

**The Language of Faith**  
**Pastor Deborah Oakley - GFC - 11-24-2024**

Since this is Thanksgiving week – I want to show you how thanksgiving is one of the biggest expressions of faith that there is. So, I am preaching today on The Language of Faith.

Thanksgiving is a very distinctive holiday. It doesn't commemorate a battle or someone's birthday. It is a day set aside with the sole purpose of giving thanks to God. Which is actually something we should practice every day. Not just on Thanksgiving. As people of faith, we should speak the language of faith – and that includes thanksgiving. Psalm 100 says:

***Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing.  
 Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.  
 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise.  
 Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations.***

The 100th Psalm was written for the people of Israel. When God brought them out of slavery in Egypt into the Promised Land – He said - "You had to depend on me to get you to the Promised Land – so when you settle down in your warm homes and you have plenty to eat, don't forget Me."

But it didn't take very long to realize that the people of Israel needed a reminder, and I believe that we need it, too. What reminder???

Maybe God had us in mind, also, when this Psalm was written. Did you notice to whom it is addressed? The first verse says that it is addressed to "all the earth," and the last verse says that it includes "all generations." This message of thanksgiving is so important that it applies to every person in every place in every time in every stage of life. This message is multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-generational! No one is exempt from its truths!

Also, everything in this chapter is a command – not a suggestion! I see six main commands in this passage – six ways to express your faith! So, let's look more closely at Psalm 100.

### **1. Faith Shouts!**

Psalm 100:1 says: ***Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands!***

The Hebrew word here for shout means "to split the ears (with sound)." Some people think worship should be quiet in order to be reverent -

But this command says to shout out loud.

One of the ways we overcome is by shouting in faith to God. And we have a biblical precedent for that - the people of Israel defeated their enemy at Jericho by shouting! There is power in a shout!

One of the chores I do every week is laundry. Sometimes our clothes have a stain that our washing machine does not remove. Those stains need something more, so I use a product called Shout.

Their add campaign used to say – You’ve got a stubborn stain – Shout it Out!  
 Their website said – Let Life Happen – You’ve Got Shout.  
 Under that it says – pick a stain – any stain!  
 Their point is that their product can remove any stain.

That got me to thinking about the stains of life. Life can get messy and leave stains. But I want you to know – you can pick a stain – any stain – and the blood of Jesus can remove it and make it white as snow! You can pick a sin – any sin – and the grace of Jesus can forgive it! You can pick an addiction – any addiction – and the power of God can set you free from it!

I don’t know about you – but that makes me want to shout!  
 Remember... Life Happens – so Shout it Out!  
 Life gets Messy – so Shout it Out!  
 When you face problems - Shout it Out!  
 When you’re feeling down – Shout it Out!  
 I want you to know today - Faith Shouts!

## 2. Faith Serves!

Psalm 100:2 says: ***Serve the Lord with gladness.***

It doesn’t say "serve the church - serve the preacher - serve the leaders or serve the organization." It’s not wrong to serve in those places – in fact, we should - but our motivation must be to SERVE THE LORD.

You see – if you’re just serving people – you can get worn out.  
 If you’re just serving a church – you can get burned out.  
 But when your motivation is to serve the Lord – you will be –  
 Built up – not burned out  
 Encouraged – not discouraged  
 Energized – not worn out.

Some folks think that faith is just about what they believe. But James 2:20 says - ***Faith without works is dead.***  
 God did not save you just so you could sit and be served. He wants you to serve Him.

We do that through our lives – our worship – our giving – our volunteering – but one of the ways we serve God IS by serving people.

In fact, Jesus said in Matthew 25:37-39 – that when we feed the hungry, clothe the needy or visit people in prison – we are serving God. Verse 40 says -

***Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for Me.***

Our motivation must always be to serve the Lord.  
And not just serve the Lord – but serve the Lord with gladness!  
It doesn't say – Serve out of guilt or fear or obligation.  
It doesn't say – Serve with sadness or madness.  
It says, Serve the Lord with gladness!

