

**God's Folk**  
**Bob Stillerman**  
**A Sermon for Sardis Baptist Church**  
**Service of Dedication for Lucy Marguerite Stillerman**  
**Psalm 100**  
**10-13-2019**

The psalmist tells us why we should worship God.

Ours is a good creator. From the very beginning, God's breath or God's ruach – that's a fancy way of saying a wind with a deep, deep, creative, parenting, joyful spirit – that wind or that ruach of God blew across the boggy waters, and formed order out of chaos. God's ruach separated light from darkness, and water from land and sky, and it made life...Life in swimming things, and creeping things, and flying things; in trees and flowers and lakes and rivers; in birds that sing, in bees that hum, in dogs that bark. And that ruach made people, me and you, too.

And together, all of it, me and you, and the land and the skies, and the seas, and everything that fills this world, and the universe, and all that is beyond our comprehension – Our good God made all of it, deemed each part of it good, and collectively called the whole of creation very good.

Yes, ours is a God worthy of praise.

But the psalmist doesn't stop there. Our God is not just a creative God. God didn't just fling our existence into being and sit back to see what would happen next. No, our God is invested. Our God is empathetic. Ours is a God of healing, restoration, renewal, future, vision, redemption, support, encouragement. Ours is a God of salvation, whose steadfast love and faithfulness endures for all generations.

In the time before time, all of these molecules and matter and energy were bouncing around without purpose. God wrangled it all together, and gave it meaning, gave it being, gave it existence.

But even molecules that take shape and being and purpose are prone to scatter, and to wander, and they look to a creator who can re-center them, who can give them the space to live in their created purposes.

The psalmist tells us that our God has a history of doing just that. This good, creative God of ours, created space for Israel to become Israel. A sea was parted and a nation was born. And in the generations that followed, God has carved out space for God's people to become God's people: there was space in the Temple for Samuel to grow and learn; there was space in the field for Ruth to glean, and to provide for Naomi; there was space in community for Mary and Elizabeth to raise prophetic men; there was space at a table for twelve disciples to acknowledge their purpose; and there is space for each of us: to be valued, to be loved, to share our gifts, to be as God intends us to be.

I think William Kethe said it best, "We are God's folk!" In other words, we have been made by God. We are loved by God. God's got us. And God's gonna keep on getting us.

What reason is there to praise God? Ours is a good God, who loves us. Always.

Having heard the psalmist, it seems to me that our job this morning, is to convey to Lucy, and indeed all of our children, why and how we should keep praising this good God of ours.

Why are we here? It's a fair question to ask. After all, there's plenty of other things we could be doing right now: Apparently, they play football games at 9:30 in the morning, and you can get a Bloody Mary at brunch now, even on Sundays. And of course, you could read the *Times*, or mow your lawn, or just sleep in. You've certainly earned the right. Besides, if God's so big, and so creative, and so loving, and so understanding, does God really need us to show up and do praise-making on a regular basis? In other words, why should we be here?

Well, Lucy, I'll be honest with you, I believe God is big enough, and God is strong enough, and God is loving enough to do what gonna God's gonna do. But I would argue that we, as human beings, do not have the capacity to channel and to live into all of the goodness that God gives us, until we become intentional about recognizing, acknowledging, and offering thanks for God's abundant goodness.

I do not submit to you that Christian worship, and particularly our congregation's style of Christian worship is the exclusive avenue to the revelation of God's goodness. God's capacity for love, grace, and transformation transcends my wildest imagination. Thanks be to God!

But I do know this. When, we, as Sardis Baptist Church, gather every Sunday, we proclaim God's everlasting yea against the flimsy, fleeting, futile, finite nays of Caesar's world. We proclaim that God's love is the only marker of value and identification. We proclaim that someday, it might not be today, and it might not be in our lifetime, but someday, the long arc of God's graceful justice will bend back toward God's people, setting the crooked paths straight, and the high places low.

In this place, we choose to identify our neighbors, not by the color of their skin, nor by the zip code they occupy, nor by the documentation they provide, nor by the person whom they choose to love, nor by the language they speak, nor by the style of their worship, but instead by the universal, divine, ruach that fills us all, and deems them and us children of God. And we gather at a table, that renews us, forgives, empowers us, encourages us, and sustains us as we seek, however clumsily, to bring God's world into the present.

But most of all, what we acknowledge when we gather in worship, is the potential for you, Lucy, and for every child, one to ninety-nine, to be the Christ our world so desperately needs. We choose to believe in the collective gifts of God's people to make this world a better place. And we choose to believe that this world can and will be a better place. Really. Right now. It can start with us!!!

So Lucy...when we sing a song; when we notice creation; when we say a heartfelt prayer; when we give thanks for our meal; when we light a candle; when we dance; when we shake our tambourine; when join together in acts of love and service for our neighbor; when we make chicken soup; when we offer hospitality; when we plant a garden; when chalk the doors and sidewalk; when we worship; when we pause to give thanks for the lives of little girls who will grow to up to become faithful, strong, remarkable women....we remind ourselves of God's presence in the present. And we become emboldened to be agents of God's transformation in the present. And slowly but surely, one act of love at a time, God's world bursts into our lives.

Lucy the psalmist says God is worthy of praise, because God is good, and God's got us. And Lucy, we your church family, tell you that it's important to praise God, because it makes us evermore aware of God's presence and goodness. And we tell you, that every week, you can count on us praising God with heart, with soul, with mind, and with strength. And with a joy and love we hope you'll emulate.

Let me close with a final thought. Each night, you hear your older sister sing before she goes to bed. It won't be too long before you can process and understand the words she sings. Each night, Mary Allen sings aloud all of the good things God's got in Her hands.

And pretty soon, you'll be aware of all the things Mary Allen loves: Anna and Elsa, Ryder and the whole Paw Patrol; Flora the flamingo; Krispy Kreme doughnuts and chocolate chip cookies. And let me tell you, we have to sing about them all being in God's hands before she'll say night-night.

I hope, however, that it won't be lost on you, whom she mentions before all those things each night. God's got little baby Lucy, and Momma and Daddy, and all my church buddies, and my school buddies, and my grandmamas and granddaddies, and my aunts and my uncles, and my cousins, too.

Lucy, God's got you. Sardis, God's got you. Universe, God's got you. In loving hands. In creative hands. In restoring hands. In hands bigger than you can imagine.

Praise be to the Almighty. Now and Forever more. Amen.