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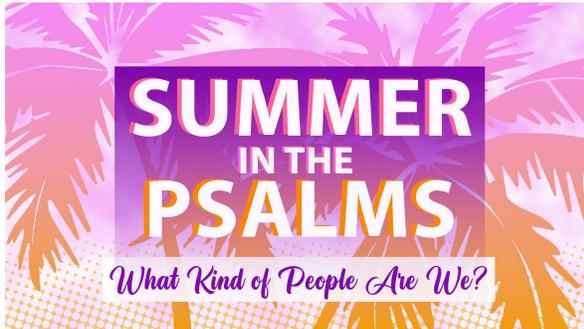
**Title:** Summer in the Psalms: What Kind of People Are We?

**Preaching:** Samantha Copeland, Associate Minister for Youth and Young Adults

**Text:** [Psalm 100](#)

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If I look a little rough this morning, if you notice some bags under my eyes and think to yourself, “Sam looks tired,” it’s because I am. You see I returned yesterday afternoon from the third and final youth mission trip of the summer! Over the course of the past month and a half, 22 youth and 6 adults ventured on three different trips around the country to Fort Worth, Texas; Newton, Iowa; and Nashville, Tennessee, to serve and learn. I want to give you a quick recap of our journeys:



Our first stop was in Fort Worth, Texas, where a group of Geist High School youth and adults partnered with Connect Ministries, a Disciples of Christ organization, that connected us with local organizations working with refugee services and resettlement.



Our second trip took another group of high schoolers and adults to the Christian Conference Center, the Disciples of Christ church camp for the Upper Midwest Region, in Newton, Iowa. We served at the camp for the week working on projects and lending a hand to their small staff.



Our final trip was to Nashville, Tennessee, with a group of middle school youth and adults. Again, we partnered with Connect and their new satellite location in Nashville. This time, we worked with a local organization around the topic of homelessness and housing injustice.

It has been a busy month and a half. My soul is refreshed and energized, but my body is tired.

It took about four hours into our first youth mission trip of the summer for someone to ask us the question. There we were standing around the gate at the Indianapolis airport, getting ready to board the plane to Texas when a woman behind us asked, “Are y’all together?” I could hear the lingering question behind the question she asked: “Who are y’all?” I’m sure she looked from person to person and was trying to piece together what it was that could have brought us together and what it was we were doing together. I turned around and explained we were a youth group headed to Fort Worth, Texas, for a week of work and play.

After this initial interaction with this woman on our first trip, I found myself starting to notice the people around us on each of our trips. I would wonder if they noticed us and were wondering who we were. Would they wonder, *Who are they?*

As I asked myself this question about how we were being perceived, it led me to a deeper question:

*What kind of people are we?*

And that question led me to explore somewhere I hadn’t expected—to a Psalm of thanks:

- 1 Shout triumphantly to the Lord, all the earth!
- 2 Serve the Lord with celebration!  
Come before him with shouts of joy!
- 3 Know that the Lord is God—  
he made us; we belong to him.  
We are his people,  
the sheep of his own pasture.
- 4 Enter his gates with thanks;  
enter his courtyards with praise!  
Thank him! Bless his name!

5 Because the Lord is good,  
his loyal love lasts forever;  
his faithfulness lasts generation after generation (Psalm 100).

Amid this litany of thanksgiving, we find a resolution: we are people of God. That's the kind of people we are—God people. At first glance, this declaration of who we are may seem out of place among the praise, but really if you think about it, declaring ourselves the people of God is an act of praise.

“Know that the Lord is God— God made us; we belong to God, we are God's people, the sheep of God's own pasture” (Psalm 100:3).

Have you ever been in a crowd cheering someone on? Maybe at a sporting event, a baseball game, or a track meet, or maybe a choir concert or musical. Have you ever heard someone stand up and clap and cheer and say, “That's my kid” or, “That's my best friend”? Or have you said it before? It is natural to make the connection when giving praise, when we are proud. So the psalmist here stands up and says, “That's my God! I belong to God! God is awesome!”

Okay, so cool. Got an answer. We're people of God. That's what kind of people we are. But here's the thing: I still have some wonderings:

*What kind of people are people of God?*

This summer as our different groups experienced different things on their trips, they all had one thing in common: our shared theme scripture for the summer. The beautiful thing about this scripture is not only did it tie our summer together nicely and helped focus our work and purpose, it also provided another beautiful path of exploring about what kind of people are people of God. Our scripture comes from 1 John 4:7-12:

<sup>7</sup>“Dear friends, let's love each other, because love is from God, and everyone who loves is born from God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>The person who doesn't love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup>This is how the love of God is revealed to us: God has sent his only Son into the world so that we can live through him. <sup>10</sup>This is love: it is not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son as the sacrifice that deals with our sins.

<sup>11</sup>“Dear friends, if God loved us this way, we also ought to love each other. <sup>12</sup>No one has ever seen God. If we love each other, God remains in us and his love is made perfect in us” (1 John 4:7-12).

