

Praise to God
Psalm 100
Week 7

Opening Prayer

****if you'd rather open with a song for this session, this would be a great opportunity to mix it up. After all, Psalms were written to be sung, and Psalm 100 has been set to some lovely tunes. You may be familiar with this one – All People That on Earth Do Dwell. It is a basic paraphrase of the psalm. You can listen to a recording and see the lyrics [here](#). (of course you can Google it and choose any version you'd like)***

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

The Lord, ye know, is God indeed;
Without our aid He did us make;
We are His folk, 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 for ever sure;
His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure.

To Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
The God Whom Heaven and earth adore,
From men and from the angel host
Be praise and glory evermore.

Ask if anyone would like to open in prayer. They can pray on their own or use the prayer printed below. It also might be a good idea to reach out to a group member prior to your meeting and ask them ahead of time if they'd be willing to open in prayer. That's a great way to encourage participation without putting anyone on the spot.

Gracious God, as we come together to place our lives in front of your Holy Word, we pray that you would give us wisdom and understanding. May we approach this sacred text with humility, curiosity, expectancy and love. Be among us and in our conversation through the power of your Holy Spirit. We pray in the name of the one to whom this whole story points, Jesus the Christ, amen.

Depending on time constraints you may want to take a bit of extra time to check in with folks and see how they're doing. You could also wait and do this at the end of the session before closing in prayer.

Check-in question

Each week, give an opportunity for folks to either respond to the check-in question below or, if they'd rather, share something that came up for them as they were reading the other texts assigned for the Big Read this week.

Worship is valuing something or someone above all else. What do you find we as a nation or you as an individual are you tempted to worship more than the Lord?

Background

There's a song for every occasion, isn't there? The right songs enhance any event, imprint memories more deeply into our minds, and make even everyday moments more special. In the Bible, the book of Psalms serves as "the songbook of God's people."

There are several categories of psalms to fit every situation. Laments lift up hard things to God and ask for his intervention. Wisdom psalms echo ideas from the other Wisdom books (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon), and prophetic psalms are resonant with the messages of the prophets. Royal psalms relate to the Messiah who was foreshadowed by King David. Some psalms celebrate God's Law, some express confidence in His help, and some relate the history of God's people. And many, many psalms are centered around praise and thanksgiving. It is in this category that Psalm 100 falls.

Psalm 100 is the last of a grouping of eight psalms that share the phrase: "The LORD reigns." This confident assertion addresses doubts and struggles that have been raised in other earlier psalms, and this truth makes thanksgiving possible.¹

Psalm 100 is a call to praise and serve God. It is noteworthy for depicting obedience to God's kingly rule as an experience of joy (v.2), for celebrating not only that God made us, but also that we belong to God (v.3), and for celebrating the enduring quality of God's covenant love to all generations (v.5).²

1. **Make a joyful shout to the LORD:** Unlike the several previous psalms, Psalm 100 does not begin with a declaration of God's sovereignty or character. It begins with the simple and direct exhortation to **all you lands** to praise God with **a joyful shout**. This is a call to the nations, extending far beyond Israel's borders.
 - a. **"Shout (Hebrew: *rua*) for joy to Yahweh"** (v. 1a). This verse sets the tone for the psalm. It calls people to shout (*rua*) for joy to Yahweh.
 - i. The word *rua* means to shout and/or to make a loud noise. After the Israelites marched around Jericho seven times, Joshua commanded them

¹ Udall, Jessica. *What Does Psalm 100 Mean by 'Make a Joyful Noise unto the Lord'?*

<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study/what-does-psalm-100-mean-by-make-a-joyful-noise-onto-the-lord.html>. 2 June 2021.

² Borger, Joyce, Martin Tel and John D. Witvliet. *Psalms for All Season: a Complete Psalter for Worship*. Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2012.

to shout (*rua*)—"for the Lord has given you the city." When they shouted, the city walls fell down, allowing Israel to win the victory (Joshua 6:16, 20). The word *rua*, then, can be a battle cry.

