

08/03/25 - Psalm 100 - "Serve the LORD with Gladness"

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[0 : 00] Please find Psalm 100 in your Bible.! This is called a Psalm for giving thanks.

! Psalm 100.

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come into his presence with singing. Know that the Lord, he is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise.

Oh, give thanks to him. Bless his name. For the Lord is good. His steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

[1 : 13] This is God's word. Thank you, God. Amen. Please pray with me. Oh, Lord, we are indeed thankful that you are our God, and you have brought us to yourself and made us your people.

We pray that you would help us this morning as we look into your word, that word which you as a gracious shepherd gave to us, that you would help us to know you better, love you more, and serve you all the more fully in the world.

We ask and pray this in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen. Well, as you heard from the reading of the word, according to the superscription, as well as the content of the psalm, this is a psalm of thanksgiving.

Therefore, as you could naturally expect, I want to begin with two laments. First is, as I have observed, the lack of what I call apologetic preaching.

Apologetic preaching. By that, I'm referring to the neglect among Christians in the church, particularly preachers, pastors, of preaching the truth of Christ over against false gods and false religions.

[2 : 49] I lament this for quite a number of reasons. Number one, the Bible is full of denunciations of false gods. It's full of warnings against going after other gods.

The Bible doesn't shrink back from this sort of thing. It does it on virtually every page. Sometimes, even when you don't know it's doing that, to the ancient reader, they would have recognized, oh, it's taking a jab at this god or that god.

And that, in part, is because the Lord, quite often, is not even mentioning the name of these other gods. They're not even worth mentioning. But, occasionally, the names are mentioned, because some of us are dull.

Sheep aren't smart. Sheep will walk right off a cliff if the shepherd doesn't pull them back. So, sometimes, the Lord is more pointed. He mentions the names of these false gods as a warning to us.

But, part of the reason this is a problem is it makes Christians easy prey when somebody comes along and begins taking shots at the Bible, shots at the Christian faith.

[4 : 00] And the fact of the matter is, there are religions out there that are not neglecting this sort of thing in their own context. I'm here for a conference. I know some of you are from the conference, but others you heard, it mentioned that there's a conference going on.

We're engaging unbelief, and we're addressing various forms of unbelief, Islam, Judaism, and so forth. And one of the things that we know as we engage Muslims is they're not shy about talking about Christianity.

And part of the reason for that is because the Quran, which comes along centuries after Christianity, makes reference to the Christian faith. Doesn't get it right, almost ever, but it makes reference to it.

And that emboldens Muslims to come forth and challenge us. They believe the Quran is the literal verbal dictation of Allah. It's not inspired in the sense we think of the Bible.

The Bible is most certainly the word of God, but the way by which it comes to us is quite different than what they will convey to us. And so when they take the Quran upon their lips and they speak it to us, they believe they are uttering the very words of their God.

[5 : 14] And this gives them a great deal of confidence. So when they come to you, one of the great challenges is because the Quran so frequently misrepresents Christianity, to even defend Christianity, you have to persuade them that that's not what Christians believe.

But for them to accept that that's not what Christians believe, which is a necessary starting point to prove that it's true, they already have to reject the Quran. And that's just, you know, that's already asking them to do before you even get to the case for the Trinity or something like that.

It's asking them to get rid of their belief in the Quran. Well, the same thing is true among Jews. Jews today are very much unlike Jews of the first century. The Judaism of today is not the elder parent of Christianity or anything like that.

It is a post-Christian concoction. I would love to take a lot of time explaining that, but you can ask me afterwards. It's simply a matter of fact.

And this is acknowledged by quite a number of Jewish authorities. Jacob Neussner, an incredibly prolific author, wrote over 800 books. Imagine that. Over 800 books.

[6 : 22] He's a foremost authority in Judaism. He says, actually, he has a book called Judaisms and their Messiahs, reflecting the fact that there's no one Judaism. There are a bunch of Judaisms, but it's post-Christian, according to Neussner and others.