Every time I have read this passage out loud for our youth, there is always a word I want to add. “No one has ever seen God, BUT if we love each other, God remains in us, and his love is made perfect in us.” No one has seen God, BUT if we love each other, we see a glimpse of God. Is that not what we are called to do as people of God? Love each other? Isn't that the kind of people we are supposed to be, people of love?

Yeah that sounds about right. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself, for when we love one another, we love and praise God.

Okay so what kind of people are we? Loving people! Here's the deal with being loving people though, it is easier said than done. So now I'm wondering:

*What does it look like to be loving people?*

What do they do? What do they look like? How do they show love to other people? This past summer has given me an idea of what it looks like. Let me share it with you:



Being loving people looks like sitting through hours of talking, even when you don't feel like it, so you can learn about what your neighbor is going through.

It looks like groceries: Buying them, loading them in people's cars, carrying them upstairs.

It's kicking the soccer ball around and disputing whether or not the goal was in bounds.

It's weeding.

It's face painting and learning about anime characters you had never heard of in the process

It's delivering bags of items for newborn babies

Here's what I learn about being loving people in Fort Worth: It is often in the small moment. Earlier on in the week, we spent time at the Neighborhood Needs food pantry. A parent drove through and shared that their son's birthday was coming up that week, and preparations began. One of our youth brought out a birthday cake to the car and helped the parent pick out toys for the little boy's birthday.

Later in the week, part of our group had the opportunity to shop for a refugee family with 13 people. Our group made sure to shop for this family with dignity by going to the Halal meat market and getting meat that was prepared correctly for them. Another part of our group spent time with a refugee family while delivering a newborn baby bag.

They took extra time to sit and chat with them, even though they didn't speak the same language, and found out that they needed many resources that our group had access to and could connect them with. This small moment of taking the time to sit down and have coffee with this family turned into a life-changing moment.

You see, being loving people is in the little things, and it goes beyond language and any other barriers, it is something that can translate through sharing a simple bottle of water and recognizing the shared humanity in each of us.



Loving people also looks like:

- Taking extra care around our animal friends to make sure they don't get squished by a brick or tractor
- Hitting an old shed with a crowbar
- Painting a minion chair
- Weeding (again)
- Riding around in the back of the camp pick up truck as we haul things across the camp.

Here's what I learned about being loving people in Iowa: Being loving people is not only about loving others, which they did and did well by helping the camp and the camp staff make projects more manageable with more hands. Being loving people is loving a triffecta of things: others, creation, and ourselves.

Our youth in Iowa loved creation many times when we encountered creature after creature. I was not the only one on the trip that didn't like spiders, and yet we learned to work around them instead of smashing them with bricks. I even had a youth look at me and say, "I don't think I mind the bugs any more!"

Being loving people also means taking time to love yourself—taking breaks when you need them and finding outlets for creativity and play! I watched our youth do this as they were tasked with painting a chair at the camp that would leave our mark. They tied in a fun activity we had done earlier in the week and created a minion chair! I watched them sing and dance and laugh as they painted it together. Watching their faces light up as they talked about it and bonded over it was such a joy.

In loving all these things, we also love God, and when we love others, creation, and ourselves well, we love God well.



And most recently, love came in the form of:

- Tie-dying white towels to make them new and special for our friends on the street using the showers
- Packing school supplies
- Restocking newspapers
- Making food for strangers and each other
- Loading up vans with supplies for new moms
- Walking around downtown with eyes open for those most people just pass by

Here's what I learned about being loving people in Nashville: Loving people think differently. On our first day of work in homelessness outreach and housing injustice, we learned when referring to someone on the streets, it's important to say "a person experiencing homelessness" instead of a "homeless person." This is simply because of the way our brains work; we focus on what word we put first. When the person is first in the sentence it is a small way to instill humanity back into a person. And it's not just for how that person would feel when we are talking about them, but how we train ourselves to talk and think about a person. I watched the kids' lightbulbs go off as they took this small but significant change to heart right away.

We live in a world of labels and categorizing. It is how our human brain works. This goes with this, that means that. These definitions can be extremely helpful to us. They give us direction on how to live and information on how to proceed and make good, sound decisions. We're finding a label for ourselves right now as people of God and as loving people, but oftentimes, labels can be limiting. We must be prepared to look beyond labels and investigate how we label ourselves and others.

Being loving people means letting your heart and mind be changed by new information.

All of these stories, all of these trips, and the experiences I had with the youth this summer have taught me what it means to be the people of God. I watched them learn from amazing mission partners. I watched them act it out, and I saw the things that they already had inside of them—their generosity, kindness, compassion, and joy teach me how to be a more loving person.

So I hope that sharing these stories with y'all will inspire and encourage you on your path. What kind of people are we? We are loving people of God. As we declare it to be so and live it out as our truth, we praise God and give God glory as our Psalm says. And so I leave you with this blessing:

Dear friends, let us love one another, for we are beloved children of God, and so is every single person we meet.

Amen and amen.