

# Living With an Attitude of Gratitude

Dr. Patricia L. Hunter



November 21, 2021

Psalm 100

Thank you, Eleanor, Daryl, and Dr. Jennifer. We give thanks for you! Your reflections of Thanksgiving give us even more reasons to be thankful.

Eleanor and family, we love you and miss you and we look forward to seeing you in worship soon.

Choir we give thanks for you as you ushered us before Spirit's presence with, The Kingdom of God is Justice and Peace. After the Rittenhouse verdict on Friday we know we are not there yet. But we pray one day we will live with justice and in peace.

Listen to these words found in Psalm 100. If you have a bible on your electronic device, you are invited to read along.

### **Psalm 100**

*Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.*

*Worship YHWH with gladness.*

*Come into God's presence with singing.*

*Know that YHWH is God.*

*It is God that made us, and we belong to God;*

*We are God's people, and the sheep of God's pasture.*

*Enter God's gates with thanksgiving,*

*And God's courts with praise.*

*Give thanks to God, bless God's name.*

*For the LORD is good.*

*God's steadfast love endures forever,*

*And God's faithfulness to all generations.*

*The word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.*

This has been one of those weekends where the sermon I had prepared got tossed out because I need to address the injustice that took place on Friday. The not guilty verdict on all counts for Kyle Rittenhouse, threw many of us off center this weekend. Perhaps we should have expected it. Rev. Bonnie Bell, one of our members, had an encounter with the judge around immigration issues and knew with that judge presiding the verdict in this case was likely to be problematic.

But, surely a person with an AR15 who murders two people and harmed others would be guilty of something! But obviously not when judged by a jury of his peers. A retired police officer told me that if Rittenhouse had been Black, officers would have surrounded him immediately and neutralized the situation. There would not have been a trial because if he were black, Rittenhouse would be dead.

You may say I'm being melodramatic. Well, let me remind you of a 12 year old black boy named Tamir Rice. He was killed by a white police officer in Cleveland while playing with a toy gun. No charges were filed because the officer claimed self-defense. Self-defense from a 12 year old with a toy gun. Again, no accountability for this murder. Where is the justice? Where is the peace? Where is the kingdom of God?

In Oklahoma this week, Julius Jones was scheduled to be killed by lethal injection. He and his family begged and pleaded to have his sentence commuted from death to life in prison, while Rittenhouse walked free. Is there a flaw in the justice system in American or is it working just as it has been designed?

There are obviously two justice systems in this country, one for white people and another for people color and poor people. Yet, it is in moments like this that I must believe that the moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends toward justice.

We are a people of faith, and we believe that love wins over hate. We believe that justice will roll down like water and righteousness as an ever-flowing stream. We believe that God can do anything but fail. We believe that the Kingdom of God is Justice and Peace.

So we keep on walking in the way of Jesus believing that nothing can separate us from the love on God, not bigotry, not racism, not transphobia, not party politics, not culture wars, not the NRA, not even a corrupt criminal justice system can separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus. Amen.

We give thanks that our hope is not in systems, or things, or even in one another because we disappoint as well. One psalmist wrote, I will lift up mine eyes to the hill from which comes my help? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. We give thanks to God from whom all blessings flow. We must thank God every day for being our rock, our foundation, our

comforter, and our guide. So on this Thanksgiving Sunday I still believe in living with an attitude of gratitude because trouble don't last always.

Psalm 100 is an invitation to the hearers to worship the living God. And, our worship need not be perfect. When we are knocked off center our worship may be a bit rocky. We may be distracted in our worship or confused in worship. And that is OK for we are not called to worship with perfection but to make a joyful noise.

When all is well, it is easy to make a joyful noise. When filled with anticipation of family, food, and fun, worship comes easily. But our call today is to worship with joy even while going through the valleys. Worship with joy when disappointed, when we have medical concerns, when death invades our lives, when politics invade our lives, when there are money problems, and when there are job losses. Make a joyful noise, even in the valleys.

Verse 5 of this psalm supplies us the reason why we are to worship,

*For the LORD is good.*

*God's steadfast love endures forever,*

*And God's faithfulness to all generations.*

Two days after the Rittenhuse acquittal, God is still good and God's hesed—God's steadfast love endures forever. We can't run

from it or hide from it. God is going to love us anyhow, anyway, in this life and the next.

You have no doubt heard many African American Christians say, God is good and the antiphonal response is, all the time. And all the time, God is good. That affirmation certainly is in keeping with Psalm 100 for the Lord is good and God's steadfast love endures forever.

The Negro spiritual, Rock a My Soul, speaks of this mighty love of God. It's so high you can't get over it. So low you can't get under it. So wide you can't get around it.

Friends, now it is even more important to have an attitude of gratitude. Yes, make a joyful noise unto the Lord. If we maintain an attitude of gratitude, there will be much less room in our lives for fear, doubt, anxiety, and jealousy. Somebody say, Amen.

We are a resurrection people so we must believe that good will triumph over evil. We must **be** hope when despair is all around us. We must **be** love when cynicism and fear threaten to take over. We must be grateful in all things, for our God reigns.

So let us cultivate gratitude not just on Thanksgiving, or during the holidays, or on Sundays, but every minute of every day. Yes, we can live with an attitude of gratitude. Gratitude will make a difference in how we see the world, how we see our church, how we love God and how we love our neighbors. We can live with an

attitude of gratitude even as we await the kingdom of God that is justice and peace.

And, all God's people said, Amen.