

Psalm 100:1-5

Celebrate 5: Thank You Father

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Do you ever just want to say “thank you”? Or as my son likes to say, “Thank you, thank you, thank you!” Today I want us to direct our hearts to the heavens and say, “Thank you! Thank you Father for what you have done for us! Thank you for what you have done for us and our families and our church!”

On a Monday morning in late May 2012, Monica and I walked into a class at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and sat down, not knowing that God was going to change our lives. That class was called *Church Planting and Growth*. We’d signed up because we’d heard the *Discipleship & Evangelism* class was terrible, and we’d heard this one was much better. God was just moving us where he wanted us. All that week we learned what it meant to start a new church.

We created pretend proposals in class. Our little group brainstormed what it would be like to plant a church in Salem. One of our outreach ideas was to host outdoor yoga sessions to readings of the Psalms. Nothing like a psalm of lament to stretch your thighs. Another group came up with a church called “Nurch Church” which was supposed to be really loving and caring. You’re nurtured at Nurch Church!

Our big assignment was to study a real community, with real needs, and create a church-plant proposal. We had no intention of planting a new church, but if we were going to do the research, we wanted it to make a difference. So we asked Monica’s mentor, Pastor Dana Smith, if he might have a suggestion of a community we should study. He was pastor in Chelmsford, but lived in Westford, and asked us to study Westford.

Later that summer we drove around Westford looking at yards and houses and businesses. We drove right down Graniteville Rd., but missed this church building. We had to turn around to see it. We interviewed local Westford residents and at the end of the summer we wrote our church-plant proposals. We presented our findings to the Immanuel elders at their summer retreat. Then we got married and went back to school.

And that was it... Except God was working in other places. A mom who lived right down the street was praying for this church when they drove by, asking God to revitalize it. That’s Karyn Tang. Another woman was attending a Bible study at this church, Westford Bible Church. She didn’t know it but God was preparing her to help start the church again. That’s Mary Ethier.

Across the country in Minnesota the Conference Minister of a small denomination called the CCCC, the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference, was praying for one of their smallest churches, a church with around five people left in it called Westford Bible Church. Ron Hamilton was praying God would use this church to rebirth a new church in a suburban New England community that needs Jesus.

Monica and I attended a church planting conference that next spring and met Ron. When I told him we’d just studied Westford, he said, “Interesting. Interesting.” God was on the move. That summer Immanuel Church, where Pastor Dana Smith served, called me to be their Associate Pastor, and six months later Westford Bible Church approached Immanuel about taking the building to replant a new church in Westford.

Isn’t God amazing? Today I want to take time to remember what God has done, and say thank you.

Thank you Father.

Our Scriptures gives us Psalms to help us thank our Heavenly Father. Psalm 100 is for a whole community of people to give thanks. It's not like a tiny thank you card I write and send off. It's like one of those big thank you cards everyone signs. Everyone says thank you.

Psalm 100 is a Psalm of thanksgiving. The Hebrew literally says a “sacrifice of thanksgiving.” It’s my prayer that this sermon and our worship service would be a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God. That we’d give back to him something out of all he has given to us.

What are you thankful for? Maybe it’s something personal. The Lord gave you a new job, or a special relationship, or a new family member. Maybe it’s church-related. You’re thankful for your church family, for being able to worship outside, for being together. What are you thankful for? Would you thank God for it? I’m thankful for Cornerstone. I’m thankful for five-years as a church plant and that I get to be a part of it.

Today I want to lead us in thanking God for **four things**. I want to thank God for renewing us, reclaiming us, redeeming us, and resending us.

Thank you Father for:

1. Renewing us (v1-2)

Thank you Father for re-energizing us, for restoring our hope in you. God re-energizes us by reminding us who he is. He’s the Lord of all the earth.

Psalm 100:1-2 (ESV)

1 Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!

2 Serve the Lord with gladness!

Come into his presence with singing!