And this means that it's been developing in the shade of Christianity and in reaction to Christianity. And so there are all sorts of elements that are anti-Christian explicitly in it.

I know this. I have a lot of background interacting with Jewish people. My own wife was Jewish when I met her. We worked at a pizza place, and I would come in, and she would ask me questions. She said, my rabbi said this. What do you say? I would give her answers, and eventually she became my wife, but not before first becoming a believer in the Lord Jesus.

But because of this, I was thrown, you know, there's already a normal, I don't know that it should be, but it is, a normal initial conflict between son-in-laws and father-in-laws.

[7 : 28] And you can imagine the fact that I'm Christian. He's Jewish, and my wife became Christian. It only exacerbated that. And I'd love to be able to, I wish I had an archive of these last conversations we would have throughout the course of my marriage.

I think it would be very interesting for people. But in any case, without getting distracted, the fact is that these groups say a lot about Christianity.

And so these people are prepared in their minds to come against us. Now, I'm not suggesting that you began to formulate in your mind some sort of animosity towards them.

That's not my point. I'm just observing that that is their mindsets, even though we intend they're good. I was always amazed after becoming a Christian. I was converted when I was 18.

I was in prison and deserved to be there and knew I was wretched as I was reading the Bible while I was there. And I heard the gospel and it was such wondrous good news.

[8 : 32] I immediately thought, everybody needs to hear this. And I assumed it would hit their ears like the wondrous good news that appeared to me. And instead, people were lashing out against me and I thought, what in the world is this?

You know, your sins, all of your sins can be forgiven. How dare you call me a sinner? Well, that reminds me, one of the main reasons for bringing up the issue of apologetic preaching and the reason that we should be doing this is because I think this psalm very much addresses certain lines of argumentation against the Christian faith.

So let me just raise one thing that is brought up by Jews and Christians or Jews and Muslims. Jews and Muslims are both scandalized, first of all, by the idea that the infinite God could become flesh. That is scandalous to the Jew and to the Muslim. It's not as scandalous to some others, though it's still unaccepted, because if you think of a lot of the world's religions don't have an infinite God. The vast majority don't. It's nothing to think of a Zeus or a Hera or whoever becoming a man. I mean, they're only a stone's throw from human beings.

[9 : 50] And so when you hear people say sometimes, oh, you guys borrowed this idea from Greek mythology, I'm thinking, there's no such notion in Greek mythology. There's no such notion that the

absolute God became flesh.

Now, don't immediately think that this can just be easily dismissed. This is an incredible thought, one worth thinking about, because it leads to, I think, great gratitude, gives rise to great thanksgiving.

Think about what Solomon said. I read this text the other day in 1 Kings 8 when he constructed the temple. He constructed the temple by God's command. His father's wish was to build it.

God said, no, your son will do this. Solomon builds this temple aware of God's promise, convinced of the truth of it, but as he prays, he says, will God really dwell on earth?

The heavens, the highest heavens, cannot contain you, how much less this house which I have built. So Solomon marveled at this.

[10:53] He wasn't saying God's promise is false, he's just saying, I don't quite get how, how this is possible. How could the infinite God dwell in a temple?

Now, of course, he doesn't think that this is going to be true in this pagan sense. In the pagan sense, it's like God is moving in, right? That's where he is as opposed to somewhere else. He's packed all his bags and that's where he lives and if you want to see him, you got to go there and so forth.

Remember the later statements of the scriptures where it eschews that sort of notion. In Isaiah, it says, heaven is my throne, the earth is my footstool. Paul says to the pagan philosophers in Athens, God doesn't dwell in temples made with human hands.

He doesn't mean that what Solomon said is false. He's talking about their conception of this. He doesn't dwell there as though he's being localized and limited. Certainly not.

So that's the first thing. They're scandalized by this idea. The infinite God cannot, in principle, become a human being. They also, though, think that this is a derogation of God's majesty.

[11:59] So it's not just in terms of the nature of God and his infinitude, impossible for him to become a man. It's also beneath his dignity. Don't the Psalms speak as well as the rest of scripture of God's majesty?

