



St Barnabas Cray

Unusual Praise: Worship in Every Season

Weekly Devotional Journey

Monday - Knowing Who Made You

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

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. (Psalm 100:3 NIV)

Devotional Thought

There is a question that quietly underlies all of human life: to whom do I belong? It sounds philosophical, perhaps even abstract, but the answer to it shapes everything — how we make decisions, how we handle success, how we respond to suffering, and how we spend our days. Psalm 100:3 cuts through the noise with startling clarity: we are not self-made. We are not the authors of our own stories. We are his — made by him, sustained by him, and ultimately accountable to him.

The ancient story of King Nebuchadnezzar, found in Daniel chapter 4, is one of the most arresting

illustrations of what happens when a human being forgets this truth. Here was a man of extraordinary power and achievement — a king whose reach extended over entire nations, whose word was law, whose name commanded fear and respect. And yet, standing on the roof of his palace, surveying the empire he had built, he made the fatal error of ascribing all of it to himself. The glory that belonged to God, he claimed for himself.

What followed was not merely a personal humiliation. It was a divine correction — seven years of living as an animal in the wild, stripped of reason, dignity, and throne. Seven years. And then, at the appointed moment, Nebuchadnezzar looked up. That small phrase carries enormous weight. To look up is to acknowledge that there is someone above you. It is the posture of a creature before its Creator. And when he looked up, everything changed. His reason returned, his kingdom was restored, and — most significantly — he began to praise and honour the one who truly deserved it.

This is not simply an ancient tale. It is a mirror. Every one of us is prone to the same subtle pride — the quiet assumption that our abilities, our health, our opportunities, our relationships are fundamentally ours. We built this. We earned this. We deserve this. But the Psalmist calls us back to a more honest and more liberating reality: it is he who made us. That is not a diminishment of who you are. It is the very foundation of your worth and your security. You are not an accident. You are not self-sustaining. You are his — and that is the most wonderful thing that could be said of any human being.

Reflection Question

In what areas of your life are you most tempted to take credit for what God has given you — and what would it look like to genuinely acknowledge his hand there today?

From Sunday's Sermon

""He had started to ascribe it to the Lord and no longer to himself.""

Today's Application

Begin this week by taking a few quiet minutes to write down three to five things in your life that you have perhaps unconsciously claimed as your own achievement — your career progress, your family stability, your health, your intelligence, your opportunities. For each one, pause and consciously offer it back to God in a short prayer of acknowledgement. This is not a performance; it is an act of inner reorientation.

Throughout the day, when you catch yourself thinking 'I did this' or 'I deserve this', gently redirect your heart with the words of Psalm 100:3 — 'It is he who made us, and we are his.' If you have a journal, note at the end of the day where you noticed the pull of self-sufficiency and how you responded. The goal is not guilt but growing awareness — the kind of awareness that slowly reshapes the posture of your heart from self-reliance to grateful dependence.

Morning Prayer

Lord God, I confess that I so easily forget that I am yours. I carry my days as though they were mine to spend, my gifts as though they were mine to own, my life as though I were its author. But you made me. You sustain me. You hold my every breath in your hands. Like Nebuchadnezzar, I need the grace to look up — to see you clearly above all my achievements and ambitions. Reorient my heart today. Let everything I do be an act of returning to you what was always yours. I am yours, Lord. Teach me to live like it. Amen.

Evening Devotion

Looking Up at the End of the Day

Evening Reflection

Nebuchadnezzar's turning point came when he looked up. It is a simple phrase, but it describes something profound — a moment of honest reckoning in which a proud heart finally opens to the reality of God. This evening, as the day draws to a close, you are invited into that same posture.

How did today go? Did you find yourself moving through your hours with a sense of self-sufficiency, or did you find moments where you genuinely leaned on the Lord? Perhaps there were decisions made without much thought of him, conversations where his presence was not acknowledged, successes that were quietly savoured without a word of thanks. That is not condemnation — it is

simply the honest reality of most of our days.

But here is the grace: the invitation to look up is always available. Even now, in the quietness of this evening, you can turn your gaze upward. You can acknowledge that today — with all its ordinary moments — was held in his hands. He was present in the meeting you were anxious about, in the conversation that surprised you, in the fatigue you felt, in the small kindness someone showed you. He was there. He is always there. The question is simply whether we are willing to look up and notice.

Evening Reflection

Where did you notice God's hand in your day today — and where did you perhaps forget to look for him?

