

Exposition on Psalm 100

by St. Augustine

The sermon emphasizes the importance of serving the Lord with gladness, confessing our sins, and entering His presence with joy and gratitude.

Scripture: Psalm 99:1-5

Topics: "Worship And Praise", "Sovereignty Of God"

Description

St. Augustine preaches on the importance of jubilating unto the Lord with confession, understanding the depth of jubilation and the need to praise God with a joyful heart and understanding mind. He emphasizes serving the Lord with gladness, acknowledging His sovereignty, and entering His gates with confession and hymns. Augustine urges believers to continually confess and praise God, recognizing His everlasting mercy and truth that extends from generation to generation, both in earthly and heavenly realms.

Transcript

1. You heard the Psalm, brethren, while it was being chanted: it is short, and not obscure: as if I had given you an assurance, that you should not fear fatigue....
2. The title of this Psalm is, A Psalm of confession. The verses are few, but big with great subjects; may the seed bring forth within your hearts, the barn be prepared for the Lord's harvest.
3. Jubilate, therefore, unto the Lord, all you lands Psalm 99:1. This Psalm gives this exhortation to us, that we jubilate unto the Lord. Nor does it, as it were, exhort one particular corner of the earth, or one habitation or congregation of men; but since it is aware that it has sown blessings on every side, on every side it does exact jubilation. Does all the earth at this moment hear my voice? And yet the whole earth has heard this voice. All the earth is already jubilant in the Lord; and what is not as yet jubilant, will be so. For blessing, extending on every side, when the Church was commencing to spread from Jerusalem throughout all nations, Luke 24:47 everywhere overturns ungodliness, and everywhere builds up piety: the good are mingled with the wicked throughout all lands. Every land is full of the discontented murmurs of the wicked, and of the jubilation of the good. What then is it, to jubilate? For the title of the present Psalm especially makes us give good heed to this word, for it is entitled, A Psalm of confession. What means, to jubilate with confession? It is the sentiment thus expressed in another Psalm: Blessed is the people that understands jubilation. Surely that which being understood makes blessed is something great. May therefore the Lord our God, who makes men blessed, grant me to understand what to say, and grant you to understand what ye hear: Blessed is the people that understands jubilation. Let us therefore run unto

this blessing, let us understand jubilation, let us not pour it forth without understanding. Of what use is it to be jubilant and obey this Psalm, when it says, Jubilate unto the Lord, all you lands, and not to understand what jubilation is, so that our voice only may be jubilant, our heart not so? For the understanding is the utterance of the heart.

4. I am about to say what ye know. One who jubilates, utters not words, but it is a certain sound of joy without words: for it is the expression of a mind poured forth in joy, expressing, as far as it is able, the affection, but not compassing the feeling. A man rejoicing in his own exultation, after certain words which cannot be uttered or understood, bursts forth into sounds of exultation without words, so that it seems that he indeed does rejoice with his voice itself, but as if filled with excessive joy cannot express in words the subject of that joy....Those who are engaged at work in the fields are most given to jubilate; reapers, or vintagers, or those who gather any of the fruits of the earth, delighted with the abundant produce, and rejoicing in the very richness and exuberance of the soil, sing in exultation; and among the songs which they utter in words, they put in certain cries without words in the exultation of a rejoicing mind; and this is what is meant by jubilating.. ..