- ii. This *rua*, then, is not a subtle, measured sound—dignified and refined. The psalmist is calling people to raise the roof—to give it all they have. They are to praise the Lord for the wondrous things that he has done for his people—for the victories that he gives them day by day.
- iii. But they are not simply to shout. They are to shout for joy! This is a call to exuberance and rejoicing—to the kind of energetic praise that wells up within to the point that it can no longer be contained.³

2. **"all you lands!"** (Hebrew: *'eres*) (v. 1b). The word *'eres* means the earth or land. The psalmist calls not only Israel, but also all the *'eres*—all the earth—all the lands and all the peoples to join in praising of Yahweh. He invites both insiders (Jews) and outsiders (Gentiles) to be part of the chorus of praise.
 - a. Given Israel's understanding of its distinctive covenant relationship with Yahweh, it seems remarkable that the psalmist would extend this invitation so far—that his invitation would penetrate the spiritual wall that separated Jew and Gentile.
 - b. But there are a number of hints in the Old Testament that point to the breaking down of walls that excluded Gentiles. For instance, when God called Abram to leave his homeland, God promised, "All of the families of the earth will be blessed in you" (Genesis 12:3).
3. **Serve the LORD with gladness:** The whole earth is invited to **serve the LORD**. The psalmist likely had in mind the service of worship or temple rituals, but the principle applies to *any* service directed to God. Those who **serve the LORD** should do it **with gladness**.
 - a. **"with gladness"** (Hebrew: *simhah*). *Simhah* means gladness or joy or rejoicing. The psalmist calls us to worship God with gladness—joy—rejoicing. While there is a place for quiet, reflective worship, rejoicing should predominate in our corporate worship.
 - i. Christians have sometimes expressed their faith in ways that some people saw as humorless and dour—stern and gloomy. That sort of faith not only fails to serve the individual Christian well, but it also gives faith a bad name. Who would want to join a community of faith that they see as humorless, stern, and gloomy?
 - ii. But the fact is that even people of faith sometimes feel gloomy. We have our ups and downs like everyone else. How then can the psalmist expect us to "serve Yahweh with gladness" when we aren't feeling glad? The psalmist will address that in verse 3, where he gives reasons why we should rejoice.

³ Donovan, Richard Neill. *Sermon Writer: Making Preaching More of a Joy!* <https://sermonwriter.com/psalm-100-commentary/>. 2017.

4. **“know that the Lord is God”** -- Amidst the summons to the procession, the psalm presents another imperative verbal phrase, “know that the Lord is God” (NRSV, verse 3).
 - a. At first gloss, this command “to know” seems out of place. We typically understand “knowing” to be an internalized mental process rather than a specific action to which one can be summoned. Yet the Hebrew word “to know” (*yד'*) actually suggests something more. This term is used in several contexts (Genesis 4:1 and 1 Kings 1:4) to describe an embodied mutual awareness that comes through sexual intercourse. To be clear, a sexual knowledge is probably not in view in this context. However, the larger usage of the verb “to know” in the Hebrew Bible suggests that the people’s knowledge of Yahweh’s identity is not merely intellectual assent. It is a deep and intimate awareness of God’s identity as revealed to a particular people. The community embodies this understanding of God through the ritual of the procession, through shouting, praising, and entering God’s holy places together.⁴
5. **“the sheep of God’s pasture”** -- The psalm describes God’s people as “the sheep of God’s pasture” (verse 3c). This particular metaphor draws upon royal ideology from the ancient Near East, wherein the king is depicted as shepherd. Those in his kingdom are his sheep. From Egypt to Mesopotamia, kings constantly styled themselves as shepherds.
6. **“enter His gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise”**-- Drawing an analogy from the temple, the Psalmist informs us as to how we can open the door into God's presence. The gates were a part of the outer wall that surrounded the temple grounds. One entered the temple complex through the gates.
 - a. As we enter God's presence we enter his gates with thanksgiving - here we thank God for what he has done. Once through the gates, the worshipper enters the courts with praise - here we extol God for who he is. One gets a sense of movement from the outside to the inside, moving closer to the presence of God.
7. **"Praise His name!"** --The word “praise” means to kneel. It communicates the idea to show honor and homage to God, by kneeling before him as King of kings and Lord of Lords. True worship always involves falling at the feet of God.
 - a. Why on our knees? Because we are in the presence of the King, the God of the universe. The essence of his being, his all-encompassing nature, his very person, his resolute character are summed up in God's name. All of God is embodied in his name. He is the object of our worship - the personal God who reveals his name, which includes his presence and his authority.
 - b. What do we know about the name - the person, the character, the nature - of God? The Psalmist reminds us that **"The Lord is good"** (Psalm 100:5); he is gracious and kind. **"His love (or mercy) is eternal"** (Psalm 100:5). The word for love means covenant love. God has bound us to himself in a covenant or contract that he will never revoke or abandon. **"His faithfulness endures**

