



January 6th, 2018

Knowing God - Psalm 100

Sermon Title: I Will Say Thank You

Good Morning Mercy Church!!

Today is a very, very exciting day for Mercy Church. For about 18 months now we've been out of space in our weekend services. Many of you have been a part of our story or have followed it but last year we were gifted a facility by another church in the area that is about the same size as the one we've been meeting in. So, after a lot of prayer the elders and leaders of our church made the decision that by worshipping both in our current location AND in this new facility, we could finally open up room for more people to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. And so TODAY for the first time, we are meeting as one church in two locations!

Our new location will be Mercy Providence Rd and our OG will remain, for the moment, in the Levine Center and will be called Mercy Independence. Now let me say something big: Doing this is a giant leap of faith ok. It's trusting what we believe to be God's calling to as a church. So here's what needs to happen: First, we need to collectively be praying for one another more than ever. This moment is RIPE with opportunity for the enemy to get in here and create all kinds of division. We MUST pray for one another and for our church

collectively. Jesus was BIG on unity. In fact in a couple places he said it is THE thing that will determine a church's effectiveness in reaching the lost with the gospel. So will you commit to spend 2 minutes a day praying for your church?

But here's the next thing: To make this work we need to double our ministry teams. Which means some of you who have been on the sidelines watching here need to step out and be a part of the team. There are needs in every area of ministry from Worship, to communication, to kids, to guest services, to missions, to YOU NAME IT. And listen _____ is how you take that step. Text Mercy? Or What? Tell a pastor?

Ok, with that said lets jump into 2019! For the month of January we are going to be looking into the Psalms. Bible: Hop over to Psalm 100.

This is our third year in a row where we've opened in the Psalms. Here's why: The Psalms are like a collection of poetic prayers that reveal to us a very personal relationship these writers have with God. They praise God, they yell at him, they question him, they cry to him, they celebrate him, and they sit in awe before him. And what you are going to see every Psalm is that God is not some abstract force, he's not a school subject...he is a close personal God that they walk through each day with.

There is a shift I am hoping will happen for you that will reset your spiritual life in January. See people often approach church, the bible, prayer...all these things they approach them as a way for them to know more *about* God. That's why some

of you who are brand new to church this weekend came in here. To learn about God. Almost like God is a subject you study and church is the classroom where you come to hear the young professor with George Clooney-like dashing good looks teach you about the subject. And he teaches from the text book. And recommends additional text books. And the church even offers you more classes to learn more about the subject. We offer vacation bible schools where you can drop your kids off to learn more. And in all of that you can be around church for *years* learning ABOUT God.

And listen, its not bad to know about God ok. I hope as a result of being a part of Mercy you grow more than you ever have in your knowledge of God. BUT, the Christian message says God is not a SUBJECT, he is a PERSON! And not only is he a person...the message of the bible is this person is WITH US. And the reason why God hasn't been very helpful to some of you is because you've only ever seen him as a subject matter.

And if we are honest...the subject matter is easy to put on the shelf because God as a subject matter becomes at best a vague set of moral guidelines. Or at worst a rigid set of rules that I know I'll break so why do I want that guilt on top of everything else? And many walk away from the faith because of that right there. God isn't helpful, if anything God is a burden. But that's because he's a subject you only know ***about***.

And what I want for you in January is a corrective shift where God stops being a subject matter and starts being a person...who is with you!

You were never meant to ***just*** know ABOUT God, you were meant to know God. To know the person. To have a relationship with him where you walk day in and day out sharing the highs and lows of life and building trust and experiencing the things that turn strangers into close friends. That's why God uses language in the bible like father, friend, spouse to describe how he relates to us. He's a person. And the bible is the story of God being personal, being down here in the hurt and pain of this world WITH us. Garden – God is walking in the garden. OT – God is in the tabernacle & then in the temple. New Testament – Jesus is named God WITH US. Jesus leaves and says he's sending the Holy Spirit who will be WITH US, LITERALLY IN US. And one day Jesus is going to come back through the clouds in triumphant victory and dwell forever WITH US. The God of the bible is a personal God.

