality to belong.

And those who reject that idea - those who don't want to fit in to a big group - they go and make a small group - they all dress like this and pierce this and tattoo that to prove they're part of the group that doesn't belong to a group.

Psychologist, sociologists, counsellors tell us over and over again how important it is to know where we fit in, where we belong.

And it's our sin nature that repeats the lie of Eden and says, "Well that's all well and good, we can't escape it, but we certainly don't belong to God!"

How do we fight that sin nature? We worship. We praise God. Because it puts everything else into perspective for us. We need it.

And so we

Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

We acknowledge, we remind ourselves that:

- 1) The Lord is God  
There is a Supreme Being and He knows us by name.
- 2) He made us, and we are his.  
There is a Creator who designed us on purpose - in His own image.

(I cannot begin to talk about the importance of creation vs evolution because I won't want to stop. We will touch on it briefly next week when we look at Ps 139 which states that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Let me just say two things. We are often told in scripture that believing in a creator is foundational to faith and rejecting God as creator leads to endless problems. The second thing is this; the Bible has a few chapters that talk about HOW God created but EVERY single chapter has something to do with how God REDEEMS. I think it's fun to argue about how God created but let's keep it in Biblical proportions. If we're going to spend this much time (small) talking about how God created then we should this much time (big) talking about God redeems.)

3) We are HIS people, the sheep of HIS pasture.

He is our Keeper: our active guide, active provider, active protector.

4) But also WE are His people.

We are part of a group, part of His Congregation, part of His Church. He decided that for our good.

Remember that aspect of the Trinity we looked at: examples of following and obeying and preferring-others-over-themselves and mutual submission and love in action.

Now keep that in mind as you read the next verse that is part of a prayer that Jesus prayed for you and me:

[John 17:22 "So they may be one as we are one."]

It also helps us understand another verse:

[John 13:35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.]

When we love one another we are acting like the trinity.

[Matthew 13:24-30 Parable of the Wheat and Weeds/Tares. Luke 9 Fire From Heaven]

In case you haven't planted wheat or confronted Samaritans lately, think of it this way.

Let's say you've been travelling in Asia or Africa, you've been gone for a while and you're homesick. So you find a McDonald's to get a taste of home. You haven't seen many white people but you notice the guy ahead of you in line is white. Interesting.

Then you notice he has a Canadian flag sewn on his shoulder. Your first reaction is, "It's probably an American trying to get better service."

But as he turns with his Big Mac and Coke he bumps into you and he apologizes, "Sorry about that, eh", and you notice he's wearing a Saskatchewan Roughrider's jersey.

So you say can I sit with you? And you are instant best friends. You sit there and find out as many things as possible that you have in common. It reminds you you're a Canadian.

But think of another scenario. You're in Vancouver, BC Place, at a BC Lions game. And you go to the concession. The guy ahead of you turns around with his \$14 coke and \$18 hot dog and bumps into you and you notice he's wearing a Saskatchewan Roughrider's jersey. And you think to yourself, "Not another Riders fan. They're everywhere. And Saskatchewan isn't even playing. It's the Lions and the Stampeders. Riders fans are like a disease in Canada. And what's with the watermelons. How low an IQ do you have to have buy a watermelon, scoop out the guts and wear it like a hat. It's a waste of food. Think of the starving children in the

former Yugoslavia. It's bad for the environment. And he says, "Sorry about that, eh" and you say, "Go back to Corner Gas you loser."

As we gather together in a God-honouring and God-like manner, it's not to focus on what separates us. "They do that when they worship. They do that when they pray. No wonder; look what translation they read. You believe WHAT about antisestablishmentarianism?"

Think about all we have in common:  
You believe in God? Me too.  
Jesus is your saviour? Me too.  
You pray? Well I pray.  
You like to worship? I like to worship.  
I love the Bible too.

And thank God that there are people in this Church that are different than you. That means when they leave this building they can reach people you can't. And you can reach people they can't.

But when we're together we can worship as one with so many things in common.

And just like praising God is good for us as individuals, praising God is good for us as a group. We need to see each other loving God and admitting our need of God.

But let me offer this challenge: Be sure that what is unique about Sunday mornings is that we are 'praising God as part of His people', and not simply that we are 'praising God'.

As we said, praising God is for our benefit and we need to do it daily. We have messages coming at us all the time, for our mental sanity, for our spiritual survival, we need to fit praising God into our daily routine.

It doesn't need to be singing and dancing. You don't need a worship band to lead you. But it does need to be conscious and deliberate.

Read a psalm of praise every morning. Add three items of praise every time you say grace for a meal. Listen to worship music in the car.

If Sunday morning is the only time we praise God, it's so easy to get distracted, to feel like it's not meeting our need, to think we could get into more if it was a different style of music.

What's special about Sunday morning is that we worship TOGETHER. We have the rest of the week to choose the style, the volume, the speed. But here it's a family gathering. WE come from our different worlds just to be together, just to sit around the table with out Father at the head and the know that we belong.

And so we:

[Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name.]

[For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.]

The Farmer's Wife's Folly

Let's get back to that old couple for a minute. The farmer's wife has to learn a few things too. Yes, it would be good for both of them if she heard "I love you" a little more often but she also has to understand something about her husband. Every time he plants or harvests the field,

when he paints the house or fixes the car, he has her in mind. So many things that he does are his way of showing his love for her. And she needs to look for those things and be thankful.

We do praise God for miracles, for special guidance, for things that are out of the ordinary, but with God even the ordinary is miraculous.

Does it feel like God isn't touching you, isn't reaching out to you, isn't a part of your life?

Then:

Give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.

Praise him for the mundane: for sunshine and rain, air and food, eagles and dogs. He is the creator of all, it is His and he shares it with us.

I admit we've been looking at Praise as it relates to us.

Yes: God is worthy of Praise. We could talk endlessly about that.

But this morning I wanted to encourage you, to challenge to embrace the Power of Praise

[for your mental health  
for your spiritual health  
for your joy and peace  
for the strength of the Church  
for the benefit of your fellow believers]