

Grace, Mercy, and Peace are yours from God our Heavenly Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:**

**[Somber Reality]**

When I wrote this sermon, I admit, the last thing I was feeling was peace. There was a sermon I preached months ago where I asked the question, “what’s going on?”. Even today, I find myself still asking the same question. Whether you’re watching online, or you’re here in person, one thing is evident, nothing is “normal”. But that’s not all. You and I can handle things not being normal for a little while, after all, that’s been what the past few months have been full of. You can handle wearing a mask now when you go shopping. Working from home isn’t optimal, but by now it’s possible. Even online worship and bible studies have become part of weekly life.

What strikes me is the lack of peace.

Around the country, there are countless people who are suffering and in pain. Emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual pain seem to be rampant right now. What began as the tragic murder of George Floyd has spread across the world as people around the globe cry out for justice. There have been protests, and out of anger, there have been riots. All while people are still getting sick from Coronavirus, and social distancing keeps people apart.

Peace. It feels so foreign right now.

**[Psalms of Thanks]**

So, we turn to the Word. You and I are gathered to hear from the Word of God. Today, the Word comes to us through the book of Psalms. Often, when people discuss the book of Psalms, they talk about the ones that truly describe how one is feeling. Psalms are God’s word to His people, and they return to him as the people’s words to God. Psalm 100 is written as a “*Psalm for giving thanks*”.

Psalms can convey a great depth of meaning, providing a window into the soul that is both breathtaking and sobering. However, today's Psalm struck me in an altogether different way. From the first words, "Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!" I was lost. With the sin and the pain that are plaguing society, it felt inappropriate to make a joyful noise.

It isn't easy to give thanks currently.

To make a joyful noise.

Maybe you're in the same place. At this time, you might be feeling less than joyful. Coming into His presence with singing? Not today! Not yet! What is there to spark joy in you and me? How are we supposed to enter into the gates with thanksgiving, or His courts? The world around us is crying out in anger and pain, heartache and loss. Perhaps it would be better for us to be silent and let other voices be heard.

[Gospel Reality]

God's Word comes down, "Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us and we are his; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture...For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations." Amen. So be it. Truly I say to you, the Lord is God and his steadfast love endures forever! Let the voice of the people of God be heard.

***WE are his people.***

For some time, churches had to "close" and move to online worship.

But the Gospel is never "closed".

As you come to worship, you and I may have to practice social distancing,

but the God that you and I serve is never distant.

The world may say an awful lot about the church,

but one thing that cannot be said about the people of God is that we are *silent*.

The Gospel is never silent! The Gospel is that rich Word of God who was in the beginning and came down to Earth. The Gospel is that same Word going to the cross to suffer and die for you, me, sinful people around the globe and throughout history. God did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

Psalm 100 says that it is God who made us. God who loves us. God loves humanity. People of all ethnic backgrounds, all languages, all social statuses, from across the globe, Christ bore the wounds and the indignity of the cross. Whether it be George Floyd, Derek Chauvin, Judas Iscariot, Miguel Gonzalez-Feliciano, or you. Jesus loves. The Word of God tells us so. Jesus died for the sins of all humanity so we could have peace.

A Psalm of giving thanks is **exactly** what we need.

**[Give Thanks to Him]**

So, make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Perhaps it will be the words of a hymn we sing here together. It could be a loud Amen. Maybe it's tears and sobs of gratitude. Whatever your joyful noise is, don't be silent. Often, and intentionally make that joyful noise.

Cry with one another

Laugh with one another

Sing with one another

Worship with one another.

God loves you.

No truth in the world matters more than this. The love of God will endure forever. This seems so foreign to the world. The Devil wants to divide us in every way he can. But it is the Gospel that draws us together, the love of Christ which brings us across the racial, social, and economic divide. The Gospel sits you and I down at the same table and gladly recognize that we are sons and daughters of Christ.

## [All Generations]

Years from now, undoubtedly, I'll have to explain to Daisy what life was like during the year 2020. World War three was trending on Twitter in January. In February, there was this disease emerging in China. March: Coronavirus spreads to America and thus began the lockdown season. In April, we spent a month indoors. May saw the arrival of the Murder Hornets and June saw protests and riots. Only God knows what the rest of 2020 will look like.

But through it all, Psalm 100 reminds Daisy, it reminds you and me, "For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations."

All generations.

God is God. I am not, so I read my Bible and I read it a lot. Only through the Word of God can I hear the truth that my soul fails to recognize. Only through the Words of Jesus can my spirit rejoice within me. All generations, all people are shown the faithfulness of God. You and I and all of mankind have access to God through Jesus Christ. We can receive his Grace, Mercy, and Peace. Now and forever. May this serve as a reminder as we begin to come back to worship in the house of the Lord together again, as we converse with family and friend online, and while we show hospitality to our brothers and sisters at home and around the world.

Peace be with you.

So be it.

Amen.

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As followers of Christ, "Keep loving one another earnestly

And show hospitality to one another without grumbling." AMEN! (1Pt 4:8-9)

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