And he created you to KNOW him.

That's the shift I want for you in January 2019. That you will kick off this year seeking not just to know ABOUT God but to know him. Because the power of God to change your life...its not in knowledge of God, the power is in the presence of God with you. And that might be different for you if you've never engaged God like that before. That's why I encourage you to stick with us for the whole month of January. Our community groups will be going through this material so maybe you need to jump into one of those.

Ok. Psalm 100. Let me read the whole thing for us. Because its kind of like poetry I think, where we can, its good to take in the psalm as a whole and then figure it out. And to honor

God's word a simple thing we can do is stand as it is read. So if you can, would you stand together with me.

1 Let the whole earth shout triumphantly to the Lord!

2 Serve the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

3 Acknowledge that the Lord is God. He made us, and we are his — his people, the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and bless his name.

5 For the Lord is good, and his faithful love endures forever; his faithfulness, through all generations. -- Psalms 100:1-5 (CSB)

Pray – God show us yourself. We want to know you. We know you reveal yourself here in your word. So we pray a simple prayer: God help us to know you today. All God's people said Amen. - Seated

We are going to walk through this Psalm and then really sit down in the last two verses. The title for today's sermon that we are already 12 minutes into is: **I Will Say Thank You.**

That's the title because that's the take away. That's the application. That's the one big idea. That this week as you try and make that shift to begin really engaging God as a person you will choose to be thankful to God for who he is and what he has done. And I'm very intentional with the wording here because "I will say thank you" is a declaration. There may be some other things you want to say to God. And you know what, he can take it so go ahead. I told you, some of the

psalms have authors that seem to be yelling at God. But what I think our psalm today is telling us is that the more you really know God, the more you will be thankful for him. This Psalm is a CALL to God's people to rise up and with thankful hearts celebrate their wonderful God.

1 Let the whole earth shout triumphantly to the Lord!

The Psalm begins with a cry to the entire world. To SHOUT triumphantly which has also been translated "make a joyful noise." It's evoking the image of a victorious king coming home to a parade and the streets are lined and there you are on the streets and the joyful noise...it isn't somber. It's a celebration. We don't really have, in our generation, a good experience to help us get this. Because listen, even if the Charlotte Hornets were to somehow turn it around and have a miraculous season and win the NBA title...And we threw them a parade...its not like we are celebrating victory over a real enemy. I mean the Golden State Warriors are not threatening to declare martial law on CLT, round up every hornet fan and exile them (bad example because there are more steph fans than hornet fans in this city anyway).

The best I can think of is May 8, 1945. When celebrations erupted around the world as news of the full Nazi surrender spread. Especially in France where Charles De-Gaulle was able to tell them that they were officially victorious over the ones that had captured them. People ROARED in celebration. That's the joyful noise here. Tears of freedom from and victory over a real and evil enemy.

And the Psalmist is saying ALL THE EARTH – because this isn't news just for one people group but for every people group. ALL THE EARTH – Our greatest enemy who is out to destroy us...our greatest enemy has been defeated by our Great Lord.

Here's where thankfulness comes from:

Thankfulness is a celebration that comes from believing God has won our freedom from sin.

Plain and simple. The reason France celebrates VE-day every year is to remember it's freedom. The reason the CHURCH all over the world gathers every single week is because each one of us were captives to Sin...Romans 6 tells us we were in bondage...we were slaves to sin...to the very thing that would keep us from God. But God...seeing our condition...did not wait on us to liberate ourselves. We couldn't. The enemy was too powerful and we were too weak. So He...God the person in the form of Jesus Christ...HE CAME FOR US! And he said he'd go in place of us. A king stepping into captivity? Willingly into punishment in the place of his people? And the enemy surely thought he won when he killed our king. But what he didn't know is that our king was going to kill death itself. He broke out of the grave and said all who believe he died for them will also now LIVE in freedom from sin now and forevermore!

So what we do every week is SHOUT triumphantly to the Lord because he rescued us!!!