Evening Prayer

Father, as this day ends, I look up. I acknowledge that you were present in every moment — even the ones I rushed through without noticing you. Thank you for sustaining me today. I am yours. Help me to rest in that truth tonight. Amen.

Tuesday - Praise When It Is Difficult

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. (Acts 16:25 NIV)

Devotional Thought

It is one of the most extraordinary scenes in all of Scripture. Two men, chained in the deepest part of a Roman prison, their backs raw from a public flogging, their feet locked in stocks — and they are singing. Not whispering quiet prayers of resignation. Not muttering complaints into the darkness. They are singing hymns. Loudly enough that every other prisoner in that place can hear them.

The context makes this even more remarkable. Paul and Silas had not ended up in prison through disobedience or recklessness. They were there precisely because they had obeyed God. He had specifically directed them to Macedonia, and they had gone. Their faithfulness had led them directly into suffering. This is the kind of situation that can quietly corrode our faith — the sense that doing the right thing has made things worse, that obedience has cost us rather than blessed us.

And yet. And yet they sang. Why? Because their praise was not contingent on their circumstances. It was rooted in something deeper — in the character of the God who had sent them, in the conviction that he knew the end from the beginning, in the trust that his purposes were not derailed by a Roman prison cell. Their praise was not a performance of spiritual optimism. It was an act of theological conviction. They were declaring, even in chains, that God was still God.

The sermon reminds us that praise comes easily when things are going well. When the team is winning, everyone sings. But when things turn against us — when the very obedience we offered seems to have led us into difficulty — the temptation is to go quiet. To withdraw. To wait until circumstances improve before we return to worship. Paul and Silas expose that temptation for what

it is: a misunderstanding of what praise actually is. Praise is not a response to good circumstances. It is a response to a good God. And a good God does not change when our circumstances do. He is the same in the prison cell as he is in the open field. The question is whether we are willing to sing in both places.

Reflection Question

Is there a situation in your life right now where you have gone quiet before God — where difficulty or disappointment has silenced your praise? What would it mean to begin singing again, even there?

From Sunday's Sermon

""They were praising the God who knows the end from the beginning and the beginning from the end. They were not upset. They were not angry. They had submitted all to him and they started and they were praising him.""

Today's Application

Today, identify one area of your life that feels like a 'prison cell' — a situation that is difficult, frustrating, or not going the way you had hoped. It might be a relationship under strain, a work situation that feels stuck, a health concern, or a prayer that seems unanswered.

Rather than waiting for that situation to improve before you praise God, choose to offer praise in the midst of it today. This might mean playing a worship song during your commute and singing along honestly. It might mean writing a short prayer of thanks to God that acknowledges the difficulty but also declares his goodness. It might mean sharing with a trusted friend or fellow believer what you are walking through and asking them to pray with you.

The goal is not to pretend the difficulty does not exist. Paul and Silas were genuinely in chains. Their praise did not deny reality — it transcended it. Ask God today to give you that same quality of faith: not a faith that ignores hardship, but one that worships through it.

Morning Prayer

Lord, I confess that my praise is often weather-dependent — it rises when things are good and falls when things are hard. Forgive me for the times I have gone silent when I should have been singing. Today I choose, by your grace, to praise you not because everything is easy but because you are good. You are the same God in my difficulties as you are in my blessings. You know the end from the beginning. I trust you with what I cannot see. Teach me to sing in the night, Lord. Amen.

Evening Devotion**The Songs That Carry Us Through****Evening Reflection**

Paul and Silas sang at midnight. Not at dawn, when the light was returning. Not after the earthquake, when the chains had fallen. They sang in the deepest darkness of the night, before any visible sign of deliverance had come. That is the kind of praise that moves mountains — not because it is a spiritual technique, but because it is an expression of genuine trust.

This evening, reflect on how you carried the theme of today into your hours. Were there moments where you chose to praise rather than complain? Were there moments where the difficulty felt too heavy and the song would not come? Both are honest. Faith is not the absence of struggle; it is the choice to keep returning to God in the midst of it.

The other prisoners heard Paul and Silas. Your praise — even quiet, even private, even imperfect — is never without witness. There are people around you who are watching how you carry your difficulties. Your willingness to trust God in hard times is itself a form of testimony. You may not know who is listening, but someone is. And the God who hears every prayer is also the God who acts in response to faith-filled praise.

Evening Reflection

Did you find it possible to praise God today in the midst of difficulty — and what did that feel like, honestly?

