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[Scripture quotations are mostly from the NIV.]

Psalm 95:1-7

The People of His Pasture

Greetings! The Lord be with you!

This message is for Sunday, November 22, 2020, which on the church's calendar is Christ the King Sunday. The Scripture reading is from Psalm 95, verses 1-7.

Psalm 95 is a call to worship for the people of Israel. "Come, let us sing for joy to YHWH; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song." It is also a call to worship for we who are engrafted into Israel, who are included, through Christ, among the people of God.

Psalm 95 provides two motivations for worship. First, God is sovereign over all creation. "For YHWH is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land." Second, God is personally invested in creation and, specifically, in the human creatures he calls his own. "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before YHWH our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care."

Worship is only natural and appropriate and reasonable. Why in the world would we not sing for joy and come before him with thanksgiving?

As Thanksgiving Day approaches, I thought it might be worthwhile to reflect on some of the many ways that Scripture describes what it means to be the people of God's pasture. So, I have a list to share with you. This list is not original with me. It is not an exhaustive list, but each item is a good reason to be thankful. I invite you to read the list slowly. Let the words not only enter your mind but also diffuse into your spirit and settle in your heart. Take the words personally. The items on this list are not generic statements that apply to somebody out there. They are specific statements that apply to you. (You might want to replace "you" with "I" as you are reading.)

You are God's child.

John 1:12 – Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

You are a friend of Jesus.

John 15:15 – I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

You have been justified.

Romans 5:1 – Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

You are one in spirit with Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:17 – But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

You have been bought with a price and you belong to God.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 -- Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price.

You are a member of Christ's body.

1 Corinthians 12:27 -- Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

You have been chosen by God and adopted as his child.

Ephesians 1:4-6 -- For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

You have been redeemed and forgiven of all your sins.

Colossians 1:13-14 -- For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

You have direct access to the throne of grace through Jesus.

Hebrews 4:15-16 -- For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

You are free from condemnation.

Romans 8:1 -- Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

You can be assured that God works for your good.

Romans 8:28 -- And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

You cannot be separated from the love of God.

Romans 8:38-39 -- For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You are established, anointed, and sealed by God.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 -- Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

You are hidden with Christ in God.

Colossians 3:1-3 -- Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

You can be confident that God will complete the good work he has started in you.

Philippians 1:6 -- ... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

You are a citizen of heaven.

Philippians 3:20 -- But our citizenship is in heaven.

You have been given a spirit of power, love, and self-discipline.

2 Timothy 1:7 -- For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

You have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit.

John 15:16 -- You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last....

You are God's handiwork.

Ephesians 2:10 -- For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

You can approach God freely and confidently.

Ephesians 3:12 -- In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

Through Christ, there is nothing you cannot endure, nothing you cannot get through.

Philippians 4:13 -- I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.

You are accepted. You are significant. You are secure. Thank God.

May the peace of God guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.