So listen if you struggle to be thankful right now...good news is you are in the right place. Cause every single person around you right now has a story. A story of struggle, of times of

unbelief, of pain. And some of them have decided to believe their victory belongs to Jesus. And so we get together once a week and just celebrate God's victory on our behalf. That's what Sunday is! It's victory day! In your struggle to be thankful I point you back to Jesus. Who says your greatest need...your greatest hurt...it has been answered. Jesus says abide in him. Don't fake it til you make it. Abide in his love for you.

That will lead right to verse 2.

2 Serve the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

Now this is great. Serve the Lord...how do you serve the king? With gladness. Because we aren't begrudging servants. We are children of the God who rescued us. And so we serve HIM with gladness. In fact, in the bible you won't find much distinction between serving God and worshipping God. Because serving is an act of worship. Romans 12.1 Paul says make your body a living sacrifice to God...this is your act of worship. 1 Cor 10.31 – whatever you do, eating or drinking, do to the glory of God. GLADLY!

Thankful people serve with gladness

Do you serve God gladly? Do you have a habit of looking for how you can serve others? And when you serve, are you glad to be doing it? We'll get to the cure in a moment but are you answering this call?

Singing is the first part of that. He doubles down in verse 4 on this saying enter his courts with praise, give thanks to him, & bless his name. PRAISE HIM. Listen I don't know how else to say it.

Thankful people sing to God with gladness

That's why we sing on the weekends. Our gladness is given words in song. Did you know that our worship director, Charlie King, was actually in a singing group in college called Psalm 100? 5 verses so they had a 5 part boy band...Just kidding. He really was in a group with that name but so were a bunch of others. And man they sang joyful songs to the Lord.

Listen, we sing in response to our salvation. I love being in a church that has a bunch of song writers because listen songs are sermons people remember. So we sing songs from church history and we write new ones reflecting on God's work here and now. And I love it because this is what the church does.

We SING! So listen...This one is easy. Some of you come in here and it is like you've been waiting all week to get in and SING. Others of you I'm sorry you just don't appear glad to be here. And if you aren't a Christian, I'm not really talking to you. I don't expect you to sing to a God you are still trying to figure out if you believe in him yet.

But if you are a professing Christian and you spend your time with God's people with your arms crossed and brow furrowed...I mean maybe that is gladness but I'm not believing

it. Here's all I'm saying...Your king has won the victory, you've been set free and THE CHURCH WORSHIP GATHERING IS THE VICTORY PARADE. Celebrate like it!

Hey let me say something to you who are hurting...sometimes hurting people feel like they need to isolate themselves because they can't bring themselves to sing. But the opposite is true. You don't need isolation. You need the singing of other believers to carry you for a little while. So to anyone who may be listening to this because a friend sent it to you: it is ok, even good for your soul, to come with all that pain and let others carry your song for a while.

3 Acknowledge that the Lord is God. He made us, and we are his — his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Ok this one seems like it should be first right? And maybe it should be but its here in the middle of this Song to make sure we know who is who. The Lord...the one who MADE us...he's God. And we are sheep. And him calling us sheep is no accident. There are a lot of parallels between us and sheep.

Sheep follow wherever the herd is going, they are timid and easily frightened, they are notorious creatures of habit. If left to themselves they will follow the same trails until they become ruts & graze the same hills until they become desert wastes.¹ Sheep are pitiful & hopeless without a shepherd.

That's us. Wandering with our head down from thing to thing, stubbornly set in our ways, in desperate need of the

¹ Phillip Keller "A Shepherd looks at Psalm 23" p.70.

protection of our shepherd. LISTEN TO ME: YOU ARE NOT GOD! YOU ARE A SHEEP! AND THE GOOD NEWS IS YOU HAVE A SHEPHERD! Psalm 23 says thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. That's shepherd talk.

Here is the very simple point:

Thankful people submit themselves to God.

And so the question genuinely is: who is in charge of you? Listen this is hard, **But To know God is to submit to him as your shepherd.** Not your advice giver or buddy, but the one in charge of your life, telling you where to go because he sees & knows best.

