

Sermonnotes: Sunday, November 25, 2007

Notes to better help you understand Sunday's sermon text

Text: Psalm 100

Title: Excited to Come Into the Presence of God

I believe this was the first psalm I ever committed to memory back when Bible memory was a normal part of Sunday school in the Presbyterian Church. Our Christian Discipleship Committee has discussed starting this practice up again and hopefully we will soon.

One of the first things we notice in this psalm is that there are seven imperatives: shout, serve, come, know, enter, give thanks and bless. Each of them has *Yahweh* as its object. Biblical writers were almost never arbitrary in numbering. So, we can be quite sure that the psalmist used exactly seven imperatives to reinforce the truth that in worshipping *Yahweh* we are worshipping the one true (complete or perfect) God.

The next thing we notice is the sheer exuberance that is apparently the norm in worshipping *Yahweh*. 'Shout to *Yahweh* in joy' is equivalent to the fanfare blown by the trumpets when royalty enters a room. It's the 'three cheers' for the woman who scored the winning goal, the standing ovation for the great actor, the jumping-out-of-our-seats shout for the come-from-behind fourth quarter touchdown. But look too at the other words connected to the imperative verbs: with gladness, with singing, with thanksgiving and praise.

Clearly, to know *Yahweh* is, once we remember who he is, to no longer be able to react in any other way than exuberant worship. Conversely, a clear first sign of idolatry creeping into our lives is when our worship is dull and lifeless. That is true of both individuals and congregations.

Having said this I am reminded of something Martin Luther once wrote. He confessed (and can't we all) that there were times in his life when he came to God with a cold heart. He didn't feel like worshipping. In fact this tended to be normal for him. And so, he would take Scripture – like the 100th Psalm – and use it to 'light' his heart. The German word he used is, I am told, the word still in use for a 'lighter'. He discovered that by dwelling on Scripture and what it taught him about this God whose name is *Yahweh* exuberance, praise, thanksgiving – genuine not manufactured excitement – all followed. Perhaps we would do well to imitate Luther in this!

