

PRAISE GOD WITH JOY

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 100

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Psalm 100

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE: Psalm 100

I. A Call to All

Psalm 100:1-2

A psalm. For giving grateful praise.

¹ Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

² Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

1. The command to *shout for joy* appears in exactly the same Hebrew phrasing in only two places: here and in Psalm 98:4. This is a call to unhindered praise.

The Hebrew word behind the translation *shout* is translated as “extol” (Psalm 95:2). Both senses are present here. This attests that the psalmist expects volume and excitement. Shouts could be accompanied by the clapping of hands (47:1), singing (98:4), and instruments (98:5-6).

The Lord is never referred to with explicitly royal language in the psalm we are studying. Even so, the call matches the worshipful equivalent of making fanfare for a king. This is the first of four appearances of the divine name Yahweh, identified in English translations as “LORD” in small caps. This could just be the writer’s preferred method of referring to God. Or it could be that the psalmist uses this designation specifically to show that all people will know God by name and have greater knowledge of him because of it.

1b. The word *earth* in this context refers to the world in its entirety. This word can also refer to specific nations or territories when used with parallel terms that speak of such groups (Psalm 74:8). Sometimes a doubled usage will refer to both in poetic parallelism (67:6-7). This flexibility results at times in ambiguity as to whether the narrower or the wider sense is intended.

Assuming that this address is for people everywhere, we see God’s concern for all humanity. The psalmist anticipated the day when all nations would come to know the Lord and would offer their praise to him. This theme complements the motifs of Israel proclaiming the Lord’s name among the nations and of his reign over the nations.

2a. Given that this psalm is associated with Psalm 90, we can surmise that the writer alludes to the exodus here. Serving *the Lord* therefore suggests a contrast between Israel’s service to God and the nation’s service to Pharaoh. Whereas their labors for Pharaoh caused the people to cry out to God in distress, service to God is accompanied by *gladness*.

2b. If this verse alludes to the exodus, then coming *before him* can easily be an allusion to the ark of the covenant (Exodus 25:22). This brings to mind the ark’s location in the tabernacle and later in the temple.

Throughout the centuries, the people of God had experiences worthy of song. In these instances, the people of God could declare with David, “[God] put a new song in my mouth” (Psalm 40:3).

II. A Call to Know

Psalm 100:3

³ 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.

3a. This, the fourth command of this psalm. The word *know* in this context suggests a profound awareness beyond mere intellectual perception.

The Lord is God is a central affirmation of Old Testament faith. Its parallel of Jesus as Lord is a central affirmation of the New Testament (Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 12:3). In both instances, the proclamation sets apart the one who is confessing from those who will not confess the same. In the first-century church and throughout its early history in Rome, declaring Jesus to be Lord—the only Lord—was tantamount to denying the deity of a caesar or any other so-called god. Yet any saving faith in the Lord must begin by confessing that he alone is God.

3b. It would be easy to think of the first part of this half-verse’s declarations in terms of the creation of humanity in Genesis 1:26-27. But pausing to look at the second part may lead us to a different conclusion: *his people* and *the sheep of his pasture* may be intended to refer primarily to God’s creation of the nation of Israel. Psalm 95:6-7 is quite similar in this regard: “Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.”

The metaphor of the nation of Israel as the Lord’s sheep draws on ancient imag-

ery. Kings were depicted as shepherds and their subjects as the monarch’s sheep. God is often alluded to as shepherd as well.

Being God’s sheep suggested that the people of Israel could feel confident in their relationship to God but should be humble concerning their own abilities. Like sheep, Israel was weak, vulnerable, and needing care. However, they belonged to and were valued by the Lord God, the true and ultimate shepherd-king. It was he who would guide, protect, and provide for them.

Whether referring to humanity in general or Old Testament Israel in particular, the text before us highlights both God’s identity as Creator and the worshipper’s identity as created being. The implications are profound: it effectively negates any notions of human self-sufficiency. Neither humanity in general nor Old Testament Israel in particular came into being by self-sufficient effort (Acts 17:28). We do well to remember that it is Christ who has created the church. And the one who created the church is also the Creator of everything.

The shepherd-sheep imagery carries over into the New Testament. Jesus referred to himself as the shepherd who cares for his sheep to the point of giving his life for them (John 10:11, 15). The church is God’s flock, and its elders are called to care for and to protect it as does Christ.

Before moving on, we should pause to note that the affirmations made in Psalm 100:3b echo the two halves of a standard covenant-promise formula: “I will . . . be your God, and you will be my people” (Leviticus 26:12; see Exodus 6:7; Psalm 95:6-7). This formula’s final appearance is associated with the promise of “a new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21:1-3).