And I know "submitted to God" can be a little abstract but the litmus test to figure out if you are there: is how do you react, deep down...to the idea of submitting to anybody. Let's go even deeper: how do you handle correction? Not talking about random facebook fights that you should never get into...I'm saying When someone close to you who you trust points something out...do you push it back? Do you make excuses? For you married people: what if your spouse lovingly corrects you? do you receive it?

Ya'll listen I like being right. And I do NOT like being corrected. And as a college student and really in most of my 20s anytime I was corrected by someone I would quickly create this multi-pronged defense that proved I was RIGHT and they just didn't understand.

You know what that was? It was pride. Fear that I would be identified as a failure. And when a good friend challenged me on it, I realized I wasn't willing to be corrected EVEN by God himself. God was often using those other people but my pride blinded me to that.

Thankful people submit themselves to God. And as a result, they often humble people. Not perfect, but striving towards the image of Christ.

These first 4 verses were all action heavy. SHOUT, SING, ACKNOWLEDGE, ENTER, GIVE THANKS,

But not verse 5. No commands here. Just a summary of the Character of God.

5 For the Lord is good, and his faithful love endures forever; his faithfulness, through all generations.

The Psalmist says do all those things....because the Lord is good. I want you to see here: This is person-language that the Psalmist is using. Even the personal pronoun "his" faithful love. When he says his faithful love endures forever he's making a claim grounded in a lot of experience! He knows the history of Israel who had experienced God's faithful love in the wilderness and again after being in the promised land.

And HIS faithful love...listen to me: doesn't go away when we fail him. See you could hear all these things and leave under a burden of guilt. I gotta be all these things. And what the Psalmist says is NO! THE LORD IS FAITHFUL...NOT YOU!

You are a SHEEP! You will wander. THE LORD IS FAITHFUL! HE HAS SAVED US BECAUSE OF HIS FAITHFUL LOVE! Sheep don't earn the shepherd's love. They are constant recipients. And that's you and me! God has come, paid for our sin and rescued us! And remains with us. And listen the practice of being thankful to God for his love is what unlocks his power in your life.

Let me explain through a common struggle: A lot of Christians feel like they cannot overcome lust. Lust is just too powerful. Do you know what's stronger than lust? Thankfulness.

When Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph, why didn't he succumb to her advances? He explains, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Genesis 39.8–9.

Joseph received Potiphar's remarkable favor on him as a gift *from God*. Gratitude was occupying so much space in Joseph's heart that there was not enough room for the ingratitude of sexually sinning with Potiphar's wife.

Now look at your own experience. You have not indulged in lust when your heart has felt full of thankfulness to God. Why? Because lust is a form of coveting & which is a fruit of

ingratitude. It's a desire for something you want but don't have, or can't have; it's a desire for something God has not provided for you or forbidden to you.

So lust, being a form of ingratitude, is incompatible with gratitude — they cannot cohabit the same space at the same time. It's one or the other. And thankfulness is the stronger power. In the moment, Lust might feel powerful, and thankfulness might feel meek. But that is usually because you've stopped preaching verse 5 to yourself.

But when thankfulness is truly present, lust is no match for it. Thanksgiving is not merely a "nice" Christian character trait. It is a sin-conquering force. Gratitude is both a vital indicator of our soul's health and a powerful defender of our soul's happiness. Which means we should intentionally cultivate the healthy, happy habit of thanksgiving.²

Thankfulness is immensely (and subtly) powerful. It is what we experience when we perceive that what we have received is an undeserved gift of God's grace. It is a fruit of humility; it's inherently unselfish. We don't feel true gratitude toward ourselves, but only towards someone else who treats us better than we deserve. That's how Joseph felt being entrusted as Potiphar's chief steward. Sins like sexual lust, however, are a fruit of pride; they're inherently selfish, exploiting others for our own narcissistic purposes. That's how Potiphar's wife felt looking on the attractive Hebrew house slave.

