

"The Christian's Joyful Service – a Fruit of Christ's Resurrection"

s/4/21/13

INI

Psalm 100

Dear Fellow Redeemed by the life, sufferings, and sacrificial death of our risen Savior,

Have you heard someone try to end a religious discussion by saying, "Well, we all serve the same God"? It is true that every religious person serves a god of some kind; but not all religious service is the same. For whatever service arises from those who reject Christ is the fruit of the spiritually dead. The service of the Christ-believer, however, arises from spiritual life.

**OUR JOYFUL SERVICE AS CHRIST-BELIEVERS
IS A FRUIT OF HIS RESURRECTION**

I.

The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 6 that through baptism Christians are **"buried with Christ, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."** Without our Lord's resurrection and true faith in Christ's redeeming work for us, there is no "newness of life" – no joyful service to the true God.

One of the most disturbing comments we hear as pastors is "I don't have to go church in order to be saved." But isn't this where our service to our great Savior God begins? God has served us first! For this reason Psalm 100 begins: **"make a joyful noise (shout) to the Lord, serve Him with gladness, and come before his presence with singing!"**

Why shouldn't our Christian service include our glad praises of Him in the congregational worship service? For, as the Psalmist says: **"The Lord is God; He has made us; we have not made ourselves."** As Luther put it in his explanation of the first article of the Apostolic Creed: God "has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my body-parts, my mind and all my senses. And still preserves me . . . therefore daily and richly providing all that I need for my body and life. . . ."

Even after fallen man threw away all the earthly blessings God had given him in the Garden, The Lord still claimed a people for Himself. As the Psalmist says: **"We are His people and the sheep of His pasture."** God's eternal plan to save mankind was fulfilled when Jesus of Nazareth kept the Law of God perfectly for us, and then suffered eternal punishment for all

the sins of man on the cross.

That goodness and mercy continues until the end of time through the preaching of Gospel, through which the Holy Spirit calls and creates **His people, the sheep of His pasture.**" God has delivered Jesus, **"for our transgressions and raised Him again because we have been declared righteous"** on account of Him! (Rom. 4:25) Those who believe what our Creator-Redeemer God has done for them and made them in the risen Christ will surely desire to sing His praises with the congregation of believers!

II.

And this "service of glad thanksgiving" will also spill over into the daily living of the true Christian. "Joyful noise," "serving with gladness," "coming with singing" – This is what characterizes the service of those who know that God has first served them in connection with Jesus Christ. The unbeliever serves a god who demands to be served. The service of the true Christian arises from the happy truth that God has already freely given eternal salvation – full and complete through Jesus Christ!

In our congregation there are so many ways to serve our Lord and Savior. You women may serve as Sunday School and VBS teachers, choir members and musicians. You may serve with hospitality at funerals, by visiting the sick, and by your prayers for others. You men may serve as teachers, members of the voting assembly, and as delegates to church conventions. ALL may serve in the general maintenance of our church property. There are so many ways in which we all can and do serve the Lord.

And yet, if the heart is not right, our service is displeasing to the Lord. If we try to serve Him with an unwilling heart, then our service becomes evil. For the Bible tells us that **"whatsoever" is not done from faith is sin!** (Heb. 11:6, Rom. 14:23) – yes, even in the church! But what a beautiful sight to behold your glad service in the Lord! I give thanks to our God for the fruit of his resurrection, whenever it rises up and appears upon you, His believing people.

According to our text, **thanksgiving** distinguishes the true Christian's service to the true God. The love and gratitude of happy hearts is to be the motive for all our service in the congregation and in our daily lives.

Why do the unbelievers and hypocrites appear to serve God? – In order to earn the praises of others, and the favor of God. But there are no

tickets to heaven. Even if we had all the gold and silver in the world, forgiveness of sins cannot be purchased. God HAS all the silver and gold in the world, but even he could not buy our salvation with such things. Forgiveness for all people has already been purchased by the holy, precious blood of God's own Son. Christ alone is the ticket to heaven, stamped upon the cross by God Himself!

Each day the believing sinner has something to be thankful for, as he remembers that God Himself has freed him from the power of sin, death, and hell through the life, sufferings, death, and resurrection of His own Son. Our God continues to shower us with His gracious blessings and gifts – both spiritual and material. We can't buy anything from Him! We deserve nothing but punishment here on earth and in the world to come. We cannot bribe Him. We can only receive from Him again and again with joyful thanksgiving!

III.

There is another distinguishing feature of the joyful service of those who believe in the resurrection of their Savior – continual, unending service. Those who think that they must earn the favor of their god by their service to Him, will keep a record of what they have done. They want to be sure that they get back what they have put in! If they feel they have done their best to earn God's favor, and then experience some setback or suffering in life, they will immediately blame God for being unfair, and even cut back their service in a spirit of bitterness!

Jesus illustrates this tendency of the unbeliever in the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. As the Pharisee stood in the temple, he appeared to be praying to God. In reality, he wanted to make sure that God did not mistake him for an ordinary sinner, like the tax collector!

So he spoke of himself as a man of high morals. He "thanked" God, not for the way God had served him, but because he was such a good fellow as compared to others. Then he stopped and left, confident that his deeds of service would earn God's favor. But Jesus said that this man did not go down to his house justified before God. (Lk. 18:9-14)

Take a look at today's character-building organizations, which seek to build moral character without the Gospel of Christ. They all emphasize the idea of the individual multiplying his good deeds, and even keeping track of them. Members are given "merit badges," medals, promotions, and public citations. The Scouts, for example, are supposed to give evidence of

private prayer, stewardship, and mission work. Then they stand before the altar of their church to be rewarded! Such training is the direct opposite of what is pleasing to the Lord!

“Serve the Lord with gladness,” our Psalm says! That implies a continual, unending life of service – not a list of individual acts of service for which a person is to be rewarded. Whatever a Christian does, he is to do as Paul says in Colossians chapter 3: **“as unto the lord, and NOT unto men”** – not in order to be rewarded by men, or by God!

Our risen Lord Jesus will surely have His resurrection fruit in the joyful service of His believing people. The believer will always know the Lord as the only God Who has first served mankind with life and salvation through the work of His Son. The believer will respond in faith’s joy to the **“goodness”** of the Lord. Whatever the setbacks or trials life may bring, the Christian knows that the Lord’s **“mercy is everlasting”** toward him, and that the **“truth”** of Christ’s Gospel **“endures” unchangeably “to all generations.”**

Resting joyfully on this Word of Truth, we shall feel and experience the joy spoken of in this Psalm. In this joy let us **“enter His presence”** each day with glad and thankful service to the only God Who has loved us and given Himself for us. Amen.