I'll never forget when our church was smaller – We weren't able to hire children's ministers yet, so all the parents took a turn in the nursery. We were so thankful to each parent who willingly and joyfully served. However, one of the parents had an attitude about serving. She said – "I'm not called to work with children and I don't want to do it."

We said – we understand – most of these parents don't feel called to be children's ministers – but right now this is necessary – we're all taking turns serving by ministering to each other's kids.

But she had such an attitude that by the time church was over – she was crying and all the kids were crying. She was miserable and made them miserable. Needless to say – we released her from that ministry.

But you know what – she could have changed everything by changing her attitude. She could have gone in there and served with gladness as unto the Lord and she would have been happy and the kids would have been happy.

I want to encourage you to serve the Lord by serving others – and for the sake of yourself and everyone else - serve with gladness!

### **3. Faith Sings!**

Verse 2 also says: ***Come before His presence with singing.***

Christianity is a faith that is filled with singing. That's something that carried over from our Jewish heritage. But there's a difference between songs sung by free people and songs sung by captives.

Psalm 137:1-4 talks about a time when Israel disobeyed God and was taken captive. It says-

***By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.***

***There on the poplars we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?***

You see – when you’ve been taken captive – you hang up your harp!  
 When you lose your freedom - You stop singing.  
 That’s how you know you’re someplace spiritually you should not be!  
 There’s no joy in your heart – and when there’s no joy in your heart – there’s no song on your lips! Beware of the time you lose your song!

That happened to Israel - but the prophet Isaiah prophesied about the time when God would redeem Israel from their captivity. He told how they would return in Isaiah 51:11

***Therefore, the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.***

If you’ve been held captive by someone or something – I encourage you with this word today – go ahead and sing by faith! Pick up your harp by faith. Put on a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Sing your way out of your bad situation. Praise your way through your problem. Worship your way out of the wilderness! Faith sings!

#### **4. Faith Sees!**

Verses 3 and 5 say: ***Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture... For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations.***

There are some Psalms that tell us what to give thanks for – like God’s salvation and mercy and healing. But this Psalm shows us where our thanksgiving begins. The focus of this psalm is worshipping God for who He is! It focuses on God, not on what He gives. Faith sees the truth about God and the truth about self. Faith knows – there is a God and I’m not Him.

God is the Creator and He knows what He’s doing.  
 God is the Shepherd and our role is to follow Him.  
 He is the Lord and we are to submit to His will!  
 And – faith sees God as good – all the time!  
 If we don’t see God as always good, we will never be thankful.

Instead, we will be ungrateful, angry, frustrated, and unhappy.  
 We will not praise and we definitely will not worship.

We must take the time and effort to get to know God. When we do, we will become grateful. Grateful for God's grace, mercy, forgiveness, and salvation.  
Grateful for God's love and grateful for all His benefits.

Ungrateful people do not worship. There are so many "reasons" NOT to express thanks. It's so easy to be ungrateful. We must make an effort to be thankful people. Thankfulness is a habit that must be developed. It takes no effort to focus on bad things or unfulfilled dreams. It takes effort to focus on being thankful for the things God has done.

Having said that – I think we need to move beyond just thanking God for what we have. There's danger in determining your level of thanksgiving by:

How much money's in the bank

How much food's in the pantry

That's being thankful for what we see in the natural.

But we cannot let things determine whether or not we're thankful. Things come and go. The only constant in our life is the Lord.

That's why we walk by faith and not by sight!

The basis of all our thanksgiving is a right view of God!

Faith sees that, and thanksgiving is the language of faith!

## 5. Faith Steps!

Verse 4 says: ***Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise.***

Faith intentionally steps into the presence of God.

And faith knows the way into the presence of God!

It all starts with thanksgiving!

In Luke 17 we read the parable of Jesus healing the 10 Lepers. Scripture tells that 9 of the Lepers did not come back to thank Jesus. Only one came back and showed gratefulness. Verse 15 says:

***One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked Him...***

This blessed Jesus, but He showed His disapproval of ungratefulness by asking...  
"Where are the other nine?"

