

Psalm 100

Notes for a Sermon for St Pauls

19th September 2004

As a teenager,

“Let’s Make a Joyful Noise.”

Bass part, extremely cool, the doo-wop kid.

Now seriously cringe-inducing

Based on this Psalm, but the KJV version

PSA 100:1 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. 2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. 3 Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath 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 unto him, and bless his name. 5 For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

Our KJV handicap. Sunday School and CE drilled the KJV into our brains.

We think this is the way God speaks.

I remember the shock, as an adult ... German is the language God speaks. Intellectually, I accepted it was no more crazy than the idea that God speaks English, but I realised I thought God spoke like the KJV.

Instead of “Listen here, Philip” I thought he would say, “incline thine ear unto me Oh Philip.”

In the 21st century we still have the KJV, and I thank God for the way it has given so much to our everyday language, but we do need to recognise that sometimes it does let us down in the way some of the original Hebrew and Greek has been translated.

So, today we are not saying “Let’s make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands” we have the NIV to guide us and to urge us to “Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.”

Immediately see a difference. “Joyful noise” and “Shout.”

What did the Psalmist actually say here?

Actually he did not say “noise” and he did not say “shout”.

He said a Hebrew word, *roo-ah*.

And he wrote it in Hebrew, which looks like this...

Now, in case you hadn't ever notice, Hebrew is not the same as English. Take some care, when translating.

The Hebrew word the psalmist uses (literally) *to suddenly make something worse*. When used in sound it means to make an ear-damaging noise. Ear-splitting. Like a blast on the trumpet, or as the NIV suggests, a shout.

This Psalmist is obviously a young person. They want to worship with ear-splitting noise. This psalmist is learning to play drums, or trumpet. This psalmist is probably deaf. Or soon will be.

But we oldies better be careful, because this word we translate as *shout* appears 42 times in the Old Testament and nearly all the times in the Psalms. Shouting for joy is not just the province of the under-25s. Or it ought not be. We are all urged to split ears with joy.

Then, “Worship the Lord with gladness.”

“Worship” is the right translation, but not if you think it's only for Sunday. The basic meaning of the Hebrew word here is *to work*. And not merely to work, but to work until you're tired from work. To work hard. To so give oneself over to the work that you give everything.

It's not so much like the marathon runner who wobbles across the finish line. It's more about seeing worship as something to which you give your whole life.

There's nothing wrong with translating the Hebrew word as *worship*, but there is something wrong in thinking we are only talking about what we do for an hour or so on Sunday morning.

Maybe here the old KJV helps us a bit because this verse in the KJV goes, “**Serve** the Lord with gladness.”

It's really about serving God every day as an act of worship. Living a worshipful life.

The next idea is pretty straight forward. Know that the Lord is God. Well, maybe not.

Unlike 21st century Australians, the Hebrews lived in a world of many Gods. They lived among people of other religions and ideas. Lots of things got labelled “god” in those days. People would have kitchen gods, and travelling gods, and gods that looked after the crops.

Of course, we don't have such gods in our society. You reckon? Maybe the people who openly acknowledge their lesser gods are more honest than most Australians who seem to spend their time worshipping a whole range of substitute gods without being fair dinkum enough to call a god a god.

In any case, the Hebrews were saying an amazing thing here. They were saying the their Lord was THE God. The God of Gods.

Sam Kamaleson. The Absolute Absolute. The Relative Absolutes. All those things we believe are absolutely true, [culture. Rules of society, behaviour] are only relatively true. Travel. Real absolute truth can only be find in the one whose truth endures to all generations.

More than the fact that God is the absolute God, the Psalmist says that He made us and we are his people. I reckon we could translate this as we are his mob. The Psalmist compares us to a flock of sheep to give us the clear idea.

Now in the next verse there are three key ideas in two words. *Thanksgiving* and *praise*.

The Hebrew word for thanksgiving literally means *to extend your hand*. That's why in English we say we **give** thanks. It's not about *saying* thanks. It's about *giving* something in thanks.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving ... give thanks to him.

What did we bring to church today that we want to give to God? What did we do during this week of worshipful living that was a gift of thanks to God?

There are 2 words translated as *praise*. The first generally means a song or a hymn of praise. So we are to enter his courts with a hymn of praise. OK, today we did it right. So far so good.

The second word literally means *to kneel down*. "Kneel down" to his name. This word is very common in the old testament. More then 400 times. About half the time it is translated *praise*, and about half the time *bless*. Only two or three times is it used in its literal sense of *kneeling*.

Why *kneel down*? Works within English culture as well. When a person was to be knighted for service to the monarch, what did they do to receive their award? They knelt down in front of the king or queen and the sword was placed on their shoulders as a symbol of praise and blessing from the king or queen.