Our God is in heaven. He does whatever he pleases. Remember what King Nebuchadnezzar says after he was brought to his senses? He raised, he lifted his eyes to heaven and he says, you do according to your will among the hosts of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth.

Nobody can stay your hand or say to you, what have you done? Nobody can even question God. That's how great he is. So imagine that kind of being becoming subject to all the things we're subject to.

His mother, his father, other people in the community. They weren't like us. They had a community mindset and other authorities. Quite a radical thought.

And to the Muslim, this is scandalous. And, of course, here's how it comes out from a Muslim mouth. I won't be too guttural. I won't be guttural at all, but you'll at least know that they express this in much more graphic ways.

[13:10] Typically, a Muslim will say something like, your God came out of a woman. As though, you know, there's something terribly bad about that. Personally, I'm happy about the whole thing.

Otherwise, I wouldn't be here. But, to them, this is just beneath God that he could possibly come out of a woman. Then, they say, your God had his diapers changed.

I'm saying this from experience. This is what I've heard countless times. Your God had his beard plucked out. Your God was whipped, spit upon, punched in the face, nailed to a cross.

How could that possibly be true? And all this stuff is repeated by Jews and, in various ways, by other groups that are opposed to the Christian faith. Therefore, I lament that there's not good apologetic preaching.

How do we not know how to respond to this sort of thing? I can tell you there are countless Christians who don't know what to say. They're embarrassed by this. They think, well, yeah, how do I respond to that? And some of them succumb to the Muslim intention.

[14:18] Well, I have another lament. And this one, I lament because it's really a way of entering into this psalm that helps us rise above both of these laments.

But the lament is that people don't know how to approach the Psalter. They look at the Psalter as though it's all about them. All right, I preached on another psalm a few weeks ago and I started it by mentioning the song from Carly Simon, You're So Vain.

It goes on to say, you probably think this song is about you. Most people read the Psalter and they just immediately assume it's talking about them. And of course, it's relevant to us.

There's no question about that. But the Psalter is fundamentally Christological. It is a book about Jesus in the first place. And to the extent that it's of benefit to us, it's because we are in him.

All the things that it says of Jesus are of benefit to us because we are in him through faith. Well, remember the Lord Jesus just to start this off.

[15:24] You all know this but maybe haven't taken full stock of it. Jesus on the road to Emmaus said to the disciples, everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the Psalms had to be fulfilled.

Now the way this reads in the context reads if you're just taking it naturally and not trying to modify it or water it down is as if Jesus is saying the whole thing is about him.

You can't turn a page and not learn about Jesus. Now this takes a great deal of, I mean some of it's quite easy and right there on the surface but there's other stuff you have to dig for.

This is why the book of Proverbs will constantly talk about searching for treasure and working hard for it. Solomon's not, almost never, talking about seeking money. He's talking about the treasure of God's word, his truth.

So there is stuff we have to work at. But I just want to say a couple of things and here again I wish I could say more about the Psalter. What many people don't know is that the Psalter is a very, we call it the book of Psalms but it's actually a five book collection.

[16:34] I mean it is proper to call it the book of Psalms, the New Testament does that, but it's a book that's five books. That should sound familiar to you. It would immediately to a Jewish person make them think, hey, five books in one.

That sounds like the Torah, the law, the law of Moses. Well interestingly when you look at the beginning of this five book collection and by the way if you want to see that all you have to do just to see at least the beginning of this is look at Psalm 1 and you'll see right above it it says book 1.

You ever notice that? Maybe you have because I know you guys are going through the Psalter but it says book 1 as you move through the Psalter eventually you come to Psalm 42 and it'll say book 2. You get to Psalm 73 it'll say book 3 and so on.

There are five books but notice how this Psalter begins. It says blessed is the man. Doesn't say blessed are the men. Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked.

Now you might not know in Hebrew the term man I mean here in English as well it's singular. The man. No question it's singular and the term wicked is plural.

