

CCW, 18th June 2017

Exodus 19 v2-8a

Romans 5 v1-8

Thanksgiving

Psalm 100

Matthew 9 v25 -10 v8

What have you said 'thank you' for so far today? A cup of tea, a bowl of cornflakes, car keys, coat, someone holding the door open for you?

One of our readings today may well put you to shame because it's nothing but a song of thanksgiving. In Psalm 100 there's not one single mournful or depressing word: joyful, gladness, singing, thanksgiving, praise, thanks, bless, good, steadfast, endure, faithfulness. Not one single negative idea.

Commentators have suggested that this psalm was written to be chanted by a festive procession as it approached and entered the temple – 'enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.' But we no longer have nor need that temple because, as it says in 1 Peter, we actually are that living, spiritual house with Jesus as the foundation and each of us now a stone in that building. But we are still invited to enter into God's presence with hearts full of joy *and to make a song and dance about it*. With joy on your face and worship in your heart.

The first phrase of the psalm is rendered in some versions as '**Shout for joy**' – shout don't whisper or skulk or slink into God's presence but do it gladly and joyfully. Don't just go through the motions, coming to church reluctantly just because it's what you've always done. Even though the psalms reflect the whole gamut of human emotion, from desperation and loneliness, fear and anger,

bewilderment right on through to pleasure and eternal joy, this psalm is telling us that we're here to meet with the creator of the ends of the earth. We're here to share a meal with him. Do it in style, rejoicing!

Just the first verse alone is full of challenge to us living out our faith in the C21st. It calls on us to be

- *Catholic*
- *Joyful*
- *Hopeful*

Catholic, that is universal – all the earth is made to worship God, no one nation, no one tradition, no one gender, no one culture but the whole of the earth as God created it, in all its diversity.

Joyful, because worship is innate. It is part of our very being that we are made to worship God. The old catechism asks the question what is the chief end of man? The chief end of man is to worship God and *to enjoy him forever*. We are incomplete if we do not keep God in his place, his rightful place. We are joyful, full of joy when we 'know that the Lord is God.'

Hopeful, because all human hope is in God's faithfulness: not our own faithfulness because that is pretty weak. Nor is our hope in our power to earn or to achieve salvation. All human hope is in God's faithfulness that he will keep his promises – to pardon, deliver, cleanse and redeem. In fact in spite of our vainglorious efforts, we still have hope because 'God proves His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' While we were still mired in sin, the price was paid. Give thanks.

But you may say we don't have the right to be proclaiming and expressing such joy given the times we live in?

Is God our creator? Is Christ our Saviour? Is the Holy Spirit our Comforter? Does God the 3-in-1 and 1-in-3 love us? Does God love you? Then tell me that's not something to be joyful about.

God is faithful and loving even when we aren't. We are justified by faith. We have peace with God through Christ. God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. And we can *boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God*. Now tell me that isn't a whole list of reasons to be joyful - because **joy is not the absence of trouble**, joy does NOT depend on circumstances – but **joy is the presence of Christ** (Vander Haven).

Nor are we alone in history in living through bad times and being expected to be joyful. A story from 1636:

'Amid the darkness of the 30 Years War, a German pastor, Martin Rinkhart, is said to have buried 5,000 of his parishioners in 1 year, av 15/day. His parish was ravaged by war, death and economic disaster. In the heart of that darkness, with the cries of fear outside his window, Martin Rinkhart sat down and wrote this table grace for his children:

Now thank we all our God
with hearts and hands and voices;
who wondrous things hath done,
in whom His world rejoices.
Who, from our mother's arms,
hath lead us on our way
with countless gifts of love
and still is ours today.

Joy is not the absence of trouble, but joy is the presence of Christ. 'It is he that made us, and we are his' so go and be joyful about it.

Refs

<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/tpc/psalms-100.html>

William Vander Haven in Zuck, Speaker's Quote Book