

The God Who Never Changes

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[0 : 00] Well, let me invite you to have Psalm 100 open in front of you. This is where we'll be for the next 25 minutes or so as we spend time just listening to God and just stilling our hearts as we come before his word and all the excitement that this morning has been.

Let me ask your honest opinion. I'm amongst friends here, so I'll ask for your honest opinion. What do you think of my jumper? Yeah? We're digging it? Yeah? It's great.

I'll tell you a little story about my jumper. We were at a Christians and Sport camp a couple of weeks ago up in Perthshire and I wore this jumper and one of the young people came up to me and said, I love your jumper.

And I said, oh, thank you for that. And then they proceeded to give me two words to describe my jumper. Now, if we had time, I'd ask you to turn to your neighbour and figure out what those two words were, but we won't.

Those two words were back in. Back in. Which I took as, I kind of think that's a compliment, I'm not sure, but this is what they said about my jumper, back in.

[1 : 15] And it's funny because when I was young, I had a jumper very like this when I was growing up. And honestly, I thought I was the bee's knees in this jumper. However, if you fast forward to when I was a teenager, I wouldn't be seen dead in a jumper like this.

Okay, I'm talking about the brand, not the black, the brand. Okay, less. I wouldn't be seen dead in a jumper like this. But now I'm delighted to learn that apparently a lessee from the youth of today, a lessee is back in fashion.

And it's interesting, isn't it? Because it's not just clothes in our world that kind of come and go.

Property prices, they go up and down. Politicians change their minds.

We know it, don't we, that friends and family, they drift in and out of our lives. We know it in our own bodies. Our health fluctuates. Our emotions go up and down. Our energy levels kind of go back and forth.

Lots of things in our world every day come and go. They come and go. And that's why the news of this psalm is so refreshing to us today.

[2 : 22] Because this is a psalm that celebrates the God who never changes. He never changes. And if you come with me to this text, into our ever-changing world, here is the God who doesn't change.

You'll see that this is a psalm that is full of imperatives, if you've got it there. Okay, the psalmist is encouraging us to worship this God who never changes. Six imperatives.

Okay, six verbs. And if you're like me, I still remember a verb as a doing word from school. Six verbs. Do you see them? Make, verse 1. We've got the text. Serve and come, verse 2.

Know, verse 3. Enter and give, verse 4. They're our verbs. And they're accompanied by, do you see, words that tell us how we are to do those things.

So you get, what do you get? Joyful. Verse 1 or joyfully. Gladness. Verse 2 or gladly. So the psalmist is encouraging us to worship God and to do these things and to do them joyfully and gladly.

[3 : 27] So let me tell you, here is how the rest of this sermon could go. It could be what I like to call a Nike sermon. Never heard a Nike sermon before? They're terrible to hear.

A Nike sermon is essentially somebody who says, just do it. Right? Look at the verbs and just go and do it. So, make. Would you just go and do it?

Serve. Just how about you go and do it? Give. How about we give it a chance this week and go and do it? And so on and so on the sermon could go. And not only would that be a terrible sermon to hear.

But let me just say it wouldn't be any different from the sermons that the world preaches to us every day. If you go down to Tyne Castle on Saturday at 3 o'clock, you'll be encouraged by thousands of others to shout for the boys in Maroon.

And if you want to add some disappointment, if you want to pay £28 for the privilege of doing that, you can go and do that. But they'll say shout, won't they? Walk down the meadows and I'm stopped by people on the street who are telling me about their charity.

[4 : 31] And they're saying this is the charity that you need to give to. This is the, not just your money, but your time and your energy. Give to this charity. You go to your local yoga class and you're invited to enter into that quiet place of contemplation.

So, here's my question this morning. Why is this any different? Right? In our world that likes to pick and choose our lifestyles, what we do, is this another one that we can kind of pick and choose? What makes this God any different? Well, the key to making this psalm a joy, and it is a joy-filled psalm, the key to making it a joy rather than a burden, is to get in touch with your inner two-year-old.

And it's to ask the question that we all asked when we were that age. And it's a question you will know that if you're a parent, can drive you to your knees in despair, as you're asked to explain and justify your every single action in life.

What is that question? Why? Why is this God worth serving and knowing and giving and coming and entering?

[5 : 42] Why is this God? And why should I make serve, come, not enter, and give to him? Well, the answer that is particularly in mind here is found in the word that crops up three times in this psalm.

And it's the word Lord. Do you see it? It's the covenant name of God. It's the covenant name of God.