[17:47] So it's talking about a blessed man over and against a plurality of wicked men. This man does not walk in their counsel. Now see when you read that as though this Psalm is about you you start thinking I'm the blessed man right?

I'm the man who doesn't walk in the counsel of the wicked. But then it goes on it says he doesn't stand in the way of sinners nor sit in the seat of scoffers but notice this his delight is in the law of the Lord.

So this five book collection begins by talking about a blessed man whose meditation is the law of God. If you look back in Deuteronomy in the law in 17 and 18 Moses has a series of instructions for the anointed offices of Israel the offices of king priest and prophet.

You know that's one of the great messianic prophecies the statement about the prophet in Deuteronomy 18. One of the great messianic prophecies is found right there but all of this is pointing ultimately to the Messiah the anointed one the one who would be the king the priest the prophet par excellence.

But one of the things you read there about the king that he's instructed to do is he's to write out his own copy of the law of God and he's to have it beside him all his days.

[18:59] That's the perfect king. Well that's what you're reading about here in Psalm 1. This man is entirely devoted to the law of the Lord. Now what's further interesting in Hebrew is the syntax.

I turned the page I don't remember how the ESV does it but in the Hebrew it says in the law of the Lord is his delight meaning the blessed man's and in his law meaning the blessed man's law he meditates day and night.

I don't know if you've caught that. It's calling the law of God this man's law. He's meditating in his own law and then as you move to Psalm 2 it becomes even clearer. Notice it says in Psalm 2 why do the nations rage and the peoples conspire in vain the kings of the earth take their stand the

rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his Christ.

Wait you have a blessed man who doesn't walk in the counsel of the wicked now you have a bunch of wicked men who are taking counsel together against the Lord and his anointed one.

Remember Psalm 1 also says he doesn't sit in the seat of scoffers. What does Psalm 2 say? The Lord sits in heaven and he scoffs at them or has them in derision. They're clearly playing off of one another and so think about it this is the introduction to the Psalter introductions are crucial.

[20 : 16] My introduction is entirely too long but it's still crucial to understand the points of Psalm 100. For those of you that were concerned I'm not going to get there I am. But it's crucial to understand these things.

You have to read them through the right lenses because this Psalm if you just pluck this Psalm out of its context there are all kinds of people who would think they can read this and it's legitimate for them.

Jewish people know this they say it sing it it means all kinds of stuff in their mind but it's not being understood in its context. The Psalter has a context that's part of what I'm driving at.

You might you think of the Psalter typically I don't mean you per se maybe your understanding is a good bit better than what I'm used to encountering but people think of the Psalter as like an anthology it's just this collection inspired hymns to be sure but they're just gathered together there's no particular order you don't think what does the Psalm before this say what does the Psalm after this say like you might in the Gospels what's before and after this getting the context people don't think that way but you should this is a book books have introductions they have a plot they have a resolution they have a flow there's a narrative flow I'm suggesting to you that in this very uncharacteristic way you don't think of songs like this that that's exactly what's happening in the Psalter there's a story being told as you move through the Psalter it's a quite remarkable story but it's all about that blessed man it's all about the anointed one of Psalm 2 so when Psalm 1 says here's the good news when Psalm 1 says how blessed is the man and then Psalm 2 ends forming an inclusio literary device where something's enveloped literarily by a statement that kind of picks up something from the beginning

Psalm 2 ends by saying how blessed are all who put their trust in him who the blessed man the anointed one of Psalm 2 who's also called by the way the son who will rule the nations so this is the introduction to the Psalter there's much more that could be said showing that these chapters really are functioning as an introduction I'm not just being clever here these are introductory to the Psalter it's very well known among Psalm scholarship these days so that means though that you should read the Psalter fundamentally looking for what it tells you about Jesus my laments are over as I said Psalm 100 is a Psalm of Thanksgiving it says that in the superscription the superscription by the way is inspired it's part of the text that's not a heading added by translators that's if you look at the old manuscripts these are there so this is part of the text itself it's a Psalm for giving thanks and then of course the term