I have to ask myself what reasons they could have had for not returning to give thanks. Maybe...

The 1<sup>st</sup> one wanted to wait and see if the cure was real and lasting.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> one had too much business to take care of

The 3<sup>rd</sup> one said he would thank Jesus later.

The 4<sup>th</sup> one decided that he had never really had leprosy.

The 5<sup>th</sup> one said he would have gotten well anyway.

The 6<sup>th</sup> one gave the glory to the priests.

The 7<sup>th</sup> one proudly took the glory for himself, "After all, it was my idea to go see Jesus."

The 8<sup>th</sup> one said, "I can't believe he made us walk all the way to the priest. I mean, was that necessary? I'm not walking all the way back just to say thanks."

The 9<sup>th</sup> one said, "I'm thankful in my heart, so I don't have to tell him."

There are so many "reasons" not to express thanks. It's easy to be ungrateful. We have to make an effort to be thankful people.

Only 1 out of 9 stepped by faith into the presence of Jesus. Notice he was praising God in a loud voice. Faith steps and faith shouts with thanksgiving.

In the Old Testament, whenever the people came to the temple, they knew that they had come into the presence of God. Now that temple no longer exists. But oftentimes the place where we meet to worship God is called a "sanctuary," indicating that God is there. But God is everywhere.

He is with you as you drive on the highway.

He is with you when you work.

He is with you as you care for your children.

He is with you every moment of your life.

What we need to do is cultivate our awareness of the presence of God.

And we do that through thanksgiving.

***Enter His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise.***

True worship starts with thanksgiving. When we approach God with thanksgiving and praise, He manifests, or reveals Himself to us. Thanksgiving is the entryway. Thanksgiving gets us in the door. Then, praise gets us into His presence. Worship is our response to His presence.

When we are in that manifest presence, wonderful things happen!

When we touch heaven – changes happen on earth!

But that change must start in us.

We must overcome the barrier of ungratefulness by choosing to be grateful.

Faith steps!

**6. Faith Speaks!**

Verse 4 also says: ***Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.***

God is a speaking God. He spoke the world into existence. And in a much lesser – but still important way – we're speaking our worlds into existence.

There is life and death in the power of the tongue. There is power in our words. And complaining is to Satan what praise is to God. Grumbling is to Satan what gratitude is to God.

I'm closing today by encouraging you to speak words of faith & blessing!  
 You see - The optimist says, the cup is half full.  
 The pessimist says, the cup is half empty.  
 The child of God says, My cup runs over.

The complainer says, "This is the day the devil has made, let us complain and be miserable in it."  
 The grateful person says, "This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!"

Ungratefulness says – "What I have is never enough."  
 Gratefulness says – "I've learned in whatever state I'm in to be content!"

Fear says, "I don't know how I'm going to pay these bills."  
 Faith says, "My God will supply all my needs according to His riches in glory."

Grumbling says, "This is way too hard for me."  
 Gratitude says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Fear says, "The devil keeps holding me back and beating me down."  
 Faith says, "Greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world!"

Grumbling says, "I don't think I'll ever get ahead."  
 Gratitude says, "Thanks be to God who always causes me to triumph in Christ Jesus!"

Unbelief says, "I don't think I'm ever going to get well."  
 Faith says, "By His stripes I am healed!"

Doubt says, "I don't think I will ever get free."  
 Faith says, "Whom the Son sets free is free indeed!"

Grumbling says, "Everybody's against me."  
 Gratitude says, "If God is for me, who can be against me?"

Doubt says, "I've been a failure and I'll always be a failure."  
 Faith says, "NO – in all these things I am more than a conqueror through Him that loves us!"

Faith says no to doubt, fear, and unbelief! And faith says "Yes" to God!

I don't know about you – but God has done so much for me – I am so thankful – and that makes me want to shout with joy, serve with gladness, sing with thanksgiving, see God by faith, step into His presence and speak the truth about how good He is!