Service Intro: Some might wonder, “What do we have to be thankful about?” The world is a mess with strife and tension, wars and calamities, hurricanes, fires. The economy is strained with run away inflation.

Here closer to home, there are many stressful events. Waldemar is so weak he can barely get out of bed. Rosemarie and Felix are both deteriorating mentally and physically. These are very stressful times full of sadness and uncertainty. It’s not surprising if you don’t feel like giving joyful praise and thanksgiving to God.

Psalms 42 and 43 were suggested for you to read as a preparation for worship this morning. The Psalmist was also feeling very sad and depressed. He had been captured by his enemies and held captive. They were tormenting him and saying to him, “Where is your God?” He was beginning to wonder why God had forgotten him. He missed going to the House of the Lord. Three times he says: “Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?” We would say why are you so depressed. Then he told himself, “Hope in God, for I will again praise him for salvation from his presence.” (42:5) The answer to His sorrow and depression was to “Hope in God.” God would deliver him and restore His joyful praise.

It is especially in the times of sadness and depression that we need to remember all the things God has done for us and all the reasons we have to give praise and thanksgiving to God. God himself will lift you up and restore the joy to your heart.

That is what we want to do this Thanksgiving, rejoice in the LORD.

Sermon:
Psalm 100 is a great Psalm for leading us to joyful praise and thanksgiving, even when we may not feel very joyful. It is only five short verses, but it picks us up and leads us in the most Joyful Thanksgiving!

This Psalm:
1. Calls us to praise God with Joyful Thanksgiving, and
2. Gives the Reasons for such Joyful Thanksgiving.

“Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands!  2 Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before His presence with singing.

3 Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has 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 to Him, and bless His name. 5 For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations.”

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

When is the last time you shouted joyfully to the LORD? We express our joy with loud shouts in other settings. The crowd roars when a touchdown is scored or a home run is hit. Children squeal with delight when they open a present and shout loudly when having fun playing outside. But when it comes to our worship we seem to have agreed to an unwritten rule that we should be more quiet and subdued in church. Don’t get too excited here.

That’s not what God says. He urges us to “Make a joyful shout to the Lord.” Verse two also could be translated, “Come before His presence with shouts of joy.” The parallelism in Psalm 81:1 suggests that singing ought to be with joyful shouting. “Sing aloud to God our strength; Make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob.” It’s not that God needs us to shout in order for Him to
hear us. He hears the thoughts of our mind and the emotions of our heart. But great joy calls for loud praise, and loud praise lifts our spirits with joy. I have to say, the loud singing this past Tuesday evening was very uplifting. So this Psalm

-1- Calls Us to Joyful Thanksgiving

Notice all the imperatives used to call us to give thanks and praise. vs. 1 “Make a joyful shout to the Lord!” vs. 2 “Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before His presence with singing.” vs. 4 “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, … Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.” These are all commands to sing praises of joyful thanksgiving, but it is not demanding us to grudgingly do something we don’t want to do, “You better sing praise or else.” This is not something we have to do, it is something we get to do. It’s like a mom telling her child who just got home from school, “Go get a cookie and some milk and we’ll talk about your day.” The child doesn’t say, “Oh, mom, do I have to?” No, they jump and skip over to the cookie jar and ask, can I have two?” So it is with us, God fills our hearts with joy from all the good things He does for us on a daily basis and then invites us to express that joy with loud, joyful singing praise for His goodness.

That is what today is all about. It’s not that Thanksgiving is the one time of year that we have to give thanks to God. Far from it. It is a day when we stop to remember all the good things that God has done for us. Especially if we are going through a traumatic or sad time, it is good to stop and remember the multitude of God’s blessings in our life. That fills us with joyful shouts of praise. So let us take a closer look as Psalm 100 reminds us of

-2- The Reasons for Joyful Thanksgiving.

Verse 3 gives us three great reasons for joyful thanksgiving and praise.

“Know that the Lord, He is God.” That seems obvious to us, but there are several reasons for great joy in that sentence. What a joy and privilege it is to know the LORD. Rejoice that that statement does seem obvious to you. For many people it is not. How many millions of people do not know the LORD. They don’t know who He is. They don’t know His great power. And most of all they don’t know His amazing love and salvation. To know the Lord is the an amazing gift that God has given to you. It is the gift of faith. We should thank God every day for the gift of knowing Him.

We not only know Him, but we know that He is God. That means He is the one who is in control of all things. There is so much comfort and peace in this evil world in knowing that the LORD is God over all. The LORD in capital letters, that is Yahweh or Jehovah. He is the God of the covenant “who loved us and gave Himself for us.” The LORD of our Salvation is the God of all the whole universe. And He promises to make everything work together for the good of those who love Him; those that He has called according to His purpose. Psalm 100 is part of a group of psalms giving praise to the LORD. Several of these psalms begin by exclaiming “The LORD reigns.” He is in control of all things. We may shake our head at what this or that ruler does. We might despair when an election comes up and none of the candidates are very trustworthy. We may have pity on our brothers and sisters in Myanmar who are suffering under a tyrannous military regime and wonder why they have to suffer so. But we have great peace and joy knowing that the gracious LORD of our Salvation is the one who reigns in heaven. He will have the last say and He is able to protect His own. That is why the Psalms that tell us the LORD reigns are interspersed with Psalms that call upon us to “Sing to the LORD a new song. Sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD. Praise His name. Proclaim the good news of his salvation from day to day. Tell about his glory among the nations, about his marvelous deeds among all peoples. For great is the LORD and worthy of great praise.” Ps. 96:1-4

There is also something very liberating and comforting in the phrase, “Know that the Lord,
He is God.” That’s right, the LORD is God NOT ME and NOT YOU. You say, “Of course I’m not God.” We know that intellectually, but don’t we often act like we are God? Doesn’t the majority of our stress and worrying, come because we think that some problem depends on me solving it. If I don’t solve this problem, it won’t get solved. Don’t we act like we are in control, at least of our own little corner of the world? I’m not saying we should just stop everything and let God take care of everything. God does give you a role in the things He has given you to care for, but don’t forget He is God, not you. There is a joyful peace in knowing “that the Lord, He is God.” Let Him be God!

