



# FROM THE PASTOR

## Psalm 100 (NIV)

- <sup>1</sup> Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.
- <sup>2</sup> Worship the LORD with gladness;  
come before him with joyful songs.
- <sup>3</sup> 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.
- <sup>4</sup> Enter his gates with thanksgiving  
and his courts with praise;  
give thanks to him and praise his name.
- <sup>5</sup> For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;  
his faithfulness continues through all generations.

I come from a different time. I started Sunday School in the 1950s. It was the high water mark, of the Church, in American society. The world was recovering from the worst period of uncertainty, chaos and violence that it had ever known. The financial ravages of the 1930s (The Great Depression) and the fear and carnage of the 1940s (World War II) left people of my parents' generation longing for stability, peace and security. Those are some of the factors why traditional churches grew so rapidly in the 1950s and early 1960s. The church stood for stability, peace and security.

Among many familiar church denominations, stability, peace and security was expressed in our worship. This was particularly so among Lutherans with our strong sense of tradition, value of historic forms of worship, and obsession with good order. Both at home and at school, I was taught that shouting was a bad thing except at play. Shouting was unthinkable at church.

Now, this may or may not sound familiar to you. I don't suppose that everyone was raised in exactly the same way I was, but I can't remember things being much different for my friends either. If there was shouting, it was done privately within the family and not publicly out in the world.

I think that if someone, other than the preacher in rare moments of enthusiasm, had shouted for joy at Sunday morning worship we would have all been stunned. Compare that with the opening lines of Psalm 100, our appointed Psalm for this Sunday: **"SHOUT FOR JOY TO THE LORD, ALL THE EARTH. WORSHIP THE LORD WITH GLADNESS; COME BEFORE HIM WITH JOYFUL SONGS."** Unlike so much of the culture in which I grew up, we are told to shout! But we are told to shout about the right things. In spite of all the evil which we see around us, we still see reflected the beauty and goodness, of what God has made in this world. And as we contemplate that beauty and goodness we find it hard to keep silent. I am amazed at how frequently the words of the old hymn come to mind: "When through the woods and forest glades I wander, I hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees; When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur and hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze; Then sings my soul, my savior God, to thee, How great thou art! How great thou art! Then sings my soul, my savior God, to thee, How great thou art! How great thou art!"

But it is not just the grandeur of what God made that is amazing. It is the love that caused God to make it. In His vastness and majesty, God made me to be His and when sin tore me away from Him, sent His own Son, our Savior Jesus, to bring me back! **"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."** Now that is something to shout about—even in church. That theme of God's



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continuing love and care for us is thrilling! Again, the words of the old hymn come flooding to mind: "But when I think that God, His Son not sparing, Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in, That on the cross my burden gladly bearing. He bled and died to take away my sin; Then sings my soul, my savior God, to thee, How great thou art! How great thou art!"

I can't tell you how good it felt to be with so many of you, together in worship, at our first worship service at St. Luke's since the middle of March. Even though we still experience restrictions and our safety measures keep us from close contact, it was just a joy to be together. I felt a lightness in my soul as I drove home that I had so sorely missed. It is because we did what God created us to do. The COVID-19 scare couldn't separate us from God or God's Word of expectation and promise. But it had kept us from expressing our joy in being the communion of saints. **"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."** As we enter His courts with praise, as we come back together, let's remember that God's courts are not the stone and mortar building, but the hearts of God's redeemed people. And, although it's not really like us to shout out loud, let our assembly loudly proclaim the goodness and love of God that endures forever! Let us pledge ourselves to keep the shout resounding through all generations.

In Christ's service,  
*Pastor Brian Shirey*

## *Post Scripts:*

- † Our lessons for this Sunday, June 14, the Second Sunday after Pentecost, are:
  - First Lesson: Exodus 19:2-8
  - Psalm: 100
  - Second Lesson: Romans 5:6-15
  - Gospel: Matthew 9:35—10:20
- † Even though we are gathering for worship again at our own facility that does not necessarily mean that we can completely guarantee safety from infection or that everybody should attend. I'm sure that our Lord wants you to continue to use prudence and caution. Let's err on the side of caution. If you are not feeling well or have been around anyone at risk for COVID-19, you should wait awhile before coming back. If you have any factors that might make you more vulnerable to getting or would have more difficulty recovering from the virus, you should wait a while before coming back.
- † Keep praying for one another and pray for our President, Governor and other leaders. And trust in our strong Fortress to get us through the remainder of this crisis.