This is what is celebrated in this psalm. And you see how this Lord, verse 5, his steadfast love. I love that phrase. Steadfast.

It's going nowhere. He's never changing. His love towards his people endures forever. It stays the same. Do you see it? It stays the same throughout all generations.

[6 : 54] What a God. And the good news is that this God is good. Because if he was bad, and he was bad yesterday, today, and forever, if he was bad down the years, then that, quite frankly, is news to be avoided rather than celebrated.

But this God is good all the time. And all the time, this God is good. He's good. And whoever wrote this psalm, that truth, that the Lord is good, and his steadfast, in Hebrews, hesed, his never changing love endures forever.

Whoever wrote that, the psalmist is celebrating the fact that this God is that kind of God. And that truth has gripped the psalmist's heart. Do you see how they are celebrating and they are inviting? Do you see it? Verse 1. Who are they inviting? Not just Israel. Do you see it? Who are they inviting? They're inviting the whole world. Whole world.

Remember, the earth is the Lord's. The peoples are his. And as Derek Kedner points out with this phrase, the psalmist is claiming the whole world for God. What are they doing?

[8 : 08] I like to think they're sitting in their armchair, the psalmist, and they're spinning the globe. Spinning the globe. Maybe that was just me when I was young. Spinning the globe. And they're looking at the world. And they're saying, the peoples of these nations, they need to come to know this God too.

Because once they come to know this God, he is the God who gives joy and who thrills hearts. And they will celebrate and they will invite too. This is the God, the source of all true joy.

And is it not an amazing thought to think that this psalm has become the anthem of the church of God's people down the ages? Isn't it? Psalm 100.

The anthem of the church down the ages. Put to music by William Keith. Some of you will be singing it in your head right now. That much love to him. All creatures that on earth do dwell. And these precise words have filled the praises of God's people for thousands of years.

And they will fill the praises of God's people for thousands of years until he comes and brings us home. Isn't it a wonderful thought to think that these words are those kind of words. Celebrating the God who is this good. Now this psalm is a small cluster of psalms which begins at Psalm 93 that celebrate God's kingship.

[9 : 23] And if you want to flick back over the last few psalms you'll see this theme. That God is the great king over all the earth. He's the great king over all the earth. The Lord reigns. He's roged in majesty.

And so the kind of shouting that's in view here, the kind of singing, is the kind you would give to a returning victorious king as they ride back into town. You see God's abode.

Where does he live? He lives in the temple. His dwelling place in this psalm. And the heartbeat of the worship life of Israel is his temple. This is where the all out worship of this king takes place in this psalm.

And so the psalmist, as he's writing here, whether he's physically there or whether he's picturing it in his mind, he's envisaging the temple. And as he does that, as he physically thinks about it, he's reminded of three ways in which this good king has proven himself worthy of worship.

And here we get our three reasons why we should worship this God. So firstly, we should worship him, says the psalmist, because he is the God who's brought us out.

[10 : 31] Now we've got a saying in our house. And it goes like this. A promise is a promise. Promise is a promise. We say it to the girls to try and help them understand that if we say something, we should follow through.

And every time I say it to them, I say to them, a promise is a promise. And it's not meant a promise, it's a promise. That's how you say it. Every time I say it, I'm confronted by the fact that there will be times when I do not deliver on my promises.

Okay? So Alex leaves for work in the morning. She says, sweetheart, would you put the bins out? And I say, of course I'll put them out. I promise. They're as good as out. And then she comes home at night and she says, how did you go on with the bins?

Because I noticed the bin lorry drive past. And do you know what else I noticed? I noticed our bins are still there. Friends, the very fact that there's a temple in Jerusalem is proof that this God is good for his word.

He's not like us. He will not change. What he says happens. The promises that God made to Abraham, and you can check them out in your own time, Genesis 12, Genesis 15. The promises that he made to him of making from him a people and taking that people and pouring his love upon them and taking them to the land that he promised them.

[11 : 50] And against all the odds of it happening, what did he do? God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt. And he parted the Red Sea and he led them to the other side. And by doing so, he won the freedom for his people and he brought judgment to pass on their enemies.

And when the other side of the Red Sea, despite their numerous groanings and sins in the wilderness, he carried them all the way to the land that he promised them. And why?

Well, so that they could dwell with him and worship him and know him as their incomparable gods. You see, he is the king who's worthy of worship because he is the God who's brought us out.