⁴ LeMon, Joel. *Commentary on Psalm 100*. <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-11/commentary-on-psalm-100>. 18 June 2017.

through all generations" (Psalm 100:5). God is not fickle or forgetful. He does not change his purpose or break his word.⁵

Conclusion

We must understand the name of God. We have to begin to grasp, as feeble as our minds and hearts are, the greatness, holiness, wisdom, goodness, loving kindness, and truthfulness of the name of God. The essence of worship is to bless, to fall down, and to ascribe glory to the name of God. Heartfelt worship is to be gripped in the depth of our beings by the goodness, love, and faithfulness of our Creator God.

The presence of God is revealed. At this point we have truly worshipped. Worship is not the shout or the singing or the thanksgiving or the praising, all those are prelude. Worship is encountering the person of God as revealed by his name.

Worship is an audience with the King. Let us not forget that. Our hymns refer to this truth again and again. We sing such songs as: "O worship the King, all glorious above," "Praise ye the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation," "Come Thou Almighty King, help us Thy name to sing." When we come to worship we come to meet the king of the universe. And, like an earthly king, there is certain protocol that we must follow to meet him.⁶

Read Psalm 100

- in at least 3 different translations (it's short!)

Initial Reactions

1. What from this story confuses, inspires, or resonates with you? What questions or curiosities do you have about this passage?
2. What does this story tell us about God? What does this story tell us about humanity?
3. Were there any images, stories or insights that stuck out to you from Sunday's sermon?

Going Deeper

4. What do you think the Bible means when it says, "all the earth?" Can you think of anyone or anything that wouldn't be invited into the calling of Psalm 100? Why?
5. The word "abad" in Hebrew (v. 2) can be translated into both "worship" and "serve". How is it that these two seemingly different definitions can be held together in the same word?
6. We typically think of gratitude when we think of thanksgiving. However, biblical thanksgiving is closely related to worship and sacrifice. How does this change your understanding of how we express thanksgiving to God?

⁵ Ezell, Rick. *The Protocol of Worship – Psalm 100*. <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/sermon-protocol-of-worship-psalm-100>. 1 January 2014.

⁶ Ezell, Rick. *The Protocol of Worship – Psalm 100*. <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/sermon-protocol-of-worship-psalm-100>. 1 January 2014.

7. There are 7 imperatives in these 5 short verses. Which do you find easiest to do? Most difficult? How do we participate in each of these during a Sunday worship service?
 - a. Shout
 - b. Worship
 - c. Come
 - d. Know
 - e. Enter
 - f. Give
 - g. Praise
8. Why do you think we are referred to as the Lord's "sheep"? Do you find comfort in that imagery?

So What Questions

9. What does it mean in today's world to serve God alone? What other powers contend for your allegiance or service?
10. In this season of life, do you find it easy to worship joyfully? Why do you think that is?
11. Why is it so important to gather together regularly to worship alongside God's people? Why is it so valuable?

****Challenge yourself to memorize Psalm 100****

Closing

Check in if you haven't already done so and ask for any prayer requests. Encourage group members to write down these requests and follow up as necessary. Close with prayer.