

Special Focus

November 21, 2021

GIVE THANKS TO GOD

Psalm 100:1-5

We Baptists tend to be orderly people. After all, doesn't the Bible say that all things should be done decently and in order? As a result, we have a set worship schedule to tell us when to meet, and a detailed, printed "bulletin" to preserve our "order of worship." Many a pastor has been chastised for straying from the bulletin (Our big inside joke is that we pastors wouldn't know what to do next if we didn't have the bulleting to go by!). As teens, we were even taught to pray in order. The word *ACTS* was our reminder: *A* stood for adoration; *C* for confession; *T* for thanksgiving; and *S* for supplication. While all of this order is helpful, there are times when it tends to stifle any spontaneity in worship. In reality, the biblical portrayal of worship is a healthy mix of order (see Ezra 8, for example) and the spontaneous reaction to God prompted by His Holy Spirit. The five brief verses of Psalm 100 give one example of unbridled worship. This is not a formula for worship, but rather a jubilant mix of six ingredients. The psalmist uses imperatives, but rather than taking them as commands, the reader should hear them as encouragements to join him in worship.

Shout (v. 1). The King James uses the familiar phrase "Make a joyful noise," but the Hebrew word denotes a shout of excitement, surprise, triumph, or jubilation. It is a spontaneous *act* of adoration. While simply shouting in church would be discouraged, the sense here is one of celebration. The *object* of such adoration is the Lord Himself, and the *audience* involved is all the earth. This is emphatically inclusive, inviting all people from all lands to acknowledge the King when He appears. In this introductory verse, we picture many voices joining as one at the sight of the Lord.

Serve (v. 2). Again, notice the simplicity mixed with the weightiness. Service to the Lord is due; not out of obligation but out of devotion. Charles Spurgeon in his classic *Treasury of David* remarked, "He is our Lord, and therefore He is to be served; He is our *gracious* Lord, and therefore to be served with joy."

Come (v. 2). The word *come* always indicates an invitation. The one doing the inviting is already present. He implores with voice and gesture to join Him. There is no mistaking the majesty implied here. The Lord is indeed already present, seated on a throne. His door is open, and His children are invited into His holy presence. To come before Him is literally *to pass in front of Him, face to face with Him*. While this a place of awe, the response is not a fearful quake, but a joyful song (see Eph. 5:19).

Acknowledge (v. 3). Worship is impossible apart from the profound respect we call *reverence* (see Prov. 9:10). And reverence begins with a realistic understanding of *who we are* and *who God is* and putting those two truths in the right order. Here, the psalmist acknowledges the deity of the Lord: "Yahweh is God." Where do we come in? He made us, therefore we are His. But there is no bondage here; rather the relationship is one of gentle benevolence. He is the King; we are His subjects. He is the Shepherd; we are His sheep (see John 10).

Enter (v. 4). Again, there is majesty implied. *Gates* provide access to the royal grounds, and *courts* allow a gathering to take place there. Worship is both personal as well as corporate, private as well as public. In all cases, there is a *nearness* involved. No one on the “outside” has the privilege of worship, and no one worships in the temple without a sacrifice. And what is the offering that God longs to receive from His children? Genuine thanksgiving and heartfelt praise!

Give thanks (vv. 4-5). So what is the basis of this genuine thanksgiving and heartfelt praise? The psalmist lists three praiseworthy attributes. First, *the Lord is good* (see Mark 10:18). Second, *His love is never ending*. Third, *His faithfulness is unfailing* to the end.

For reflection: *As we celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday, indeed give Him thanks! But remember that thanksgiving is only a part of worship. What a great time (and a great psalm) to remind our families what real worship looks like. Have a wonderful and blessed holiday season! RLE*