Evening Prayer

Father, thank you that you hear my praise even when it is weak. Thank you that you are present in my midnight moments. Help me to trust you enough to keep singing, even when I cannot yet see the way through. You are worthy, in every season. Amen.

Wednesday - Your Praise Affects Those Around You**Morning Devotion****Today's Verse**

Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. (Acts 16:26 NIV)

Devotional Thought

One of the most striking details in the story of Paul and Silas is easily overlooked: when God moved in response to their praise, he did not just open their cell. He opened every cell. Every door in that prison swung wide. Every chain fell loose. The deliverance that came for two faithful men became a liberation that touched everyone around them.

This is a profound theological truth wrapped inside a dramatic narrative. Our faith, our obedience, and our praise are never purely private matters. They have a reach that extends far beyond ourselves. The way we respond to God — in worship, in trust, in surrender — has consequences for the people around us: our families, our colleagues, our neighbours, our communities. And conversely, our silence, our disobedience, our failure to acknowledge God, also carries

consequences that ripple outward.

The sermon makes this point with pastoral directness: 'Because of you, because of your actions, and sometimes, unfortunately, because of your inactions, a lot of things can happen that will not just affect you, but will affect the people around you.' This is not meant to burden us with guilt, but to awaken us to the genuine significance of our spiritual lives. We are not isolated individuals whose relationship with God is a purely personal, interior matter. We are connected — to one another, to our communities, to generations that will follow us.

Think of the jailer in this story. He was on the verge of taking his own life, convinced that his failure was complete and irredeemable. But because Paul and Silas were present, praising, and willing to call out to him in his despair, he was saved — not just physically, but spiritually. His entire household came to faith that night. One act of faithful praise, sustained in a prison cell, became the turning point for an entire family.

Your praise matters. Your willingness to honour God — especially when it is difficult — is not just between you and him. It is a light that others can see, a song that others can hear, a witness that others may one day look back on as the moment everything changed for them.

Reflection Question

Who in your life might be watching how you respond to God in difficulty — and how might your faithfulness (or its absence) be shaping their view of him?

From Sunday's Sermon

""When God was going to deliver Paul and Silas, he not only delivered them, it delivered all those who were around them.""

Today's Application

Take a moment today to think about the people closest to you — family members, friends,

colleagues, neighbours. Consider: what message is your spiritual life communicating to them? Not what you say about faith, but what they observe in how you live it.

If you have children or young people in your life, they are particularly attentive to whether the faith you profess is real enough to shape your responses to hardship, disappointment, and uncertainty. One of the most powerful things you can do for the next generation is let them see you praising God when it is not easy.

This week, find one concrete way to make your faith visible to someone in your life — not in a forced or performative way, but genuinely. It might be praying aloud with a family member, sharing honestly with a friend about how God is sustaining you through something difficult, or simply saying 'I'm grateful to God for this' when something good happens. Let your praise open doors for others.

Morning Prayer

Lord, I am humbled to think that my faithfulness — or my failure — touches the lives of those around me. I do not want to be a closed door when you want to move through me to reach others. Open my eyes to the people in my life who may be watching, waiting, wondering. Let my praise be a witness. Let my trust in you be contagious. Use my small, ordinary acts of worship to open doors I cannot even see. Amen.

Evening Devotion

Chains That Fall for Others

Evening Reflection

This evening, sit with the image of those open prison doors. Every chain loose. Every cell unlocked. Not just for Paul and Silas, but for everyone in that place. That is the generosity of God — he rarely moves in ways that are limited only to the person who prayed. His grace overflows.

As you look back on your day, consider the people you encountered. Were there moments where your peace, your patience, or your quiet trust in God gave someone else something they needed? Perhaps you will never know the full impact of a kind word offered in faith, a moment of calm in a tense situation, or a prayer spoken honestly in front of someone who needed to hear it.

God is always doing more than we can see. The earthquake in Acts 16 was not just for Paul and Silas — it was for the jailer, for his household, for the other prisoners, for generations of readers who would encounter this story and find their own chains beginning to loosen. Your faithfulness today is part of a story larger than you can fully comprehend. Rest in that tonight.

Evening Reflection

Who did you encounter today who might have been quietly affected by your faith — and how does that change the way you think about tomorrow?

Evening Prayer

Father, thank you that your grace overflows. Thank you that you are always doing more than I can see. Use my life — even the quiet, ordinary parts — to open doors for others. I trust you with the ripples I cannot trace. Amen.

Thursday - Living Sacrifices: Offering All to God

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true and proper worship. (Romans 12:1 NIV)

Devotional Thought

When Solomon brought the Ark of the Covenant into the newly built temple in Jerusalem, the glory of God filled that place so overwhelmingly that the priests could not even stand to minister. The presence of God descended in response to the offering that was laid before him — the sacrifices, the dedication, the surrender of something precious and costly. It was not a casual moment. It was a moment of total consecration.

The Apostle Paul, writing centuries later to the church in Rome, reaches back into that same language of sacrifice and applies it to the whole of Christian life. 'Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice.' Not a dead one — not a past moment of decision long since filed away — but a living one. Present. Active. Ongoing. The sacrifice Paul describes is not a one-time transaction but a daily posture: the continual offering of your whole self — your body, your time, your energy, your choices, your plans — to the God who made you and redeemed you.

This is what the sermon calls us to when it speaks of adding God to all our plans — not as an afterthought or a religious formality, but as the very centre around which everything else is organised. The sermon raises a searching question: 'What are we doing consciously for the Lord? What am I, in my little way, setting aside consciously for him?' It is a question that cuts to the heart of how we actually live, as opposed to how we think of ourselves as living.

It is entirely possible to be a Christian — to attend church, to pray occasionally, to believe the right things — and yet to organise your life in such a way that God is essentially peripheral. The summer plans are made, the diary is filled, the decisions are taken, and God is not really consulted or

included. The living sacrifice of Romans 12:1 is the antidote to that kind of compartmentalised faith. It is the daily, deliberate act of laying your life before God and saying: this is yours. Use it. Shape it. Fill it with your presence.

True worship, Paul says, is not limited to Sunday mornings or moments of heightened spiritual experience. It is the whole of life, offered consciously and continuously to the one who gave it.

Reflection Question

What would it mean, practically and specifically, for you to offer this week — your plans, your relationships, your work, your rest — as a living sacrifice to God?

From Sunday's Sermon

""What are we doing consciously for the Lord? What am I, in my little way, setting aside consciously for him?""

Today's Application

Today, take your diary or calendar — physical or digital — and look at the week ahead. Go through each significant commitment, appointment, or activity and consciously offer it to God in prayer. This does not mean cancelling your plans; it means reframing them. Ask: 'Lord, how do you want to be present in this meeting? In this conversation? In this time of rest? In this family occasion?'

If you notice that God is entirely absent from your schedule — that there is no time set aside for prayer, for Scripture, for worship, for service — take one practical step to change that this week. Set aside a specific time, even just thirty minutes, to be in his presence with no agenda other than to give him praise and to listen. Write it in your diary as a firm commitment. Treat it with the same seriousness as any other appointment. This is not legalism; it is love — the deliberate choice to prioritise the one who deserves your whole life.

Morning Prayer

Lord, I offer you today as a living sacrifice. Not perfectly — I know how quickly I take myself back, how easily I slip into living as though you are optional. But today I choose, by your grace, to lay it all before you. My plans, my relationships, my work, my rest, my fears, my hopes — all of it is yours. Fill my ordinary days with your extraordinary presence. Let my life be an act of worship. Amen.

Evening Devotion**The Whole Day as an Offering****Evening Reflection**

As this day comes to a close, consider it as an offering laid before God. Not just the spiritual moments — the prayers, the Scripture reading, the worship song — but the whole of it. The commute, the difficult conversation, the meal prepared, the work completed, the rest taken. All of it can be worship when it is offered consciously to him.

Romans 12:1 speaks of a living sacrifice — and living sacrifices have ordinary days. They sit in traffic. They answer emails. They cook dinner. They feel tired. The invitation is not to make every moment feel spiritually elevated, but to carry an underlying awareness that all of it is offered to God. That you are his. That your time is his. That your energy is his to direct.

Did you manage to offer any part of today consciously to him? Were there moments where you paused and said, 'Lord, I'm doing this for you'? Even small moments of that kind of intentionality are significant. They are the building blocks of a life that is genuinely shaped by worship rather than simply punctuated by it.

Evening Reflection

Looking back on today, what would you like to offer to God — including the parts that felt ordinary, difficult, or even wasted?

Evening Prayer

Father, I offer you this day — all of it, including the parts I am not proud of. Thank you for being present in every hour. Take what was good and use it. Redeem what was wasted. I am yours, and tomorrow I want to live that more fully. Amen.

Friday - Come to Him: The Open Invitation**Morning Devotion****Today's Verse**

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
(Matthew 11:28-29 NIV)

Devotional Thought

All week, we have been exploring what it means to praise God — to acknowledge him as Creator, to worship him in difficulty, to let our faith overflow into the lives of those around us, and to offer our whole lives as an act of living worship. But underneath all of that is a more fundamental invitation, one that precedes everything else: come to him.

You cannot praise someone you have not met. You cannot offer your life to someone you have not encountered. And so the sermon ends — as all good gospel preaching must — with an open door and a direct invitation: 'Come into that relationship with the Lord. You've got nothing to lose. Absolutely nothing to lose.'

The God who made the universe — the one who breathed life into clay and called it human, the one who holds the stars in their courses and knows the number of hairs on your head — this God wants to know you. Not just to be acknowledged by you from a respectful distance. He wants to call you friend. He wants to call you daughter. He wants to call you son. He wants to call you his own. That is almost incomprehensible. And yet it is the heartbeat of the gospel.

For those who have known him for years, this invitation is a call to return — to come back to the simplicity and intimacy of a relationship that may have grown formal or distant. It is so easy, even for long-established believers, to slip into a mode of religion that is all petition and no praise, all asking and no resting, all duty and no delight. The Lord's invitation is always to come — to come with your weariness, your questions, your failures, your joys, your ordinary days — and to find in him the rest that your soul has been searching for.

For those who have not yet come — who have heard of him but not yet known him, who have been curious but not yet committed — the door is open today. He does not send away anyone who comes to him. That is not a promise made lightly. It is the character of God, revealed most fully in Jesus Christ, who opened his arms on a cross so that no one who comes to him would ever be turned away.

Reflection Question

What is it that has been keeping you from coming to God more fully — whether for the first time or in a fresh and deeper way — and what would it mean to lay that down today?

From Sunday's Sermon

""He wants to come into your life and he wants to call you friend. And not only that, he wants to call you daughter. He wants to call you son. He wants to call you his own.""

Today's Application

As this week draws to a close, make one deliberate, concrete act of coming to God. If you have never made a personal commitment of faith, today could be the day you do that — simply and honestly, in your own words, telling God that you want to know him, that you want him to have your life, that you want to call him Father.

If you are already a believer, use this final day of the week to set aside time — at least thirty minutes, ideally longer — to come to God with nothing on your agenda except to be with him. No shopping list of requests. No performance of spiritual duty. Simply come. Sit in his presence. Read Psalm 100 slowly. Let the words wash over you. Tell him what you are grateful for. Tell him where you have struggled this week. Tell him you want more of him. And then be quiet enough to listen.

As you move into the weekend, carry with you the commitment to make praise a regular, intentional part of your life — not just in church, but in the everyday rhythms of your week. Set a reminder on your phone if it helps. Find a worship song that has moved you this week and return to it. Keep coming.

Morning Prayer

Lord, I come. I come with all that I am and all that I carry — my questions and my certainties, my failures and my hopes, my weariness and my wonder. I do not come because I have it all together. I come because you have invited me, and because I have nowhere else I would rather be. Thank you that you never turn away anyone who comes to you. Call me your own. I want to know you — not just know about you, but truly know you. Take my life and make it yours. Amen.

Evening Devotion

Resting in the Arms of the Father

Evening Reflection

As this week ends and the evening settles around you, rest in this: you are known. You are wanted. You are his.

All week, we have been thinking about praise — about what it means to acknowledge God as Creator, to worship him in difficulty, to let our faith touch those around us, to offer our whole lives to

him. But praise, at its deepest, is not primarily something we do. It is a response to something we have received. We praise because we have been loved. We worship because we have been found. We come to him because he first came to us.

The invitation that was extended this morning — 'come to me, all you who are weary and burdened' — is still open tonight. Whatever this week has held for you, whatever you are carrying into the weekend, he is not waiting for you to have it all sorted before you come to him. He is simply waiting for you to come.

Let this evening be a moment of genuine rest — not just physical rest, but the deeper rest that Jesus promises: rest for your soul. You are held. You are his. And that is more than enough.

Evening Reflection

As you look back on this week, where did you most clearly sense God's presence — and how has that shaped your desire to keep coming to him?

Evening Prayer

Father, thank you for this week. Thank you for every moment of your presence, including the ones I almost missed. I rest in you tonight — not because everything is resolved, but because you are faithful. I am yours. That is enough. Amen.