Psalm 100 is found in a series of Psalms celebrating God’s kingship over all things. Psalm 99 declares “The Lord reigns”! and Psalm 101 sings of the Lord’s love and justice. When we get a bigger picture of who God is, how he’s king over everything, it renews our spirits. When we remember our Lord, Yahweh, the one true God, is king of the universe, it recharges and re-energizes us.

We can’t help but shout out, “Praise you Father! Praise your name!” The Psalm tells us to “make a joyful noise” to literally cry out, to get loud! To come into his presence with singing, loud singing, to say “Amen!” If you’re like me, loudness probably makes you a little uncomfortable, or a lot uncomfortable. When I sing I’m more like a church mouse than a songbird. But God calls us to sing big because singing engages the heart. We are renewed when we sing about our God.

God is good. He is king. Only a king could have made this church plant happen. Very few churches start with a pastor, a team, and a building, but God gave us all of them. Eleven months after Westford Bible Church approached Immanuel about taking their building we had our first team-training session. The CCCC came in to help us think through who we are as a church and the ways God has gifted us. Out of that training came the Church Plant Ministry Team (CPMT), our leadership, that lead us for the next 2.5 years. We started training and planning and that following October on the 3rd 2015 we launched our weekly worship service, five years ago yesterday. And we’re still here, still worshipping God, and still trying new ways to share Christ with Westford.

Only a king could have done this! Doesn’t it make you want to shout out, “Amen!” To praise him?! *Thank you Father for renewing us.* And thank you father for...

2. Reclaiming us (v3-4)

God is reclaiming Westford, he's reclaiming our church community, he's reclaiming you. Five years into this and there's nothing you and I need to know more than that we have a Father in Heaven who loves and accepts us and will have us no matter what.

Psalm 100:3 (ESV)

3 Know that the Lord, he is God!

It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

You need to know God at a really personal level. This Hebrew word for “know” “yada” is a personal kind of word. It’s like the word “smooch.” Smooch isn’t a word we just casually throw out. “Would you like a smooch?” You smooch your wife, or you smooch your kids, or you smooch your dogs, or you get smooched, and you like it. When you’re smooching... you know someone. You’re face to face with them. That’s what it means to come into God’s presence (v2)—to come face to face with him, to really know him.

That’s the kind of way God wants to know you. He wants to know you and for you to know him. ...God wants to smooch you! To get face to face with you, to hear your heart, to whisper his love. We’re so busy and our hearts get distracted. He wants to reclaim your heart. Will you let him?

God wants us. He wants his people back. The word “his people” is right at the center of this Psalm.¹ It’s like the Psalm itself is telling us God’s people are what matters most to him. God loves us, he’s reclaiming us.

One of my biggest struggles through this church plant has been prioritizing my relationship with God. It’s been challenging to simply abide in my Heavenly Father’s love for me. It’s been so easy to get wrapped up with all the things we have to do—the preaching, the emails, the decisions. But at the end of the day, God just wants me, and he just wants you too. God doesn’t want your busyness, he wants you. Today, God wants to reclaim you. He wants to reclaim your heart. Will you let him?

God is inviting you into his presence. We don’t have to go to the temple like the Israelites anymore. We can enter into his presence right here, right now.

Psalm 100:4 (ESV)

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise!
Give thanks to him; bless his name!

God is inviting you home, but he knows no matter where you live or where you go there’s only one true home, that’s with him. Will you come home? Will you let your Father reclaim you? Thank you Father for renewing us, reclaiming us, and...

3. Redeeming us (v2, 5)

Just like God rescued the Israelites over and over again from their captivity and sin, he has rescued us.

Psalm 100:5 (ESV)

For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

The Lord, Yahweh, is not only good, his “hesed,” his steadfast love, his covenant love, his unbreakable love, endures forever. God loves us and will never let us go. Why? Because verse 3 tells us we are his sheep. The good shepherd doesn’t leave his sheep to fend for themselves. Our good shepherd guards and keeps his flock. That’s what Jesus did for us. Jesus identifies himself as our good shepherd.

John 10:11 (ESV)

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Jesus came to renew, and reclaim, and redeem lost sheep. Are you one of those lost sheep? I was. I was born sinful and broken and in need of a savior shepherd. I was like a smelly sheep all covered in mud. But one day my good shepherd came along, washed me off, bound up my wounds, and carried me home. He redeemed me; and at the highest of costs. He laid down his life to purchase mine.

Thank you Jesus for giving your life up for mine, so that I might know the Father and be redeemed! Jesus is the reason we started Cornerstone, so we can tell others about him, about his perfectly good life. Do you know Jesus? He’s the good shepherd who became a spotless sheep, and allowed himself to be led to the slaughter. Jesus is the lamb who was slain to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

We’ve talked about a lot of things at Cornerstone, but each week we try to make sure we talk about one person in particular, and that’s Jesus. Jesus is why we started Cornerstone and Jesus is who we’re trying to tell others about because he can change your life. He not only changes your life when he saves you, but then he begins to take you to new places you never imagined when he leads you through life.

I never imagined my good shepherd would uproot me from Colorado, then to Virginia, and then take me to Massachusetts to go to seminary, get married, and start a church. I know many of you never imagined you would help plant a church. But we have a good shepherd who is redeeming us, reclaiming us, and renewing us day by day. We have a good shepherd.

Thank you Father for renewing us, for reclaiming us, for redeeming us, and for...

Resending us (v2)

I want to go back to verses one and two. This is a Psalm for the people of Israel, but also for “all the earth” (v1). Israel was God’s special chosen people, but now this Psalm says anyone can be in relationship with him. Now through Jesus Christ any can have a relationship with God, any can be reclaimed by God. Once God has reclaimed us, we want to give back out of what he has given us. That’s why in verse 2 we get to “Serve the Lord with gladness!”

God is going to do amazing things through us to serve him. Today is not about coming up with new ways to serve him, but thanking him for the ways we’ve been able to serve him, are serving him right now, and will serve him in the future. I’m so grateful the Lord let me help start this church, get to know you, and reach out to the community of Westford. How about you? What do you want to thank him for? Our thankfulness starts with thanking him for being him, but also for the ways he’s working through us in our world.

Getting to be a part of this church plant, and watching God move, has been one of the greatest achievements of my life. God is still writing the story of Cornerstone. There’s so much hope in that. Never give up because God is on the move! Our Heavenly Father is still at work. Send us again, Father. Here we are! Send us!

Thank you Father for renewing us, reclaiming us, redeeming us, resending us.

We’ve been here five years and God has done some amazing things. We’ve celebrated eight different baptisms, including one in a river. We’ve reached out and served Westford through Trunk or Treats, road

cleanups, Christmas caroling, game nights, movie nights, a parent's night out, a Habitat for Humanity build, a prayer table at the farmer's market, the youth packaging relief for Syrian refugees, the Westford Food Pantry fundraiser, and more. We've grown in our faith through studying the Bible and prayer. We've learned about reaching out with the love of Christ to those people God puts in our path every day, our frontlines. We've sang for five years, worshipped for five years, I've preached for five years, and God has been changing our hearts for five years.

What's he going to do in the next five years? We're just getting started! Today our Heavenly Father is renewing us, reclaiming us, redeeming us, and resending us, and there's nothing he can't do through us. I have so much hope for our future. Today, let's celebrate, and look forward to what God is going to do next.

We are singing the doxology in response to communion.

Pastor Jonathan Romig preached this message at Cornerstone Congregational Church. You can download a PDF copy of this sermon above, which includes endnotes and references, or share it through [Apple podcasts](#) or [Google Play Music](#). Read the [story of our church here](#).

Discussion Questions

1. What are you thankful for at Cornerstone?
2. What has your Heavenly Father done to renew you in the past?
3. Why does it matter that your Heavenly Father wants to reclaim you?
4. What does it mean to be redeemed by Jesus's death and resurrection?
5. How might God be resending us as a church to serve him?

¹ NIV Zondervan Study Bible Psalm 100:3 note. Page 1116.