5. When then are we jubilant? When we praise that which cannot be uttered. For we observe the whole creation, the earth and the sea, and all things that therein are: we observe that each have their sources and causes, the power of production, the order of birth, the limit of duration, the end in decease, that successive ages run on without any confusion, that the stars roll, as it seems, from the East to the West, and complete the courses of the years: we see how the months are measured, how the hours extend; and in all these things a certain invisible element, I know not what, but some principle of unity, which is termed spirit or soul, present in all living things, urging them to the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain, and the preservation of their own safety; that man also has somewhat in common with the Angels of God; not with cattle, such as life, hearing, sight, and so forth; but somewhat which can understand God, which peculiarly does belong to the mind, which can distinguish justice and injustice, as the eye discerns white from black. In all this consideration of creation, which I have run over as I could, let the soul ask itself: Who created all these things? Who made them? Who made among them yourself?...I have observed the whole creation, as far as I could. I have observed the bodily creation in heaven and on earth, and the spiritual in myself who am speaking, who animate my limbs, who exert voice, who move the tongue, who pronounce words, and distinguish sensations. And when can I comprehend myself in myself? How then can I comprehend what is above myself? Yet the sight of God is promised to the human heart, and a certain operation of purifying the heart is enjoined; this is the counsel of Scripture. Provide the means of seeing what you love, before thou try to see it. For unto whom is it not sweet to hear of God and His Name, except to the ungodly, who is far removed, separated from Him?...

6. Be therefore like Him in piety, and earnest in meditation: for the invisible things of Him are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; Romans 1:20 look upon the things that are made, admire them, seek their author. If you are unlike, you will turn back; if like, you will rejoice. And when, being like Him, you shall have begun to approach Him, and to feel God, the more love increases in you, since God is love, you will perceive somewhat which you were trying to say, and yet couldst not say. Before you felt God, you thought that you could express God; you begin to feel Him, and then feelest that what thou dost feel you can not express. But when you have herein found that what thou dost feel cannot be expressed, will you be mute, will you not praise God? Will you then be silent in the praises of God, and will you not offer up thanksgivings unto Him who has willed to make Himself known unto you? Thou praised Him when you were seeking, will you be silent when you have found Him? By no means; you will not be ungrateful.

Honour is due to Him, reverence is due to Him, great praise is due to Him. Consider yourself, see what you are: earth and ashes; look who it is has deserved to see, and What; consider who you are, What to see, a man to see God! I recognise not the man's deserving, but the mercy of God. Praise therefore Him who has mercy....

7. Serve the Lord with gladness. All servitude is full of bitterness: all who are bound to a lot of servitude both are slaves, and discontented. Fear not the servitude of that Lord: there will be no groaning there, no discontent, no indignation; no one seeks to be sold to another master, since it is a sweet service, because we are all redeemed. Great happiness, brethren, it is, to be a slave in that great house, although in bonds. Fear not, bound slave, confess unto the Lord: ascribe your bonds to your own deservings; confess in your chains, if you are desirous they be changed into ornaments....At the same time you are slave, and free; slave, because you are created such; free, because you are loved by God, by whom you were created: yea, free indeed, because you love Him by whom you were made. Serve not with discontent; for your murmurs do not tend to release you from serving, but to make you a wicked servant. You are a slave of the Lord, you are a freedman of the Lord: seek not so to be emancipated as to depart from the house of Him who frees you....

8. I will, therefore, says he, live separate with a few good men: why should I live in common with crowds? Well: those very few good men, from what crowds have they been strained out? If however these few are all good: it is, nevertheless, a good and praiseworthy design in man, to be with such as have chosen a quiet life; distant from the bustle of the people, from noisy crowds, from the great waves of life, they are as if in harbour. Is there therefore here that joy? That jubilant gladness which is promised?

Not as yet; but still groans, still the anxiety of temptations. For even the harbour has an entrance somewhere or other; if it had not, no ship could enter it; it must therefore be open on some side: but at times on this open side the wind rushes in; and where there are no rocks, ships dashed together shatter one another. Where then is security, if not even in harbour? And yet it must be confessed, it is true, that persons in harbour are in their degree much better off than when afloat on the main.

Let them love one another, as ships in harbour, let them be bound together happily; let them not dash against one another: let absolute equality be preserved there, constancy in love; and when perchance the wind rushes in from the open side, let there be careful piloting there. Now what will one who perchance presides over such places, nay, who serves his brethren, in what are called monasteries, tell me? I will be cautious: I will admit no wicked man. How will you admit no evil one?...Those who are about to enter, do not know themselves; how much less do you know them?

