

Introduction

- Do you ever have questions about stuff that everyone else seems to get that you are embarrassed to ask about if you don't?
 - not least in church or Christian life!!
- One of mine is around worship:
 - by personality, expressing myself isn't a big part of my nature
 - I don't **feel** any need to paint or sing or act or whatever (its maybe there, deep down, or satisfied in other ways!)
 - so there are times when I don't **"get"** worship!
 - everyone around can be singing away, whether its the good going hymn of a previous generation, the singing at a Keswick or a Crieff Fellowship, or whether its in the midst of the exuberance of contemporary worship at CLAN or something, louder music and hands raised...
 - and I don't **get** what is going on in people's heads or hearts
 - I believe words that are being sung, I know them to be true for me, but I don't often **feel** very much as I sing them!
- Which makes a Psalm like this somewhat problematic for me!
 - and I don't know that I have any answers, really...
 - except that there is an invitation to worship, not merely to sing, to give God his central place...
 - that may well involve singing and in that way affirming
 - but I rather suspect its the affirming that God is most interested in and not the singing!

Exposition

(1) Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

- What: give expression to joy, directed towards the Lord
- Who: all the earth, not just the believing community - he is Lord of all, and all should rightly praise him

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

- Call to give expression to what the Psalmist clearly already knows, the joy that comes from relationship with and trust in the Lord
 - expressed particularly in song... (how does that work for those not musical, or not moved by song?)
- **Structurally**, vs.1-2 contain a threefold invitation: **shout, worship, come**
 - with verbs of increasing nearness
 - shout - acclamation
 - worship - enter his courts, temple perhaps
 - come - into his very presence...

(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.

- That joyful worship and song singing comes out of something:
 - knowledge that the Lord is God, who he is...
 - touch on the picture of God painted by Graham Black at Scripture Union TL weekend - creator, Word, Glory, trinity...
- In particular **he made us**
 - its very particular!
 - not **"he made everything"** (though he did!)
 - but specifically us, we are specially those of his concern...
 - his people, those in covenant (you/me) relationship with God, identified with him, and so under his care and protection

- Which naturally moves on to the **sheep of his pasture** phrase, with all its overtones of protection, care, supply, nurture

- **Structurally**, v.3 answers vs.1-2's threefold invitation with a threefold affirmation:
 - the Lord is
 - the Lord made us
 - the Lord shepherds us

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

- Where is this worship to be expressed?
 - into the place of worship
 - for the Psalmist this would have been the Temple
 - a specially designated place with symbolic representations (law chest, altar, curtain, etc) of aspects of our relationship with God
 - we come now to him in a **new and living way** (Hebrews 10:20), fundamentally in our hearts (so place doesn't matter) - though it is still helpful, and the corporate nature of our coming can't be neglected
- And having entered our call is to give thanks (for what he has done), and to praise his name (for who he is)
 - note repetition of this idea in the clauses of verse 4, which is the Hebraic poetry way of saying this is important!
- **Structurally** there is another threefold invitation here:
 - enter... give thanks... praise...
 - once more with verbs of increasing intimacy (gates at boundary of place of worship, courts are inside, and name suggests knowing him)

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

- Backwards?!
 - finishing with the reasons for praise?
 - or maybe the Psalmist's mind just works differently from mine!

The Lord is good

- Intentions are honourable, his purposes in our lives, his ways can be trusted, his ways are best - not just "right", but good
 - there is a richness, a warmth to the language...

The Lord is loving

- More than merely good, the Lord is loving
 - cares for us, sets his love upon us
 - he's not merely the decent boss, the good teacher whose advice we value or whose insights are helpful
 - he loves us - there is passion and relationship here!

The Lord is faithful

- And those qualities of goodness and love endure
 - he isn't fickle, who loves us for a season and then grows bored and moves on
 - his love and goodness endure from generation to generation
 - not the passive sameness of a lump of rock (the hills around us are basically the same as our ancestors thousands of years ago would have seen)
 - but the active engagement that is as interested in our lives, as concerned with our well-being now as he was with the Psalmist who penned these words perhaps 3000 years ago!!
- **Did you see the threefold affirmation here**, following the threefold invitation of v.4?
 - good, loving, faithful!
 - so a repeated threefold invitation/affirmation... emphasis

Conclusion

- How are we entering this New Year?
 - giving thanks?
 - for what he has done?
 - and for who he is?
 - knowing him ever more closely, more intimately?

- *Strength will rise...*