In many cultures, a close association between kneeling and blessing, between kneeling and praise. So in Hebrew this word came to be used to indicate praise or blessing.

And why should we do all this? LIST.

For the Lord is good. The Hebrew word for *good* means *good* in every possible way you can imagine.

Good

pleasant

beautiful

excellent
lovely
delightful
convenient
joyful
fruitful
precious
sound
cheerful
kind
correct
righteous
the right
virtue
happiness
wisdom

The Lord is good. Real good.

And his love endures forever, his faithfulness through all generations.

The Hebrew word used here for *love* is more commonly translated *mercy* or *kindness*.

And the Hebrew word used here for *faithfulness* carries the idea of God's steadiness, stability, reliability. You can be certain about God. There is a related word in Hebrew *aw-mane* which we pronounce *a-men*. It literally means *truly*. When we say A-men at the end of prayers we are saying *that's the way it is* or *that's the God-honest truth*.

And how long does this faithfulness last? It endures forever and continues through all generations. Amazingly, though, the Hebrew has a better grasp of time than English.

Because the word translated here *forever* literally means *the vanishing point* or the point where time does not exist. In effect, the place beyond time. This is the idea of *eternity*. God's faithfulness does not

merely exist in time, nor even only until the end of time. It exists, as does God, beyond even time. Einstein and Stephen Hawking would be pleased.

What a wonderful psalm.

We've come to learn the truth of this psalm in our own family. God's faithfulness is the one absolute we have.

Now we're grandparents we've earned the right to look back on how our lives have panned out. Well, we reckon we've earned that right anyway.

And two things stand out. How badly we have planned our lives, and how faithful God is.

At High School I planned to be a doctor. God made sure I failed Chemistry in sequential Year 12 exams (I repeated Year 12). Not to mention failing it in Year 10 and Year 11. Bit slow to get the message eh?

Because I didn't have Chemistry I could not enrol in medicine. So my plan to be a doctor was scuttled. Instead within a year of leaving school I was reading the sugar cane prices at a radio station in Nambour on the Sunshine Coast.

I planned to be a doctor. God wanted me to be a radio announcer. And, of course, when you do what God wants you to do, you find out it's a lot of fun and exciting.

So Judy, who probably planned to marry a doctor, married a radio announcer. I went back to Uni part time and completed a degree, not in medicine, but in English and Journalism.

Judy and I planned to have a few children. I think we said we would have four, but maybe it was eight, you'd have to ask Judy since she was planning to do most of the work. But God had different ideas.

First of all, despite doing all the recommended things in order to become parents, we weren't. A few years went by and we got a bit worried. We had tests. They confirmed only that I should not have thought of being a doctor.

Finally, one day I heard someone from the adoption agencies talking on my radio station and I went along and picked up the adoption papers. Almost exactly nine months later we got a call to say that a boy, whom we would call Jamie, was waiting to be brought home. And almost exactly nine months later again, Judy gave birth to our second child, Melanie.

God was faithful in giving us a family. But not quite the way we had planned, nor the way we had expected.

Of course, now that we had worked out what was causing it, we thought we could produce a few more children. Two miscarriages later, we realised it wasn't that easy. There is no joy in discovering that your hopes for a child were smashed in the 10th or 12th week.

So, when in 1988 Judy announced she was pregnant again, we were both a bit sceptical about what might happen. Soon after we got this news, I was at a conference and prayed with a Christian friend from Lebanon.

This man knew about God's faithfulness because he had lived through war and tragedy in his own country, and he had seen many miracle of God's saving grace.

I told him about our concerns about whether this baby would really go full term and be born. My friend prayed to God. Not one of those "Please God if it be your will..." kind of prayers, but a prayer of certainty and confidence. He told God what he felt God already knew, that this baby was wanted by God and by us.

Well, you all know Richard. – Until Delta Goodrem...

Our plan had been to produce a series of conveniently spaced children. God's plan was for us to adopt one, instantly have another, and then wait 15 years for number 3. That's what I call family planning. According to the faithfulness of God.

There are many other stories we can tell about God's faithfulness. And if I get to preach here often and long enough, probably I shall tell them all.

About how I got into World Vision despite my complete ignorance about overseas aid. About how we went to Hong Kong despite our commitment to remain at home. About how I planned to stay in Hong Kong and found myself back in Australia. About how we said we would never go overseas again and found ourselves living in Austria. About how I thought I would be a management consultant, and found myself working at Deakin University Student Association.

They are all good stories about God's faithfulness. *For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.* His love never quits. And that's the God-honest truth. Or as the Hebrews would say... A-men.