The next phrase gives us another reason to rejoice and praise God. “It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves.” It almost sounds funny that God has to say, “We didn’t make ourselves, God did.” But that is how ridiculous this world has become. All the people who deny the existence of God are basically saying that we made ourselves. We are the product of bind chance. As Paul said, people “exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.” Rom. 1:25

Think about how perfectly God created you. In our Bible Class we have been talking about Gender Dysphoria, and the best way to protect ourselves from it is to remember that God has created each of us individually and He made us just the way we are for His glorious purpose. As the Psalmist says, “I will praise you, O Lord, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” Ps. 139:14 Remembering God as the creator also reminds us of everything else that God has created. Everything we have, our food, our clothing, our homes, every convenience in our home all comes from things God created for us to use and enjoy. We owe Him thanks and praise for our life and for all things in this world.

God gives us another great reason to shout for joy. “We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.” O my goodness! What a reason to rejoice! We are His people. Out of all the Billions of people in the world, God has chosen you and made you His child. God says that He knew you even before He created the world. Who can fathom such a thing? That means that not only is the LORD God, He is YOUR God. Think of all that God had to do to make that possible. Some think that we are all God’s children because He created us. But that is not true. There was a time when we were NOT His people. We were born sinful and enemies of God. But God still loved us and gave His only begotten Son, His perfect Son, to take our place. He took our sins, suffered our punishment and died in our place. We in turn receive His perfect righteousness.

God uses another picture to describe what it means to be God’s people. He also calls us “the sheep of His pasture.” What a beautiful picture that God paints for us. Jesus is our Good Shepherd who feeds both our body and our soul. He gives us peace, hope, joy, comfort, satisfaction and contentment. He lovingly takes care of our every need. Rejoice that you have been made God’s own special people and the sheep of His pasture.

Verse 4 calls on us again to rejoice and praise God and in that He gives us another reason to rejoice with thanksgiving. “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.” Don’t overlook the tremendous blessing that we are able to “Enter into His gates… and into His courts.” When Julie and I were in London about 10 years ago, we went to see Buckingham palace. But we could only look at it from outside the gate. We couldn’t even go into the courtyard, much less enter the palace itself. Imagine if King Charles would give you a personal invitation to come into Buckingham Palace, or better yet into Windsor Castle to dine with Him. I can pretty much guarantee that will never happen. But the Almighty God, the one who rules over King Charles and every other ruler in this world, invites you to come through His gates and directly into His courts, into His House.

Every week when we are gathered here for worship, we are gathered in God’s presence, in
His House. We may lose sight of how amazing this is because this house of worship doesn’t look very spectacular, but the fact is we are entering God’s courts and His presence. Treasure that for the great privilege that it is. What a reason to shout joyfully before the Lord.

But there is more. As God’s people, He invites us to enter into His eternal courts of heaven. And that will truly be spectacular. Remember that as you helplessly watch your loved one fade away and eventually leave this world. What we see with our eyes is dreadful. It is so hard to watch your loved one go through that. That is a very vivid reminder to us all of the dreadfulness of sin. Our sin is the cause of all our suffering and finally of our death. But that makes us rejoice all the more that Christ has conquered sin and death for us. Therefore by faith we can see beyond the ravages of sin in the fading body and we can truly rejoice that our loved ones are about to enter into God’s eternal courts in paradise. Your loved one is not fading away into oblivion to be forgotten. They will enter His presence to rejoice and praise Him forever. For that we can rejoice even while there is a tear in our eye.

Finally vs. 5 gives three more reasons for joyful thanksgiving and praise.

“For the Lord is good.” What a simple but wonderful truth, “the LORD is GOOD.” Everything He does is Good—done out of His love. Remember that in those times when all you can see is bad, sorrow and tragedy. The Lord is Good and He works everything out for the Good of those who love Him.

“His mercy is everlasting.” What a reason to praise Him with Joy. His mercy never ends towards His people and the sheep of His pasture. As we pray every day, “His Mercy endures forever.” We continue to disobey God and act like His enemies. “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” Matt. 15:19 That is true of our hearts too. Yet His mercy endures forever. He does not forsake us. He does not reject us, but in His mercy He still loves us and does everything good for us.

And finally, “His truth endures to all generations.” His truth never changes, it never fails. You can believe every word of Scripture with absolute confidence. The world has nothing solid, nothing lasting. Their beliefs are changing constantly. There is nothing that they can hold on to and find their security in. But you have God’s everlasting truth.

I guarantee you, the troubles and heartaches that you are facing right now will not last. They will fade away, but God’s mercy and truth will last forever. Therefore: “Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before His presence with singing.” “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.” May we all say “AMEN” to that, and joyfully do what it says.

Amen.