

Sermon for the 2nd Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Psalm 100

Sing to the Lord, all the world!
Worship the Lord with joy; come
before him with happy songs!
Acknowledge that the Lord is God.
He made us, and we belong to
him; we are his people, we are his
flock. Enter the Temple gates with
thanksgiving; go into its courts
with praise. Give thanks to him
and praise him. The Lord is good;
his love is eternal and his
faithfulness lasts forever.

Make a
Joyful
noise
Unto The
Lord!

Praises to Our Lord!

A wife remarked to her husband after a church service, "Did you see what Mrs. Jones was wearing?"

"No," said her husband, "I didn't."

"Did you see how tired Mr. Smith looked? I bet his wife doesn't give him a moments peace?" she asked.

"I'm afraid I didn't," said her husband.

To this his wife replied, "Well a fat lot of good it does YOU to go to church!"

Why do we come here on Sundays?

What is it that draws us here?

What makes some of you come every week without fail?

Why don't you, like the majority of Americans, only come near the church for weddings and funerals?

We come together in this church because it is here in our worship service that God comes and meets us. In the time of Moses, the people of Israel came together in a tent to meet God.

Since the very beginning of the Church at Pentecost, Christians have made a point of coming together on Sundays to experience the presence of God. Sometimes we come here carrying a heavy load on our shoulders. Perhaps the past week has been a horrendous one.

Maybe:

- a. Your health has been poor,
- b. Relationships with others have turned sour,
- c. Work has been dull and uninteresting and you are deciding whether to make a change.
- d. Your financial situation is causing you a headache,
- e. You are struggling with a death,
- f. The seemingly pointless death of someone you dearly loved and you struggle to understand how God could let this happen.
- g. You were faced with a tough decision, and it turned out you made the wrong choice.
- h. You came today with something that has happened that has got you all upset and uptight.

Whatever baggage we bring with us to our worship service, God is ready to minister to us, to help us and reassure us.

We come here to meet God. God ministers to us as he speaks to us after we have confessed our sin. He announces that our sins are forgiven through the death and resurrection of Jesus. The burden of guilt has been lifted from our shoulders and we are assured that God's love is still red hot for us, every though we have disappointed him so much.

We come here to meet God and he ministers to us through his Word. We hear again the words of promise, comfort, reassurances, and hope from God himself. We are reminded that God has made a promise to us to always be close at hand in our time of need. Our baptism reminds us that God's loving arms are always encircled around us, even at those times when we feel that God is far away or that we don't deserve his loving embrace.

He warns us through the Holy Spirit at work in us when we are being side tracked off the straight and narrow, when we are getting our priorities all mixed up and lose sight of what is really important in this life. He guides us when the going gets tough, or when we have lost our way. The psalmist makes a point of saying that "we are his flock" which brings us the image in our mind of a shepherd watching over, protecting and guiding his sheep.

When we come to Holy Communion, God meets us in a very special way. We receive the body and blood that Jesus gave for us on the cross because of his great love for us. We are strengthened, we are assured of our forgiveness, our faith is

reinforced, and our trust in God's commitment to us is reaffirmed. We may come with heavy hearts and confused minds and God ministers to us and strengthens us to meet the challenges ahead of us. The problems may still be there when we leave the church, but in our meeting here with God we are given the power to deal with them . The Apostle Paul told how he faced all kinds of difficulties but he concludes, "I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me" (Phil 4:13).

The psalmist wrote, "God made us, and we belong to him; we are his people, we are his flock." As God ministers to us through our time here, that message is spoken to us again by God through his Word and our worship. No matter what is happening in our daily life, we are reminded that God is real; his power to help is real; we are his people; his love for us never ends.

We come here to worship God because he is worthy of our praise. A children's song says, "God is so good, hallelujah. God is so good, he's so good to me".

- A. We see a lot of hurt in our world.
- B. We see what evil and sin are doing to people's lives.
- C. We experience pain, grief, depression and anxiety.
- D. We often don't understand why we are suffering; why we have to experience such intense pain; why innocent people suffer.
- E. We ask, "If God is good, why am I hurting? If God is good, why doesn't he take it all away?"

But simply because we don't understand, doesn't mean that God isn't good. The problem is not with God but with our perception and understanding of God.

The psalmist doesn't hesitate to say, "Give thanks to him and praise him. The Lord is good; his love is eternal and his faithfulness lasts forever."

God is worthy of our thanks and praise because he is good to us in so many ways.

God is good because he has provided the answer to sin and death through his Son, Jesus. We heard this from Paul in our Second reading this morning from Romans, "Christ died for us at a time when we were helpless and sinful. ... God showed how much he loved us by having Christ die for us, even though we were sinful" (5:6,8). We can do nothing about our sinfulness. We just keep on sinning – we can't help ourselves. God however has provided the answer in Jesus. His death has brought us forgiveness and eternal life. Just that alone makes God worthy of our praise and thanks.

God is good. He has made us; he cares for us and provides for us. He has given us family, friends, and fellow members of the church who provide us with human strength and support in both good and bad times. God's plan was never for us to go through life alone. God, in his marvellous goodness and wisdom, has provided family and friends to affirm, encourage, and support us during the difficult times of life. God has given us family and friends to lean on in times of mourning, hurt, suffering, or pain. Yes, God is good because he gives us friends and family.

We could go on all day talking about the ways God is good to us and we could all tell of times when we have been especially blessed by the goodness of God. Let's simply agree with the psalm writer that God is worthy of our praise. "Enter the Temple gates with thanksgiving; go into its courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise him."

Coming to worship to have God minister to us, and then responding with praise for all the good things that God does for us every day, deepens our relationship with God. We are able to talk with him in our prayers as we ask him to bless our world, its rulers, the church and its ministry and those who need his help.

When we come to worship God reminds us that "his love is eternal and his faithfulness lasts forever". He draws us closer to him as we share in his Son's body and blood in the sacrament.

God's love and power are impressed on us as we respond to his love with our songs of praises, and we are made ready to face whatever the coming week will bring. We are sent out from the service with God's blessing – we know that the blessing of almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit will go with us as we share with others the strength that we have found in the presence of God.

The writer of the psalm starts with these words, "Sing to the Lord, all the world! Worship the Lord with joy." He is excited about coming to worship. He encourages everyone to sing with all their heart. He wants us to be thrilled at the prospect of coming to worship to meet God who is so keen to minister to us in our needs. He wants us to worship the Lord with joy.

"Worship" means that we regard someone so highly for what that person has done for us that we are filled with joy and can only speak that person's praises and give thanks. Praise only comes in response to something someone has done; something that you have appreciated deeply. If you don't recognize what that person is doing for you, you won't praise that person. That goes for praising God also.

There are times when we would have to confess that we have gone to worship more out of a sense of duty than because we wanted to. Have you noticed that when your attendance at worship has dropped off or the thought of going to worship is not filled with anticipation and joy, it's because somehow you have lost sight of the purpose of why you go to worship? Somehow you have lost sight of the goodness of God in your every day life. For some reason, you don't see that God has a powerful effect on your life and you take all that he gives for granted.

Worship is a time when God ministers to you:

- a. A time when God brings you into an intimate relationship with him through Word and Sacrament,
- b. A time when God strengthens you to face the hurts, problems and crises of your every day life,
- c. A time when you can praise and thank God for all his goodness,
- d. A time when you can serve others specially through your prayers, A time when you can respond with thanks and joy.

Yes, we do have a wonderful God. Let's heed the call of the psalmist when he calls out, "Sing to the Lord, all the world! Worship the Lord with joy; come before him with happy songs!"