[23 : 07] Thanksgiving comes up in verse 4 in fact it comes up more than once that's one indication of what something is all about if you look at a chapter or a section and a word is being repeated it's a tip off this is the point this is what's being driven at so verse 4 mentions entering with thanksgiving and his courts with praise and giving thanks to him so this is a Psalm of Thanksgiving every element of it is calculated to inform us what that looks like what does it look like I was delighted when we came in here at the beginning I don't remember the precise words that were used but you were all making some kind of shout or noise and what have you the literal term here does mean shout right at the beginning of the Psalm make a joyful noise and I was thinking many people we read this and everybody in some churches would be entirely comfortable walking out of here nobody ever having made any shout but the whole Psalm it just seems so ironic right the Psalms will talk about kneeling and doing these other things and you think we didn't do any of that well and I'm not suggesting that everything is to be done at every time there are times and occasions for things but certainly shouting is quite appropriate but this is calculated to talk about this is expressive this is how you give thanks in part is by giving out a noise and of course it's not just a noise it's modified here it says a joyful noise in verse 2 it says come with singing and of course you're to carry over that modification joyful singing so you're to be making noise it's to be expressive it's to be exuberant and of course you're supposed to serve the Lord the Lord doesn't like hypocritical lip service our words are to match our actions so it tells us to come singing it tells us to come making shouts of joy of acclamation and to serve the Lord and to do so with gladness as

well as I said already verse 4 tells us to enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise all that I think is quite easy to see what it's driving at what it's telling you to do but here's the the real thing that you need to be asking yourself and looking into this psalm to understand why why should you be characterized by this kind of thanksgiving such exuberant thanksgiving what could possibly put such joy in your mouth what could possibly lead you to shout joyously well the answer is found twice in the psalm two verses the psalm is actually broken down into two sections

I know in the ESVIC they've broken it down into three but in my reading of it the first three verses are a unit and the last two verses are a unit I won't get into the literary reasons for that but the point is that verses 1 and 2 when it talks about singing and shouting are then grounded upon verse 3 where it says know that the Lord he is God it is he who made us and we are his we are his people and the sheep of his pasture this is the grounds for praising and singing and shouting he is God not Allah not Baal not Dagon not Chemosh this God Yahweh is God the term Lord there is the covenant name for our God the name God gave to Moses he is God no one else he is God this God it is this that grounds our praise and gives rise to it but notice he goes on to explain because that if you don't know anything about the Lord how's that going to help of course no person approaching the Psalter as a Christian or no Jew should either but you don't approach this as a blank slate you know this is a part of Holy Scripture the Lord has revealed himself through many other books the Exodus and so forth so you don't come to this with a blank slate you know who the Lord is but it goes on to say in the Psalm in that verse verse 3 it's he who made us and we are his we are his people and the sheep of his pasture now here's where it gets particularly good if you think about this if you meditate upon this this Psalm is all about us as sheep which means

God is our shepherd right that's the correlative that's the fancy way of saying if Jesus says I'm the son what is he saying God is father you have to point that out to some people of Muslims will often say God is not a father where did Jesus ever teach this sort of thing and I'll say he says he's the son of God and they say yeah but he doesn't say God is his father believe it or not that's what we hear well here it says that we are the sheep of his pasture which means that he is our shepherd now let me ask you a question what do shepherds do well first let me ask this why do we need shepherds I mentioned before sheep are stupid putting it that way because it's true and it helps get the point across more quickly than I'm used to making any point and I need to be quicker here sheep are stupid I said they'll walk right off a cliff they're also smelly they stink they stink really bad and they're dumb so they need shepherds shepherd has a rod and he has a crook the rod is to beat off wolves false religionists false prophets false teachers the like and he has a crook that's used to pull back the sheep from its straying and it leads of course the sheep by the quiet waters and so forth into green pastures that's what a shepherd does the sheep need that the sheep need that sort of thing but there's something else that a shepherd does what happens if a pack of wolves come upon the sheep

