

June 22nd 2014: Psalm 100: Visit of Acappella Praise

Psalm 100 is surely a good psalm to read on a day when our hearts have already been uplifted by the singing of our visitors. But it's much more than just a good psalm, for it contains a strong challenge aimed at each one of us.

It's a psalm that calls the people of God to come before Him with an explosion of joyful noise. To surge into the Temple to praise God together with an excited heart, bursting with joy to the Lord. To shout out words of acclamation and to worship Him with gladness.

One writer likened the initial verse of this psalm to a single trumpet blast that calls the worshippers to come together with lots of joy and lots of noise.

Just the other day Don Byrne was telling me about a local church where the music is so joyful and loud that the ushers on the door hand out earplugs to the congregation as they enter.

Well no one who went into the Temple on this day of praise and thanksgiving would have been given earplugs. For this joyful noise that they were called to make was to be a personal testimony of their deep understanding of God and their connection to Him as His people.

That is why v3 goes on to give these worshippers an instruction they must think carefully about before they dare to come in worship before Almighty God.

***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.***

For me this central verse is also the most important direction that the psalm gives. For whether our worship is loud and joyous or soft and joyous, the vital thing is that it arises out of this deep understanding of who God is for us.

Know that the Lord is God. This Hebrew word Know involves a deep inner acceptance of the truth which is acknowledged.

We come this morning to give God the worship that He as God deserves, for we know that He is truly the One and Only God.

I often talk to people who never go near a place of worship but who tell me that they believe in God. And I wonder how much they really know and accept about God. John tells us in 1 John that God is totally love, but that doesn't mean that He is a pleasant and kind old man who doesn't mind when we ignore Him, disrespect His moral laws, and give Him little or insincere praise and worship. For John also tells us that God is Light. He is absolutely pure and perfect and He judges this world on His standard of perfection.

This means that God cannot look on sin or have fellowship with anyone who has sin in their lives, but also, that His nature demands that all sin must be judged and destroyed.

Yet thankfully, because God is love He sent His Son to die upon a cross and there to receive His wrath against sin. In doing that God justly obtained the right to forgive those who seek His forgiveness by turning their lives over completely to Jesus Christ.

Not giving just lip service to the name Jesus. But recognizing that His great sacrifice for us requires nothing less than the sacrifice of ourself to Him.

I was typing away at this sermon last Friday when there came up on the screen one of those horrible little computer messages. It simply said that it had discovered something extremely corrupt and that it would shut down the computer in 30 seconds. If I wanted to save anything then now would be a good time to do so. I pressed every button I could think of but as it counted down the seconds in front of me there was absolutely nothing I could do to stop it shutting down.

And I realized that such was a simple illustration of the perils of this life. The clock is counting down the time when every person will face their maker. Without Jesus as their redeemer they will stand alone as a sinner. There is nothing anyone can do to stop that day happening. If you have not as yet sought the saving of your eternal souls, then now would be a good time to do so.

But once we have done so. Have gained this connection with God as our Father through Jesus, we have this assurance that ***It is he who made us, and we are his;***

God has made us twice over. When He first created us and when He recreated us as His own in Christ Jesus. He made us a new creation and He

has promised to keep us always. We are His precious possession and even though life itself will sometimes be cruel and painful it can never destroy our souls. For we who believe in Jesus now belong to God. All that we are and can ever be is safe with God and is His forever.

The Jews mentioned in this psalm connected with God through sacrifices by Faith. We who trust in Jesus have connected to God through His once for always sacrifice, by Faith. Consequently we too are assured that

we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

We have a Good Shepherd who watches over us constantly. He has promised to guide us, to feed us, and to protect us from the evil that seeks to destroy us. It is so vital that we realize that and the importance of staying close to our shepherd.

In the devotional book Bread For Today last Wednesday there was a story of a NZ sheep called shrek. For 7 years it had wandered away from the Shepherd and the other sheep and survived in the desolate places of NZ. Then it was found. So burdened with its 7 year fleece that it could hardly walk or stand. So unkempt and uncared for that it looked ghastly.

It so easily happens in a spiritual sense to the one who forgets the shepherd and wanders away on their own. Their life may look OK on the outside but spiritually they are burdened and unkempt. Sheep without a shepherd.

But when we refuse to stray from our shepherd or return to Him if we have strayed; when we reflect on the truth that because of Jesus we now belong to God as our Father. When we know in our hearts that our God is indeed the Almighty God. The first and the last.

Then we gladly come as we have this morning into His courts with praise, giving thanks unto Him and blessing His name. For we know that the Lord is indeed good. His steadfast love endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations.