

“Should anyone ever shout in church?”

Psalm 100 NIV

“Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

**(2) Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.**

**(3) 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.**

**(4) Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his
courts with praise; give thanks to him and
praise his name.**

**(5) For the LORD is good and his love
endures forever; his faithfulness continues
through all generations.”**

Theme:

We are at our best when we thank God.

We human beings amaze one another.

We watch others laugh, cry, cooperate,
conflict, collaborate, excoriate, and collapse all
in sixty minutes or less.

Scientists and technicians brilliantly
calculate, design, and pool their energies
so they can send objects to outer space.

**Meanwhile groups ably plot riots,
anarchy, and destruction.**

Artists paint scenes creating hues that in
galleries evoke “oohs and aahs.”

**But in some locales, natural
coloration of human skin arouses
prejudice and pride.**

What strange, wondrous creatures we are.

- A select few accurately hurl footballs fifty yards.
- Some toss salads that satisfy the pickiest of palates.
- A few others toss baloney so deftly they consistently hoodwink millions.

We are uniquely gifted but strange beings.

- Without a word, seemingly helpless newborns charm and outwit their parents.
- With eighty years of experience and a 25,000 word vocabulary, many parents miserably fail to charm their children.

**Everyone alive has a gift or gifts not shared
by anyone else in the Universe.**

You are uniquely gifted.

Each of you possesses great ability and potential

When are we human beings at our best?

When do we excel?

When are we nearest to realizing our potential?

Talk to parents about their young children and you hear these expectations.

They want their kids to:

- Get along with their siblings, friends, and teachers.
 - Get good grades.
- Excel in sports.

They often want sons to be the stars of sports team.

They wish their daughters to be smart, pretty, and star in sports, too.

By the time sons are in their late teens, parents want them to have well-paying jobs and their daughters to be M.D.s, attorneys, and CEOs.

But when sons and daughters reach their 30s and 40s, do you know the fondest hope their parents express of them?

You hear them say directly and indirectly that they would like for their children to be thankful.

You probably heard about the son in college, who bought his dad a cheap Christmas gift.

The father complained about its quality.
"Dad that's all you could afford," replied the son."

Three sons, with their wives, were celebrating their parent's 50th anniversary.
At the dinner, the first son stood up and said, "Dad. Mom. I'd have brought you a present, but Suzy and I spent the summer in Europe, so we're kinda broke, but we do wish you the very best."

The second son said, "My dear parents. I, too, would have brought a present, but I just bought Nancy a diamond necklace, and we're short right now."

And the third said, "Folks, we purchased a powerboat which left us strapped, but we wish you good health and love for years to come."

"That's okay, sons," said the father. "I know how it feels to be broke. I never told you this but when your mother and I decided to get married fifty years ago, we didn't even have the money for a license, so we never had a ceremony."

The first son burst out, "Dad! Do you know what that makes us?"

"Yes, I do," said dad, "and you are cheap ones, too!"¹

"Thankfulness could well be the first sentiment of humans and also the rarest," said someone.

We are most noble when we are thankful.
Psalm 100 tells three elements of Thanksgiving.

Lacking any of these elements, thanksgiving is as deficient as a three-legged stool with two legs missing.

Leg one: We acknowledge God as Creator.

¹ I first read this story in *Comedy Writing Secrets*. Where the authors found it, I do not know. I heard many years ago that prison inmates originate many popular jokes and stories.

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.

Do you regularly acknowledge God as your Creator?

Spend a moment looking into the eyes of the person nearest you.

No scientist or technician has ever invented a camera that does what our God-created eyes can do.

Their adjustment, perception, and range are virtually automatic.

Both voluntary and involuntary tweaking take place.

No need to press buttons, apps, or levers.

Those eyes also plead, tear-up, and express anger.

Look at your hands.

Thousands of nerve endings in your fingers enable you to react to hot, cold, and the warm hands of others.

No machine matches their dexterity, nimbleness, and sense of feel.

**You stand on feet given to no other animal.
Our mouths, tongues, and teeth form
sounds in thousands of combinations.
Our Creator wonderfully equipped us.**

And yet this fact is undeniably, but
shamefully evident:

**When most mouths utter the sound
"God," they are cursing, are not
thanking Him.**

Too few regularly, gratefully recognize God.

**The 2nd necessary element is in the opening
phrase: "Shout for joy to the Lord,"**

KJV "Make a joyful noise."

This calls for sincere exuberance.

To me one of the chief church mysteries is:

**How did we get the idea that worship
should be somber?**

At various times, we give to our families.

We usually consider what the loved one
needs or would like to receive.

**We go to great effort to find what our friend
or loved one needs.**

We prudently choose a gift.

We carefully wrap it and lovingly present it.

The recipient opens it, looks at it, and
indifferently says,

"Thanks." maybe says nothing.

**Do you wonder about the seeming
ingratitude?**

**Do you know someone who has had
another save his/her life?**

**Exuberant thanks usually never
stops; true?**

Yet when some folks compare what they
have with what others have, they
conclude that life stinks.

The life God gives us is special.

No one rich or poor, of any color or language
gets more than one life.

Once life ends, it never returns.

**We also do not know how or when
our lives will end; how can we
conclude that life unfair?**

**If we never know the end of the story, how
can we make a judgment about it?**

Many of us are barely thankful for what we have, yet we demand more.

The Arno River flows through Florence, Italy.

The Ponte² Vecchio in Florence is one of the world’s most famous bridges.

During its history, many bridges have been built in Florence along the Arno.

In 1944 during WW II, the retreating German Army destroyed all of Florence’s bridges except for the Ponte Vecchio.

The Medici Family ruled Florence for about three hundred years (1435-1737).

In her book, *Moment By Moment*, Margaret Applegarth related the unusual story of how a Medici prince built one of the earlier bridges.

“He had been told and retold for many years that a new bridge was needed over the River Arno. But even in Renaissance Italy there were city fathers who hated hints aimed at their pocketbooks.”

No one wanted to pay for that bridge.

² Ponte is Italian for “bridge.”

In the U.S. today, financing construction of a wall has everyone talking.

This ingenious Medici prince publicly agreed: Yes, Florence needs a new bridge!

Here’s how he financed construction of that needed bridge for which no one wanted to pay.

The prince printed and posted large placards at street corners:

**“NOTICE:
IF THE BEGGARS OF FLORENCE
WILL COME
TO THE MEDICI PALACE
THEY WILL BE GIVEN
A NEW SUIT OF CLOTHES ON
FRIDAY MORNING,
AT
9 O’CLOCK”**

On Friday “ragged creatures flocked there in droves.” At 9 A.M., “gates swung open, and beggars surged into the cobblestone courtyard.” The prince stood on the palace steps and shouted sharp orders:

1. To his servants he yelled: "Shut the gates!"
2. To the beggars: "Take off your old clothes!" They did.
3. Almost immediately the next instructions came: "Put on your new clothes!" They did that, too.
4. To the servants Medici barked: "Open the gates! Drive them out quickly!"

They found enough money tied up "in the old clothes of the beggars to build the bridge."

"And to this day men still call it The Beggars' Bridge" (Ponte Contadini, Bridge of the Peasants).³

We are often like those beggars, aren't we?

God takes great care of us.

We should regularly, loudly praise God.

Note how often the Apostle Paul interrupted what he was writing in order to praise God:

"Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift."⁴

The Lord gave Paul a tough assignment:

"I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want."⁵

- **God gave us life.**
- **In Christ He gave us life for eternity.**
But like those beggars in Florence, instead of loudly praising God, we have our hands out wanting more.

"Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. (2) Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs."

- **True thanksgiving acknowledges God as Creator and Lord.**
 - True thanksgiving exuberantly praises God.
- **Finally, true thanksgiving continues regardless of circumstances.**

³ *Moment By Moment*, pp 121, 122.

⁴ 2 Corinthians 2: 14 & 9:15

⁵ Philippians 4:12

We daily hear and see news reports concerning war-ravaged cities in various locations.

Greedy, selfish ambitions and hate disrupt family life and destroy businesses.

Innocent people suffer from conflicts that others devise.

In the early 1600s, the Thirty Years War ravaged Germany.

Armies from England, France, Denmark, and Sweden took the side of many local German rulers.

Armies sympathetic with the Pope and the Holy Roman Empire sided with other German leaders in opposition.

Their troops included soldiers from Italy, Spain, and Bohemia.

Martin Rinkart was a minister in the city of Eilenburg, Saxony, part of Germany.

Eilenburg was a walled city.

War refugees flooded into it.

Plague, famine, fear, and death pervaded Eilenburg.

In one year, Rinkhart reportedly buried five thousand persons of his *congregation*, an average of fifteen a day.

One day he officiated at fifty funerals.

The Swedish army besieged the city.

Eight hundred homes were destroyed.

War, death and economic disaster prevailed.

Of the town's preachers, only Martin Rinkhart survived.

The Swedish army demanded a huge ransom.

Rinkhart went outside the walls to negotiate a peace.

In the midst of catastrophe, ruin, and darkness, with crying outside his window, Rinkhart sat and wrote this table grace for his children:

**"Now thank we all our God With heart and hands and voices;
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom his world rejoices.
Who, from our mother's arms, Hath led us on our way / With countless gifts of love / And still is ours today."**

Thanksgiving comes from real appreciation and love of God, not from outward circumstances.⁶

Is life perfect for anyone?

Hardly.

But we have life.

Through Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, he gave us new, eternal life.

By trusting him and honoring him, we make that new life sure.

We have many reasons to shout praise to God. Join me again, joyfully, passionately, jubilantly reciting Psalm 100:

“Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

(2) Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

(3) 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.

⁶ Information about this section was drawn from the following sources: A) Don Maddox, Sherman Oaks, California, as published in **Leadership Journal**; B) *Then Sings My Soul*, by Robert J. Morgan, page 16; C) Columbia Desk Encyclopedia...

(4) Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

(5) For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.



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