I've kind of alluded to this does the shepherd run no that's what a hireling does isn't it a shepherd goes forth and puts his own life on the line to protect the sheep you all know what I'm getting at I'm sure Jesus in John 10 said I am the good shepherd the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep you remember I said a moment ago that a lot of these groups will balk at the incarnation I also intended to talk about the crucifixion that's like the lowest point of all this I did a little I guess he had his beard plucked out he was put on a cross this is the great disproof of Christianity no this is the great disproof of every religion that wants to call itself a religion that looks to God as their shepherd but refuses to see that that God precisely if he is a shepherd must be willing to lay down his life for the sheep if it's necessary when they say our God would not do such a thing it's beneath his dignity then I say he's not a shepherd he's not the Lord he's not the God of the Bible he's not our God and then that quickly leads to this your God cannot put praise in your mouth what is there to sing about when it comes to your God this is remarkable to me sometimes I've

I've heard Muslims they point to the Psalter sometimes and they'll say it says that there's going to be a new song this new song is the revelation that came through Muhammad it's the new religion because after all the old song if you don't know refers to the Exodus when they came out in the Exodus they sang a great song Exodus 15 and it's called the old song the song of Moses when the Psalter talks about a new song when Isaiah talks about a new song he's talking about a new and better Exodus a new and better redemption that's going to come through a new and better shepherd that's the new song in the Bible but the reason I think this is so funny is because anybody who's interacted with Muslims know they don't like music at all Muhammad said music is evil it's

haram it's forbidden so no new song there no song at all there's no song of praise in their mouth there's no reason to shout or praise there's no reason to give thanks for what to whom not to Allah he wouldn't lift a finger to do what our God does but then we could ask this question why why would the God of the Bible be like this

[31 : 58] I mean why would he do that what is it that sets him apart from these other gods well look at verse 5 I mentioned there's two parts that ground all of this this is the last part of the second division it says for the Lord is good his steadfast love endures forever in his faithfulness to all generations in fact I skipped over it but notice it says enter into his gates here it's talking about shepherd sheep entering in through a gate remember I said I know this is a short psalm if you don't set that context you can't really fully benefit from this it's not me being fancy if I try and tell you this is about Jesus the Psalter at the beginning tells you to read it as though it's about Jesus Jesus told you to read it as though it's about him and I'm leaving a lot out that further supports that so here we have a shepherd we have sheep we have gates and then it's but it says grounding all of this the thanksgiving the shouts of acclamation it says for the Lord is good the Lord is good it's talking about what his fundamental character is he is good remember when we use words too cavalierly right

I might say that was a wonderful steak I had the other day I didn't have a wonderful steak the other day I have been steak deprived no but you know we speak like that and so you go to the Bible and it says this is wonderful that's wonderful and you think little of that the Bible never uses the word wonderful for anything but what is true of God or what he does so it'll never say a wonderful steak wonderful whatever God alone is wonderful God alone does wonders that's why it's so remarkable that Isaiah 9 6 says unto us a child is born unto us a son is given the government will be upon his shoulders and then it says this is the name by which you will be called wonderful remember when the angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah to announce the birth of Samson he and his wife asked who are you this is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus the angel of the Lord angel doesn't mean in Hebrew a created being per se can refer to one but it's just a messenger of some sort somebody who's speaking the angel of the Lord is always a way of referring to a divine person who's made a appearance

Manoah and his wife say what is your name and he says why do you ask my name it is wonderful some translations will say it's its inconceivable or it's beyond comprehension not that that's not true in a certain way but it doesn't quite communicate the point he's wonderful that's the child that's why in the Septuagint which is the Greek translation of Isaiah 9 when it translates this it says this is the name by which he will be called the angel of great counsel so ancient Jews recognized that's who the child to be born was so similarly though with the word good we use the word good far too easily but remember how Jesus said the word good should be applied remember the man came to Jesus didn't know who he was and he said good teacher what must I do to inherit eternal life and Jesus said why do you call me good there is no one who is good but God alone no one so Jesus of course is checking this man because he's applying something to him that should only be applied to God without knowing that he is God so it's of course appropriate for Jesus to correct him there's more going on in that story but this psalm is saying that God is good this you just have to get out of the idea you know