And secondly, he's worthy of worship because he is the God who invites us in. You see, it throws the psalmist's heart that not only is God here, but that he invites his people near to know him.

And this is no casual invitation. If you remember what we thought about last week, the very last words of Psalm 99. In fact, it's the very last word of Psalm 99.

[12 : 56] What is God? What is this Lord? He is holy. Right? He is spotless in his purity. He is radiant in his glory. He is matchless in his majesty.

And no sin may enter his perfect presence. And yet, this holy God has made a way for unholy people to be right in his sight.

How is that? He's done it by sacrifice. He's prescribed a way for his people to come to the temple with a bull or a goat that they would slaughter. And whose blood the priest would take and splatter on the altar and the rest of the day would burn.

And what would happen is that it tells us that this would atone for or cover that individual's sin. And when the offering goes up, the smell of it might have been disgusting to human beings.

But do you know what it's described as being to God? A pleasing aroma. A pleasing aroma. And what that signifies is that the worshipper, because someone has died in their place, is now right with the Lord.

[14 : 02] And he also invites them, flowing from that, to come and to bring him a thanksgiving offering.

As a way of thanking him. Celebrating him. Worshipping him. For being the God who he is. And that too, as that sacrifice goes up, is described as being a pleasing aroma to God.

Is this not amazing? That God would desire the praises of his people. That God would invite his people to come near and to worship and to celebrate him.

Not in some kind of drummed up emotionalism. But by way of an overflow of a humble yet deeply satisfied soul. That says, I know who this God is.

And I know what he said. And I know what he's done for me. Now pause and think on that for just a moment. Is it not just an incredible thought?

[15:19] When you come to terms with the world in which we live. And particularly when you come to terms with the own gravity of your sin. That God has made a way for me to be right with him. And God desires the praises of his people.

Do you see how God wants gratitude to be one of the defining marks of his people? Defining marks of his people.

Let me ask you, when was the last time you thanked God for being this kind of God? Remember when I was young? In fact, when we were all young. What were we taught to mind?

Our P's and Q's. Our P's and Q's. Love the fact that this God, he invites his people near. To bring them his P's. Their P's and their Q's.

He invites them near. To bring him their heartfelt prayer request. To pour out their souls to him. Like Hannah did at the beginning of 1 Samuel.

[16:21] And he invites them. To bring them his praise. For everything that he's done. For everything that he is. You know, J.I. Packer, who's a theologian, writes this.

We need to discover all over again that worship is natural to the Christian. It's completely natural. Once we understand who this God is and what he's done. Friends, what a joy it is that we can know him and worship him.

He's the king worthy of worship because he invites them in. And thirdly, he's worthy of worship because he's the king who leads them on. Now just look at the language here. Fully intimacy at verse 3.

As the psalmist reflects on the covenant relationship that the Lord enjoys with his people. That he is their God and they are his people. Look at the language of verse 3. It's amazing.

You know, our girls love to watch the Toy Story films. We had a great time on holiday watching Toy Story 2 together. I mean, I loved it, honestly. Toy Story 2, watching it.

[17:22] And one of the reasons I loved it was because of one of the main characters, Woody. You'll know how it goes. Woody's there. He's running about. But the thing I loved about it, and I noticed this time, was the thing that brings Woody joy and purpose.

Right? Think about it. Because unlike every other Disney film that almost plays into our modern day narrative, that true purpose and joy is to be found in discovering who you really are, which is to be kind of going on a journey.

Where does Woody look for his purpose and joy in life? What does he do? He just looks to his shoe. Doesn't he? Key moments in that film. Where does he look? He just looks to his shoe.

And he remembers the name that's engraved there. The name of his loving owner. And he remembers the joy that it was of being with him.

And by remembering, not just who he is, but by remembering whose he is. And it's almost as if Woody has that moment where he says, Do you know what?

[18:28] That is where true joy and purpose is to be found. And it's almost as if the psalmist here, he invites God's people to join him in lifting their shoes.

And you see him do it in verse 3. What does he say? This God, what did he do? He made us.

Right? He'll not entertain notions of an accidental big bang creation. He made us, says the psalmist. He engraved his name on us. And every single human being made wonderfully in his image. But I think particularly he's got a mind to you. He's reflecting on God's covenant commitment to his people.

Where God has said, you are mine. And because he said, you are mine, look at this. Look at this.

This God knows us. And he tends us.

And he leads us. And he provides for us. And he cares for us. And feel the imagery here. As a who? As a shepherd. Does his sheep?

