

October 9, 2022 My Short List Psalm 100

A lot of things have changed and we would be foolish if we did not acknowledge some of those changes. I cannot say when this one just happened in time, but I just noticed it for the first time. And that could well mean I just did not notice when it started. The calendar that hangs beside my desk, my computer, the place where I write proclaims that Thanksgiving is tomorrow. Monday, the extra day in this weekend. Even my parents, who were not church goers saw Thanksgiving as the Sunday, with a holiday from work on the Monday in honour of that day. On the Sunday we ate turkey, many vegetables, home made pumpkin pie for desert, or apple if you preferred, and in my teen years I would be asked to say grace before we dug in to the feast. Because I did attend church. And I almost left out...there was always home made bread on the table too!

So this year I am underlining the fact that Psalm 100 puts the giving thanks in an entirely different perspective than does the balance of our culture. The text is verse 4: "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name." And while I will watch baseball, football while the turkey roasts, filling the house with the marvelous smells I have always known at this time of year, all of it, obviously is preceded by an act of choice in the light of faith in Jesus. I am with you in God's house. And we have come to do what the Psalm teaches.

The Hymns and the Chorus with which we began are joyful songs. And do not misunderstand me, I am neither judgemental of others nor am I angry or depressed. I am a realist. I recognize the balance of the nation and this province no longer understands what it means to be truly thankful. We are not lucky to be living where we do. We are blessed. We are not lucky to be doing what we do. We are blessed. And we did not earn our station or status in life by the works of our hands or the sweat of our brows. We were blessed. We are blessed because God is. Christ is risen. The Holy Spirit leads and guides. That is how I got to be here and standing where I stand, doing what I do. And I really do believe that that is how you got to be here as well. You were led. You came. And I pray you will be blessed for having heard the whisper of eternity, and responding.

Psalm 100 says, "Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise." The holy city of Jerusalem has or at least had 12 gates by which one could enter and approach the Temple. St. Andrew's is not quite as grand as Jerusalem or the Temple, but we have 3 sets of doors. Four if you count the fire escape at the back of the sanctuary on your right. But I think I am safe in saying, almost all of us entered from the south or the west. And we came aware that we would be attending a service of worship offered to the "one true God and Jesus Christ whom he sent." (John 17:3) And we anticipated that we would spend some time giving thanks for the details of our lives, in the consciousness that God is real and here and

with us wherever we go, the God we know as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, One and yet three, Three and yet One.

I have a short list I want to express for which I give thanks to God on a day like this. A day dedicated to the premise of being thankful to the Lord. Hear me when I say, that does not make us better than anyone else. We are not morally superior for doing this. Giving thanks is not about doing a good work. It is about being faithful. People who believe. Nothing more, but nothing less either. So I suspect you want me to get on with it, giving thanks.

First of all, I want to say, "Thank you Lord for saving my soul. Thank you, Lord for making me whole. Thank you Lord, for giving to me, Thy great salvation, full and free." And of course that is a chorus from the Master Chorus Book, # 43. I believe that is what happened. I came to faith, touched by the Spirit of God, aware of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection and I could not resist. I believed. That does not make me morally superior to anyone. It does mean I function and live or attempt to live, as a man who believes what Jesus said and taught, and has revealed. And I am thankful for faith.

That faith led me here, led me to you. I came from a really small family. I had a mother and father and brother. That was us, the Mitchells living at 67 Burriss Street back when the city I lived in was called Port Arthur. Some who are here come from families the size of tribes in comparison. My faith in Jesus led me into a larger family. Ada Roeper passed away last

Saturday. I participated in her funeral on Wednesday. In days of health she worshipped here. Gerry Boyce passed away on Tuesday night. He worshipped here for a time and sang in the choir too. We were friends. I think of you as brothers and sisters. God has given me so much and so many. My life made the richer for every one of you.

I said it was a short list. I am thankful for faith and the friends I have made over the last 60 years as a result of that faith centered in Jesus. Second on my list? Can you guess? I thank God for Barbara. I tell her every day 2 things. I love her, and she's beautiful. The thing is, I never ever thought someone like her could or would choose to love me. But by God, and I mean that, we met and when I asked her to spend life with me, she said yes. I thank God for her. She drives me crazy at times. I do not hear everything she says even with these new and good hearing aids. She cared for me through surgery. And blockages created by scar tissue. But she is with me and I know, I know, she loves me dearly. She makes me glad to be alive, even with the loss of my hair, the loss of hearing, the limits of my vision and the constant discomfort of arthritis. And boy can she cook! I came into the courts of God's house this morning to give thanks for 54 years we have shared. And my son Matthew. And my daughter Rebekah. Thank you God.

Third on this short list? The Church of Jesus Christ. And of course most of my time has been spent inside The Presbyterian Church In Canada. But I have had glimpses into other fellowship. Paul Timpany was a Baptist preacher and a

dear friend in New Liskeard. Captain Les Rowe was a friend serving in The Salvation Army. The late Rev. Craig Cribber, and Rev. Jennifer Cameron have both affected my life in ministry here in the Presbytery of Kingston. I wear this Jesuit cross because of the friendship of the late Fr. Defosse in Kapuskasing. I have preached as a guest in Baptist, and Pentecostal churches, and in times of illness I have been prayed for by Roman Catholics and Anglicans, and many others. People who believed in Jesus.

I have seen the warts and failings of the church up close and personal. The church is not perfect. As John Ortberg said in print, the church is Jesus best disciple and HIS failed servant all at the same time. Why? Because it is made up of sinful people like me, saved only because God loves us with a love whose depth we barely understand at the best of times. But in the church for the last 60 years I have continually met people who cared about me, helped me, directed me, challenged me, caused my faith to grow, and this short pudgy servant of the Kingdom to manage to do a few things right.

I want to close with the words of another chorus, one that I learned when I was studying to earn my doctorate at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena California. It is about the experience of the church and what it has meant of me. "When we gather may your Spirit work with us/ As we gather may we glorify your name/ Knowing well, that as our hearts begin to worship/ We'll be blessed because we came/ We'll be blessed

because we came.” (As We Gather, Praise 1 published by Maranatha Music 1983 # 135.

“Enter into HIS gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful unto HIM and bless HIS name.” (Psalm 100:4) Thank you Lord. That’s my short list.

Let us pray;

Lord we came together this morning to say thank YOU for all that we have and all that we have become. We thank you for YOUR watching over us as the Good Shepherd. We thank you for the blessings you have poured out upon us and into our midst. Some of them, we even failed to notice. But we are grateful. Receive the praise of our lips, tongues and voices. Amen