I think this is a good steak knife or a good steak or you know that was a good time that we had the word good is used in all kinds of ways but the Bible again just uses it to talk about ultimately God he alone is good so think of absolute goodness just pure goodness take forever to really try and unpack this but you just at least have to get above this idea of good in this mundane way he's full of goodness but it does give us some indication what this looks like towards creatures it mentions his steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations this is good news this is good news I've often been approached by people trying to pull me away to some other message and I know this is true of other people there are all sorts of things that call for our attention trying to pull us to them and I always think to myself first of all when I see anybody following this I think what Paul thought when Paul wrote to just such a congregation he said you stupid Galatians Paul thinks this is absolutely insane you stupid Galatians who has bewitched you in Paul's mind it makes no sense for anybody to go after something else it's like a man who has a wife that he loves why go chasing after somebody else and God is good what is there to chase after sometimes I hear and I won't mention which groups you can apply this as necessary not because I'm above mentioning it but just I like it to be available for broad application I often hear people say you need to come over to our religion and have the fullness of the truth right there are groups professing to be

Christian who will say they have a fullness of truth in them that we lack that we need and I think well wait a minute the fullness isn't found in you or your group or anything of that sort it is in the possession of Christians in a sense but derivatively it doesn't come from me for all of us it comes from the same source remember what John said in his gospel he said the same gospel where Jesus says he's the good shepherd this is the introduction so this is the sort of thing you're supposed to pay attention to to read the gospel right he says in verse 14 the word became flesh that thing that can't be done

[38 : 19] God can't do the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory the glory is of the only begotten of the father full of grace and truth by the way this is an echo of the exodus when God says that he's abounding in grace and truth the Greek version says full of grace and truth or the Aramaic full of grace and truth but then he goes on to say this and from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace we receive from the fullness of Christ in order for me to buy what this person is selling I have to be willing to say that fullness is not found in Christ alone and I have to be willing to say that what has been true for me for 30 years what lifted me out of a criminal lifestyle which I loved engaging in I mean I absolutely love doing criminal things I often tell people you know it's like you have taste buds you can't change your taste buds you either like something or you don't I liked being trouble I was trouble from my youth up there was nothing that could turn me away from that apart from this gospel when I heard it

I thought you know at a certain point you're like well it's no point trying to you know recover from all this nothing I could do to wipe that slate clean when I heard the gospel of Christ it was wondrous good news and I think how can anybody go after something else what's wrong with people that they think something else could be needed well let me begin to wind towards a conclusion I don't know how long I've been preaching but I sense it's probably been longer than I think I hope at the end of it all what you can see here from this is not only that this psalm commands you to have a joyful noise in your mouth and to be expressive of it which should spill over into the evangelism and other things but I hope ultimately that you see the reason for it we have reasons for these things the world's religions don't have a good shepherd they don't have anybody who's willing to lay down their life for them we do how can we not have hearts full of thanksgiving and praise and think of how this impacts every single thing that you do

I often joke with my wife she's a lot more practical than I am I'm terribly impractical I often say if the tree fell into our house and made a hole in the roof she would immediately be thinking okay we need to call this person they handle this and we call this person and I'd be over there with a book thinking ah sunlight now I don't mean to suggest that my wife is not upbeat and positive or anything it's just more practical but some people are actually really dour their heads are always down my classic or my famous or favorite example is Schlepprock from the Flintstones he's the figure always dressed in black has a black hat on and there's a cloud always over him just him and he's walking around saying woe is me but if you're a sheep who belongs to this shepherd then all these things should look differently to you the whole world should look different to you than it does to the unbeliever you should be full of thanksgiving you should be able to thank him even in the midst of great difficulty and suffering right after all right didn't that good shepherd suffer we might look at that if we only look at this through pagan lenses unbelieving lenses it looks like the most horrible thing in all of human history and in a certain sense it is there's no greater crime that's been committed but ultimately what was that all about it's