² Jon Bloom, "Fill Your Wandering Heart with Thankfulness," DesiringGod.com, November 18, 2018,

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/your-wandering-heart-with-thankfulness>.

Pride always looks more powerful than humility on the outside. But in reality, it's not. It's not even close. Humility is stronger than pride like heaven is stronger than hell. Like the cross was stronger than the Roman Empire. Like the Resurrection and the Life was stronger than the grave. In the same way, thankfulness is stronger than lust, and serving is stronger than exploiting. The more thankfulness is present in us, the less vulnerable we are to sin.

So where do we start? How do we cultivate a Psalm 100 life?

Listen I'd love to give you 4 easy steps here but that just aint real. The reality is, cultivating thankfulness in your soul is hard. It's worth it and I promise the power of it is unmatched, but its hard. And it's hard because you will be forming a habit. It's hard because we are much much better complainers than we are worshippers. I'll give you a couple of places to start but it's just a start. Becoming thankful:

1. Find a way to say THANK YOU today. Begin to train yourself to daily look for God's graces. Courtney and I were talking about what keeps us from being thankful and she said "tunnel vision." Just so focused on our problems or circumstances we miss the graces of God all around us. Commit yourself, and I suggest to do so with a couple other people...to find something to be thankful to God about TODAY. I'm in a group text with the guys from my community group and every DAY we are texting something we have to be thankful for from the Lord. Usually its us encouraging one another from God's word. Ya'll it's the most inspiring thing in my life.

2. Let others sing for you for a while. I mentioned this earlier and this really is for those of you who feel like your life experience is not matching up with the truth that God's love is faithful and forever. Like you know the bible says it, but you aren't seeing it. And it hurts. Maybe its swallowing you right now and you just want to isolate yourself. I'm telling you you've never needed God's people more. Don't run.

3. Sing & Serve! There is a reason the Psalmist calls us to this. So I implore you to serve somebody just like Christ served you. See if you don't find thankfulness there. When we sing in here, SING. Don't hold back. Get after it. Share the gospel with someone. You'll find such thankfulness in your own faith the more you share with those who don't have that hope. The more you'll realize how kind God is. Who is your one? Share with them this year!

To Non-Christians – Believe...

Close

The Bench

Possible Opening Illustration:

And God created you to grow in your knowledge *about* him through having a relationship WITH him.

It's kind of like meeting someone through a dating app right. (Show of hands how many are signed up on a dating app right now? Hehe. Could save ya'll some time with that survey. Just look around.) Anyways...on a dating app you get a little bit of information through a person's profile right. You learn *about* them. But you aren't on there to just get to know the profile right. You can only learn so much about them through the profile (PREACH!). The purpose of the whole app is to help you not just know ABOUT the person but ultimately you are on there to get to KNOW the person behind the profile.

How thankful we are reveals the health of our souls. When the apostle Paul describes what our being filled with the Spirit looks like, he doesn't point to ecstatic experiences or miraculous spiritual gifts; he points to thankfulness:

Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, *giving thanks always and for everything* to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 5:18–20)

When Paul describes what our being governed by the peace and word of Christ looks like, he doesn't point to an absence

of conflict or our level of theological sophistication; he points to thankfulness:

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. *And be thankful*. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, *with thankfulness in your hearts to God*. (Colossians 3:15–16)

When Paul describes what our living in the will of God looks like, he doesn't point to how well our rolls match our strengths and aspirations; he points to thankfulness:

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

When Paul describes what our freedom from sexual sin, or other kinds of defiling sin, looks like, he doesn't point to the absence of temptations; he points to thankfulness:

Sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, *but instead let there be thanksgiving*. (Ephesians 5:3–4)

If we want to know how healthy our souls are, we should check our levels of gratitude.³

³ Jon Bloom, "Fill Your Wandering Heart with Thankfulness," DesiringGod.com, November 18, 2018,

[https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/fill-your-wandering-heart-with-thankfulness.](https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/fill-your-wandering-heart-with-thankfulness)