For many have promised themselves that they were about to fulfil that holy life, which has all things in common, where no man calls anything his own, who have one soul and one heart in God: Acts 4:32 they have been put into the furnace, and have cracked. How then do you know him who is unknown even to himself?...Where then is security? Here nowhere; in this life nowhere, except solely in the hope of the promise of God. But there, when we shall reach thereunto, is complete security, when the gates are shut, and the bars of the gates of Jerusalem made fast; there is truly full jubilation, and great delight.

Only do not thou feel secure in praising any sort of life: judge no man blessed before his death. 9. By this means men are deceived, so that they either do not undertake, or rashly attempt, a better life; because, when they choose to praise, they praise without mention of the evil that is mixed with the good: and those who choose to blame, do so with so envious and perverse a mind, as to shut their eyes to the good, and

exaggerate only the evils which either actually exist there, or are imagined.

Thus it happens, that when any profession has been ill, that is, incautiously, praised, if it has invited men by its own reputation, they who betake themselves there discover some such as they did not believe to be there; and offended by the wicked recoil from the good. Brethren, apply this teaching to your life, and hear in such a manner that you may live. The Church of God, to speak generally, is magnified: Christians, and Christians alone, are called great, the Catholic (Church) is magnified; all love each other; each and all do all they can for one another; they give themselves up to prayers, fastings, hymns; throughout the whole world, with peaceful unanimity God is praised.

Some one perhaps hears this, who is ignorant that nothing is said of the wicked who are mingled with them; he comes, invited by these praises, finds bad men mixed with them, who were not mentioned to him before he came; he is offended by false Christians, he flies from true Christians. Again, men who hate and slander them, precipitately blame them: asking, what sort of men are Christians? Who are Christians? Covetous men, usurers. Are not the very persons who fill the Churches on holidays the same who during the games and other spectacles fill the theatres and amphitheatres?

They are drunken, gluttonous, envious, slanderers of each other. There are such, but not such only. And this slanderer in his blindness says nothing of the good: and that praiser in his want of caution is silent about the bad....Thus also in that common life of brethren, which exists in a monastery: great and holy men live therein, with daily hymns, prayers, praises of God; their occupation is reading; they labour with their own hands, and by this means support themselves; they seek nothing covetously; whatever is brought in for them by pious brethren, they use with contentedness and charity; no one claims as his own what another has not; all love, all forbear one another mutually.

You have praised them; you have praised; he who knows not what is going on within, who knows not how, when the wind enters, ships even in harbour dash against one another, enters as if in hope of security, expecting to find no man to forbear; he finds there evil brethren, who could not have been found evil, if they had not been admitted (and they must be at first tolerated, lest they should perchance reform; nor can they easily be excluded, unless they have first been endured): and becomes himself impatient beyond endurance.

Who asked me here? I thought that love was here. And irritated by the perversity of some few men, since he has not persevered in fulfilling his vow, he becomes a deserter of so holy a design, and guilty of a vow he has never discharged. And then, when he has gone forth himself too, he also becomes a reproacher, and a slanderer; and records those things only (sometimes real), which he asserts that he could not have endured. But the real troubles of the wicked ought to be endured for the society of the good.

The Scripture says unto him: Woe unto those that have lost patience. Ecclesiastes 2:16 And what is more, he belches abroad the evil savour of his indignation, as a means to deter them who are about to enter; because, when he had entered himself, he could not persevere. Of what sort are they? Envious, quarrelsome, men who forbear no man, covetous; saying, He did this there, and he did that there. Wicked one, why are you silent about the good! You say enough of those whom you could not endure: you say nothing of those who endured your wickedness....

