

Michael McGowan

Scripture: Psalm 100

Preached at Trinity CRC

January 14, 2018

Good morning and welcome...

Welcome to family, friends, and visitors with us this morning.

For those who do not recognize me, my name is Pastor Michael.

I am the new co-pastor here at Trinity.

My wife and I have only been here since September...

And we've already been able to worship with the Joyful Noise Choir twice...

Once at the Reformation service and once at the Christmas performance at West End.

So this is our third time...

And can I say that we have really enjoyed it.

Our Scripture reading this morning comes to us from the book of Psalms...

The prayer book of the Bible.

We will be looking at Psalm 100...

A psalm of thanksgiving.

I invite you to turn in your pew Bible or to follow along with the words on the screen.

Hear the Word of the Lord.

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.

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

This is the Word of the Lord. (**Thanks be to God**)

I was poking around on the Joyful Noise website...

And on one page I saw a few letters posted from the kids...

They're supposed to send a letter to Rein...

Saying why they want to be in the choir and what they hope to contribute.

I don't know if any of these are yours but here's what I read:

"It was a blast last year...I've met good friends...it's a great family and community."

"I love singing and dancing...I especially love going to the choir camp and tour."

"I love learning new songs."

"We are praising God without even knowing it."

"Because we get to worship God's Son...cause we worship God our King."

Sounds like you really enjoy your time in the choir.

Joyful Noise.

I don't know if you picked up on it or not...

But there is a connection between Psalm 100 and Joyful Noise.

Our Psalm is all about a joyful noise:

"Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth."

In a different translation verse 1 says:

"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth."

...a Joyful Noise.

This is a Psalm of Thanksgiving to the Lord...

It's probably not the first time we've heard it.

It's often used as a call to worship...

"Worship the Lord with gladness, come before him with joyful songs."

The question I want us to ask this morning is "Why?"

Why are we called to worship the Lord with gladness?

Why are we entering his gates with thanksgiving?

Why a Joyful Noise?

There are many great things that happen with this choir...

From friendships and community, to camp and discovering musical talents...

But at the heart of a Joyful Noise is worship.

At the heart of our gathering this morning is worship.

To come into God's presence...

Responding to his invitation for us to come...

We receive his nourishment and grace...

And then we respond with our praise and thanksgiving.

Why?

Why do we come here every week?

Why do we leave our homes on a cold winter morning to come to this place...

When we could just as easily be in our warm beds sleeping...

Why do you spend hours practicing and performing...

When you could just as easily be doing something else.

For these answers we turn to our Psalm.

It is a Psalm of Thanksgiving...

An invitation to praise...

But it does not leave us without reason...

It tells us why we praise the Lord our God:

“It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.”

We are God's people.

We *belong* to the Lord.

For some of us this might bring up a visceral response...

Something within us that gets pricked when we hear that we belong to the Lord...

When we hear that we belong to anyone.

This kind of language doesn't jive well with our culture...

We think of slavery where at one time you could legally own someone as property...

We think of human trafficking today...

Where the vulnerable are sold for labor or for their bodies...

Again being treated as something less than human.

Maybe it leads you to think of a relationship where belonging to someone meant abuse...

Where a parent or a spouse attacked you physically or verbally...

And you *belonged* to them so you had to endure it...

A common insult that's thrown around today has to do with "owning" someone.

If you beat someone badly in a video game or hockey, soccer, or volleyball...

You say, "I owned you!"

It has even seeped into the way we view our animals...

At an old job I had a co-worker who corrected me when I mentioned a dog having owners...

A dog doesn't have owners today...

It has parents or humans.

"We are independent people."

"We do not need to belong to anyone."

"We are self-made..."

"It's our lives to live..."

"Bad things happen when we belong to someone."

But the reality of our situation...

For those in Christ—

...is that we do belong to someone...

God calls us his own...

He says, "You are mine..."

"You belong to me."

The language that's used in this Psalm is meant to bring us back to the covenant...

Back to the promise God made to love his people...

The psalmist gives the command to "know" that the Lord is God.

This is more than an intellectual knowledge...

More than knowing with your head...

This is an intimate knowing...

A covenantal way of knowing...

A relational knowing...

The way a wife deeply knows her husband...

How she can tell when something is bothering him...

The way you know your close friend because you spend so much time together...

Or the way a parent deeply knows their child...

Knows when they feel safe to express themselves...

When they feel free to come alive...

The command of the psalmist is to “know that the Lord is God.”

“Know deep in your bones that the Lord is God...”

There is only this one God...

And the psalmist is drawing us back into the covenant.

“He is God...”

“...and you are his people.”

You are the treasured people of the Most High God.

In 1st Peter we read similar language (1 Peter 2:9-10)...

Instead of applying to the Israelites only, the covenant is opened up to the Gentiles...

The non-Jews...us.

Peter says, “You are a people belonging to God...Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

The blood of Jesus Christ...

The blood which seals the new covenant...

Confirms that we are indeed God’s people.

Once we were lost...

Unable to find our way...

But because of the outstretched arms of Christ on the cross...

God calls us his own...

He calls us his people:

“You belong to me.”

And belonging to God is a good thing...

He's not a God who makes us slaves...

But a God who sets us free.

He's not a God who abuses us...

But a God who nourishes and brings comfort.

He's not a God who puts his thumb on our backs...

But a God who gives us strength.

He is a good God, whose love is never ending.

I kind of see it like the relationship we have with our dog:

We've had Bailey for about a year and a half.

We bought her while we lived in Michigan...

So technically we do own her...

She belongs to us.

But just because she belongs to us, doesn't mean we take advantage of her...

No...it's anything but that...

We care for her...

Not only do we feed her two meals a day...

She gets beef liver treats and smoked bones...(and the occasional table scrap)

She goes to the park a few times a week...

We go outside to do her favorite thing...throw the tennis ball...

3 times a day...

We take her to the vet when she gets sick...

We make sure she stays out of trouble.

We like petting her and snuggling her on the couch...

She belongs to us...

Her tags have our phone numbers on them in case she gets lost...

She is ours...

She belongs to us...

And for Bailey, this is a good thing!

God calls us his own...

And for us this is a very good thing.

Knowing that we belong to a good, loving God shapes everything about us...

It defines us...

And gives meaning to our lives.

We often look at ourselves and we say:

“I’m too old;”

“I’m too young;”

“I’m too overweight;”

“I’m too emotional;”

“My sins are too great;”

But God looks at you and he says, “You are mine.”

“I made you, and I love you.”

“I created you the way you are and now I’m shaping you in my image.”

Because of the work of Christ;

The spilled blood of our savior...

Because of God’s magnificent grace...

God looks at us with loving eyes...

Seeing not our sins and our imperfections...

But seeing us as we are created, transformed and loved by him.

God calls us his own...

The sheep of his pasture.

And now we are free to follow our shepherd.

We are free to orient our entire lives around this loving God...

At the heart of this is worship.

It is living a life of praise for the one who loves us...

To the one who calls us his own.

We come to this place every week...

Even on cold winter mornings...

You spend hours practicing and performing...

All out of thanksgiving for the one who calls us his own.

This is the heart of what we do as God's people...

We give our worship;

We give our praise;

And we give our thanks to the only deserving God.

Our whole lives are committed to the God who loves us;

The God who gave up his life for us;

And the God who is continuing to transform us;

“It is he who made us; and we are his; we are his people.”

Thanks be to God.