Peter in Acts 2 and Acts 4 says God determined this for salvation of men right that's my paraphrase but it's the same thing Joseph said when his brothers had done evil to him they thought he was going to get even with them now that their father died and he says am I in the place of God you intended it for evil but God intended it for good so it doesn't mean pretending that somebody didn't do evil or something like that they're responsible for wicked things but God and his sovereignty and his wisdom and all the rest is capable of so working things together that they result in the good of his people and to his eternal glory and praise so we should look at everything differently we should experience things differently we should respond to things differently you should find ways to be thankful for things that happen you get a flat tire sure you got to take care of it but maybe you were going to be two blocks down the road when the semi truck was running a red light but you never know what these things are going to do

I'm going to end with one little story just to give you some indication of I often think that we should all be more encouraged to write down providential events things that happen in our life because I

always I say to my wife often I'll say whenever we're facing something we've faced all sorts of crazy stuff I've got a daughter who's been sick for like seven years just all sorts of fun things and I always you know I'll say to her when the new one comes along I always say do you realize we are currently on the other side of every one of those life ending problems that we had in other words we've made it through every single one of them here we are right and it's good to have examples though right to point to well this isn't exactly an example of some great tragedy well I guess in a sense it is but I got to be brief so the

[44 : 07] I had long wanted to go back into prison this was my great desire I was converted there I thought send me back in I should have never been let out so might as well just go in I every time I go in I click off the day because I've assigned myself 50 years they only gave me enough but I always wanted to go in and I had this weird idea in my head it's a long story that I was I had to be 70 this sounds crazy just follow me here I had to be 70 years old retired from some other job had income from that my kids are grown and gone and so forth and then I could go and devote my time to prisoners and I was planning to in the meantime after I graduated from seminary go to the mission field in Uganda or Italy help plant churches there different ideas and was working towards those and it was in the last year of seminary that my daughter was diagnosed and we realized we couldn't go overseas and get care for her so I thought man what am I going to do now and I sat down with the pastor I was interning under and I was talking to him and in a moment of exasperation not Thanksgiving

I said I wish I was 70 years old and could just go into prison looking across the table at me and he's like what are you talking about 70 years old and I said yeah you know I explained it to him he understood I had time to explain it and he says you could go in right now and he says I'm going to call a guy that I know and he called a guy here's the remarkable providence he called a man who lived in Tennessee I lived in South Carolina and he said hey I got a guy here who's interested in prison ministry and this guy says you're not going to believe this he says I was just getting off my knees praying for the Lord to send us somebody from South Carolina who could be our regional director my bags were already packed and I had already planned to be at two churches this coming Sunday in your area one was your church in the evening so here I am this is my desire to do but I'm not making any preparations exactly towards that I'm planning something else you know the proverb right the Lord who directs a man's steps ultimately and so here it is it all just fell into my lap but before I heard this I was thinking you know this is terrible I can't go to

Italy or Uganda I know Italy sounds so much better than Uganda doesn't it at least for the food I don't know maybe they've got great food in Uganda but the plans were pulled out from underneath me but it turned out that I mean it's not like this caught the Lord by surprise but it was all orchestrated it was beautiful and so to this day I look back to that as my sort of you know I kind of hold on to that is yeah this is where I'm supposed to be right but we all have countless examples like that in our life if we pay attention and we can look back to and what should be the response to those things thanks be to God thanks be to God and so I pray that although much more could be said about this psalm I pray that this much has come through clearly the Psalter is about Jesus we should make sure to take every opportunity to instruct people in how the Bible responds to the attacks that are made against our faith so that we're strengthened by it and also so that we are forearmed so that we might be able to deal with them but also that we look at this psalm and realize what it tells us about God and how it puts the foundation beneath our feet upon which we stand when we give thanks and praise and so forth let us pray take a look and take a look and take a look and take a look and take a look and take a look and take a look and take a look and take a look and take a look and take a look and take a look and take a look and take a look and take a look and