

PSALM 100 verses 1-5

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the lands!

2 Serve the Lord with gladness!
Come into his presence with singing!

3 Know that the Lord is God!
It is he that made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

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

5 For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures for ever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

GALATIANS, Chapter 3, verses 26-28

²⁶In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

MEDITATION

Today we are going to think about Psalm 100. It's one of the better-known psalms; and in its metrical version, "All people that on earth do dwell", it's one of the most popular. It is also considered important by Jews, for it is used at the daily service in the synagogue.

The psalm challenges traditional thinking of the Jews. They liked to think of themselves as God's chosen people and somehow, they mattered more to God than Gentiles or non-Jews. But the psalmist calls on all lands to make a joyful noise to the Lord or, in the sung version, for all people that on earth do well to sing to the Lord with cheerful voice. Notice the emphasis on "all lands" and "all people". We are reminded that all human-beings are the children of God.

Jesus demonstrated this principle in his own behaviour. When he came to Jacob's well at Sychar, he met a Samaritan woman and entered into conversation with her. That was highly significant, for the Jews of his day did not normally have anything to do with Samaritans. We may also note that Jesus gave elevated status to a Samaritan in the parable which we know as "the Good Samaritan".

The Apostle Paul took this principle even further and saw other social barriers being broken down through Christ's influence – barriers between Jews and Greeks, barriers between slaves and free people, barriers between men and women.

The breaking down of social barriers has again become an issue in recent weeks with rallies and protest marches held under the slogan “Black Lives Matter”. They were sparked by the killing of a black man, called George Floyd, in Minneapolis. A white police officer knelt on his neck for nearly eight minutes during his arrest for a petty crime. After his death, protests against police violence toward black people quickly spread across the United States and internationally.

Yes, black lives matter and they matter because all lives matter. All people are the sons and daughters of God. He made us all and each one of us belongs to his family. Jesus would encourage us to oppose any inferior treatment of people, due to the colour of their skin, their gender, their disability, or whatever else makes them different from us.

Every human-being should have the right to the same education as others, the same right to health care, the same right to career opportunity, the same right to anything that matters.

So, Psalm 100 really challenges our behaviour and encourages us to treat everyone the same. It also presents us with a vision of a world won for God. Paul expressed it this way: “At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

PRAYER

O God, Father of us all, we praise you for creating the world and making the human race in your own image and likeness. We praise you because you loved the world so much that you gave your only Son. We come to you to seek the strength to face the crying need of the world so full of suffering and hunger. We come to you to seek the strength to face our own fears, anxieties and weakness.

We confess, heavenly Father, that we have heard of the terrible needs of our brothers and sisters throughout the globe, but we have been too busy with our own affairs to pay any heed. Forgive us that we have turned a deaf ear to the cries of the suffering; that we have sometimes looked down upon those who are different in race or colour from ourselves.

Set us on fire with your love that your love may reach out through us to every nation and embrace the whole human family. Mould our lives so that the love and power of Christ may work through us. We pray that we may be of some use to you in meeting the needs of your family on earth.

We pray, O God, that new love and power may be released through every branch of the church so that people all over the world may see fresh hope and realise that it is only by the love of Christ that the evils which darken this world can be banished.

We pray for the rulers of the world, for those hostile to our country, for our own queen and her governments at Westminster and Holyrood. Shine upon them all, until people no longer scorn love as folly and are ready to listen to your word and to be governed by your Spirit of love.

We pray for those in need, for those in famine areas, and for all relief workers; for those who live in areas where there is no medical service; for refugees and homeless folk, and for all who try to help them; for political prisoners, their families and for all who seek justice for them; for young people growing up in surroundings which degrade them, and for youth workers who seek to rescue them.

We pray that your love may flow more and more strongly into the hearts of your people, until every need is met and all human-beings live together as brothers and sisters. We ask you to bless those to whom we are bound by the sacred ties of family and of friendship.

We pray through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.