[19 : 27] It's a wonderful truth, isn't it? And perhaps it's one that you need to rest in today. That if your trust is in Jesus here this morning. If he's brought you to himself.

Then God says, you are mine. I've made you mine. And you can know that I know you intimately. And I know your pain. And I know your questions.

And I know your struggles. And I know your doubts. And I know your fears. And I know your ambitions. And I invite you to draw near to me. And to know that I am a good God.

And I am your good God. This good God is worthy of worship. Because he is the king who has brought them out. He's worthy of worship. Because he's the God who invites them in.

And he's worthy of worship. Because he's the God who leads them on. You know, I got our TV license reminder through the other day. And I went online to pay it.

[20 : 26] And it asks you a few questions. If you know the process, you've done it. Question one. What kind of license do you need? One of the options. Was black and white. And I thought to myself.

Who still uses a black and white TV? But the thing is. I remember growing up. We had a black and white TV. It had a color function. But it was a black and white TV.

And one of the ways you got color. Was that you had to spend ages. And some of you might have done this. You had to spend ages with the dial at the top. And you just turned it. Turned it. Turned it. Turned it.

Turned it. Turned it. Turned it. Turned it. Turned it. Turned it. Boom. Color. and my brother and I used to spend ages trying to get this black and white TV to colour but see once we'd got it boy was that a picture worth playing on and looking at the thing is that Christ brings the full colour to Psalm 100 Jesus brings the volume the maximum volume to God's promises that he is good and that he will never change and Christ it's fully in him that we know that this good God is good and that his steadfast love endures forever because Jesus is the king if you think about it who has brought his people out he's the king of this Psalm Jesus is the one who has brought his people out from the slavery of our sin and he's triumphed over our greatest enemy as he died for our sin on the cross and Jesus is the king who invites us in he is the one who offered himself as a permanent sacrifice for sin on the cross atoning for my every sin atoning for the every sin of his people that's all those who would put their trust in him and opening up the way for us to come confidently not casually confidently into the presence of a holy God and call him father and he is the one who along with the father has sent the spirit to dwell in the very hearts of his people to know that sonship that is ours as the three in one God takes up residence in the very lives of his people and Jesus is the king who leads us on for what did he call himself

John chapter 10 he's the what he's the good shepherd the one who calls his sheep the one who knows his sheep the one who holds his sheep the one who prays for his sheep and the one who will one day return as we've been singing to gather his sheep and bring them home to be with God forever and you see how in light of everything that God has done for us in Christ all of a sudden these six imperatives make full sense and now we can go full Nike sermon on it make a joyful noise to the Lord for King Jesus is one come and celebrate him serve him with gladness follow him live for him in your every area of life at work in church at home seek to make him glorious come into the Lord's very presence with singing and enter his gates with thanksgiving and give him praise do you see how this good God has thrilled the heart of the psalmist and they are celebrating and they are inviting and so let me ask us today as God's people at Brunsfield and maybe even some of us for the very first time today as we put our trust in Jesus as our king would join in the thousands of tongues down the years and in the years to come who will sing the chorus of Psalm 100 and join in the celebrating and the inviting to come and know this good God whose steadfast love endures forever now friends just as we close you know yesterday was the as we've heard it said already 50 years since

[24 : 29] Neil Armstrong walked on the moon and honestly having a space themed holiday club it's almost as if you'd think we've got a youth passer who thought ahead and planned that I don't know and you should encourage him this week he was superb superb and all the team did such a brilliant job so do encourage him if you get a chance today but I was reading this this week I didn't really know but part of the Apollo 11 team Buzz Aldrin amongst other things was an evangelical Christian and this week also marked I don't know if you knew this but the first time communion was ever taken on the moon you can google it when you go home Buzz Aldrin an evangelical Christian he took it himself he took out his pocket when he was just about to take it a crumpled up bit of paper

and he unraveled it and on it he read to him the words that he printed before he went John 15 the words of Jesus I am the vine you are the branches whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit for without me you can do nothing and so he took the bread and the wine and it was almost

Aldrin's way of remembering that in the midst of all the achievement and in the celebration that he was very small and he was finite but he was remembering the God who is eternal friends we live in a come and go world things will come and they will go our world's constantly changing but this Sam invites us to come and worship the God who never changes he stays the same he's always been good he always will be good and the invitation is to come and know him and celebrate him by knowing Jesus as your saviour because this God his faithful love it endures forever and this God his faithfulness endures for all generations you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you