10. O serve the Lord with gladness Psalm 99:2: he addresses you, whoever you are who endure all things in love, and rejoice in hope. Serve the Lord, not in the bitterness of murmuring, but in the gladness of love. Come before His presence with rejoicing. It is easy to rejoice outwardly: rejoice before the presence of

God. Let not the tongue be too joyful: let the conscience be joyful. Come before His presence with a song.

11. Be sure that the Lord He is God Psalm 99:3. Who knows not that the Lord, He is God? But He speaks of the Lord, whom men thought not God: Be sure that the Lord He is God. Let not that Lord become vile in your sight: you have crucified Him, scourged Him, spit upon Him, crowned Him with thorns, clothed Him in a dress of infamy, hung Him upon the Cross, pierced Him with nails, wounded Him with a spear, placed guards at His tomb; He is God. It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves. It is He that has made us: and without Him was not anything made that was made. John 1:3 What reason have ye for exultation, what reason have ye for pride? Another made you; the Same who made you, suffers from you. But ye extol yourselves, and glory in yourselves, as if you were created by yourselves. It is good for you that He who made you, make you perfect....We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Sheep and one sheep. These sheep are one sheep: and how loving a Shepherd we have! He left the ninety and nine, and descended to seek the one, He brings it back on His own shoulders Luke 15:4-5 ransomed by His own blood. That Shepherd dies without fear for the sheep, who on His resurrection regains His sheep.

12. Enter into His gates with confession Psalm 99:3. At the gates is the beginning: begin with confession. Thence is the Psalm entitled, A Psalm of Confession: there be joyful. Confess that you were not made by yourselves, praise Him by whom you were made. Let your good come from Him, in departing from whom you have caused your evil. Enter into His gates with confession. Let the flock enter into the gates: let it not remain outside, a prey for wolves. And how is it to enter? With confession. Let the gate, that is, the commencement for you, be confession. Whence it is said in another Psalm, Begin unto the Lord with confession. What he there calls Begin, here he calls Gates. Enter into His gates in confession. What? And when we have entered, shall we not still confess? Always confess Him: you have always what to confess for. It is hard in this life for a man to be so far changed, that no cause for censure be discoverable in him: you must needs blame yourself, lest He who shall condemn blame you. Therefore even when you have entered His courts, then also confess. When will there be no longer confession of sins? In that rest, in that likeness to the Angels. But consider what I have said: there will there be no confession of sins. I said not, there will be no confession: for there will be confession of praise. You will ever confess, that He is God, thou a creature; that He is your Protector, yourself protected. In Him you shall be as it were hid. Go into His courts with hymns; and confess unto Him. Confess in the gates; and when you have entered the courts, confess with hymns. Hymn are praises. Blame yourself, when you are entering; when you have entered, praise Him. Open me the gates of righteousness, he says in another Psalm, that I may go into them, and confess unto the Lord. Did he say, when I have entered, I will no longer confess? Even after his entrance, he will confess. For what sins did our Lord Jesus Christ confess, when He said, I confess unto You, O Father? Matthew 11:25 He confessed in praising Him, not in accusing Himself. Speak good of His Name.

13. For the Lord is pleasant Psalm 99:4. Think not that you faint in praising Him. Your praise of Him is like food: the more ye praise Him, the more ye acquire strength, and He whom you praise becomes the more sweet. His mercy is everlasting. For He will not cease to be merciful, after He has freed you: it belongs to His mercy to protect you even unto eternal life. His mercy, therefore, is to everlasting: and His truth from generation to generation Psalm 99:5. Understand by from generation to generation, either every generation, or in two generations, the one earthly, the other heavenly. Here there is one generation which produces mortals; another which makes such as are everlasting. His Truth is both here, and there. Imagine not that His truth is not here, if His truth were not here, he would not say in another Psalm: Truth is risen out of the earth; nor would Truth Itself say, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the

world. Matthew 28:20

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-augustine/exposition-on-psalm-100/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net