III. A Call to Thanksgiving

Psalm 100:4-5

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise;

give thanks to him and praise his name.

⁵ For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;

his faithfulness continues through all generations.

4. The dedication of Solomon's temple took place during the Festival of Tabernacles (1 Kings 8:2, 65). The association of the dedication with that feast may provide context for allusions to the temple grounds here. Furthermore, *gates, courts,* and *courtyards* are mentioned together dozens of times in the Old Testament in that regard.

The gates refer to the entrances to the temple grounds, and courts are the areas in proximity. The complex included two temple courts: an "inner courtyard" (1 Kings 6:36) and a "great courtyard" (7:12). The chronicler designated the inner court as "the courtyard of the priests" (2 Chronicles 4:9). The "great courtyard" was evidently an outer court surrounding the entire temple complex. It is into this larger, outer court the psalmist envisioned the congregation entering.

Those approaching God in the temple courts needed to bring appropriate offerings. What better than *thanksgiving* and *praise* (Micah 6:6-8; Hebrews 13:15)? The terms *thanksgiving* and *give thanks* refer to a proclamation of what God had done (Leviticus 7:12-15). Joyful noise and psalms would accompany this thanksgiving (Psalm 95:2). Praise consisted of boasting about and exalting the Lord—to recognize the great things he had done and to admire his characteristics. To *praise* the Lord's *name* is to acclaim his power and reputation with all due respect.

5a. This verse offers motivations for praising God. The simple affirmation that *the Lord is good* is used four times in the book of Psalms (here, and in Psalms 34:8; 135:3; and 145:9). To these can be

added Psalms 106:1; 107:1; 118:1, 29; and 136:1, which all feature the sentence "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever" or a slight variation of it. The word translated *love* is elsewhere translated "kindness" (1 Samuel 15:6) and "approval" (Esther 2:17). God's mercy endures through the failures and sins of his people (Psalms 86:5; 89:33; 103:8). It is everlasting (103:17), and the Lord delights to show it (Micah 7:18). It is rooted and expressed primarily in covenant relationships (Deuteronomy 7:9, 12).

5b. The Hebrew word translated *faithfulness* here derives from the verbal root from which we get the word *amen*, an affirmative response to what has just been said. It refers to firmness, steadfastness, reliability, and consistency. The congregation of Israel could expect their children, grandchildren, and succeeding *generations* to experience the same goodness from the Lord's hand that they had received.

God's relationship with his people demonstrates his reliable goodness, mercifulness, and truthfulness. Pairings of the words translated "love" and "faithfulness" occur frequently in the psalms. These echo one of the Old Testament's foundational descriptions of the Lord God of Israel, as seen in Exodus 34:6-7.

The Lord's dealings with Israel proved to be more than sentimental impulses that could easily dissipate. The people could rely on God because he had been faithful to the covenants he made with their ancestors. Israel had experienced the Lord's reliability and faithfulness for a long time, and the people could move into their future assured of his continued presence. They could know that God's acts of grace were not the product of a divine whim. We can trust in the Lord because he is constant, and his gracious purposes for us are reliable. Indeed, Jesus is called "Faithful and True" (Revelation 19:11).

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

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Into the Lesson

Think of an example of one of the following two prompts:

Parents' devotion to their children

Children's devotion to their parents

Today we're beginning a five-week study from the psalms, some of which can surprise us regarding what they imply on this topic.

Into the Word

Read Psalm 100. This rendition of Psalm 100 comes from the 1650 Scottish Metrical Psalter. Write the verse numbers from Psalm 100 besides the phrase to which they refer. Write in the margins the words from Scripture that match the words in this poem.

All people that on earth do dwell
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.
Him serve with mirth; His praise forth tell;
Come ye before Him and rejoice.

Know that the Lord is God indeed;
Without our aid, He did us make.
We are His flock; He doth us feed,
And for His sheep He doth us take.

O enter then His gates with praise;
Approach with joy His courts unto.
Praise, laud, and bless His name always,
For it is seemly so to do.

For why? The Lord our God is good;
His mercy is forever sure.
His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure.

What and Why

Which verses in Psalm 100 tell us *what* we are to do in our relationship with God, and which verses tell us *why* to do it?

Into Life

Create an acrostic for the word *KING*. For each letter of the word, suggest a word or phrase to indicate how to conduct life with the awareness that God is king.

K
I
N
G

Dig deeper by considering which word or phrase is the most challenging to actually act upon and why that is the case.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Be joyful! The Lord is good, and we belong to him.