

October 3 Lesson 5 (NIV)

PRAISE GOD WITH JOY

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 100
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Psalm 100

PSALM 100

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.

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

- 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.

KEY TEXT

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

CELEBRATING GOD

Unit 2: Called to Praise God

LESSONS 5–9

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HOW TO SAY IT

DavidicDuh-*vid*-ick.

MosaicMo-*zay*-ik.

Yahweh (*Hebrew*)Yah-weh.

Introduction

A. Worthy of Song

One database of hymns and hymnals on the internet lists over 240 hymns and songs whose lyrics reflect phrases from Psalm 100. Among these are "All People Who on Earth Do Dwell," Isaac Watts's "Before Jehovah's Awesome Throne," and Mozart's "Jubilate Deo." An arrangement of "Old Hundredth" was composed by Ralph Vaughn Williams to be performed in 1953 as the processional hymn for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II of England. The attraction of Psalm 100 no doubt derives from its concise yet robust summons to joyful praise to God and its eloquent rationale for doing so.

B. Lesson Context: The Book(s) of Psalms

The book of Psalms is actually a collection of five books or sections. Most Bibles note these book divisions (often with Roman numerals) at the beginnings of Psalms 1; 42; 73; 90, and 107. Altogether these five books feature 150 poems.

Psalm 100, today's text, is found in the fourth of these five books. Many scholars consider this section of Psalms (that is, Psalms 90–106) to be the answer to the problem presented in the first three books: the Davidic dynasty established (Psalm 2; see lesson 6 on Psalm 9); the flourishing of that dynasty (Psalm 72); and the failure of that dynasty (Psalm 89; see also lesson 8 on Psalm 84). The emphasis in Book IV of Psalms is simply *God reigns!* (see Psalms 93; 96–99).

Here, finally, the problem presented in the first three books is stated. Human kings may disappoint us, but God is our ultimate king, and he reigns forever. He is the king who, through Moses, led the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage.

In this light, Book IV of Psalms has something of a Mosaic flavor (notice that the superscription of Psalm 90 attributes it to Moses). Book IV ends with two views of the wilderness wandering: God's viewpoint (Psalm 105) and Israel's viewpoint (Psalm 106). The former is about God's faithfulness to the covenant promises, while the latter is about Israel's sinfulness and failure to obey God and keep the covenant.

C. Lesson Context: Psalm 100

Psalm 100 is a brief poem that speaks to the proper response of the people of God to him. The ancient Israelites may have sung this psalm during the Festival of Ingathering (Exodus 23:16b; 34:22b), also called the Festival of Tabernacles (example: Deuteronomy 31:10). This annual seven-day observance celebrated the fall harvest and the completion of the agricultural year. It had historical significance as well, in that it commemorated the Lord's protection during Israel's sojourn in the wilderness (Leviticus 23:33–36, 39–43; Deuteronomy 16:13–15; Nehemiah 8:13–18).

The organization of Psalm 100 is a variation on the standard psalm structure known as the hymn, or praise, psalm. The standard structure consists of a summons to praise the Lord followed by reasons for that praise. This type of psalm first appears in Exodus 15:21 as Miriam and the women of Israel sang (see lesson 1). The author of Psalm 100 varied this pattern by using two invitations to praise (100:1–2, 4), each followed by a motivation for praise (100:3, 5). Conspicuous in Psalm 100's design are seven commands. The fourth command occupies the central position in the psalm (see Psalm 100:3a, below).

And although Psalm 100 does not explicitly celebrate God as king, it nevertheless shares some affinity with another type of psalm known as divine kingship psalms. Such psalms speak of the Lord's rule over the cosmos or nations.

Many psalms have superscriptions. These often include information regarding the historical circumstances of the psalm, the name of the writer, etc. The superscription of Psalm 100 does not indicate the author's identity. The date of its composition is also unclear. Alluding to temple structures would be appropriate in both the pre-exilic era (that is, before the destruction of Solomon's temple in 586 BC) and in the post-exilic era after the temple was rebuilt (515 BC; see Psalm 100:4, below).

However, given the context of Book IV, in which Psalm 100 is located, we can surmise that this particular poem was meant to be associated more closely with Moses than with other writers or prophets (see the superscription of Psalm 90; compare Psalm 100:2, below). Psalm 100 is the only psalm with a superscription that reads, "A psalm. For giving grateful praise."

I. A Call to All

(PSALM 100:1–2)

A. Come with Joy (v. 1)

1a. Shout for joy to the LORD,

The command to *shout for joy* appears in exactly the same Hebrew phrasing in only two places: here and in Psalm 98:4. To these we can compare Psalms 66:1; 81:1; and 95:1, which are similar. This is a call to unhindered praise.

The Hebrew word behind the translation *shout* is translated as “extol” in Psalm 95:2, and both senses are present here. This attests that the psalmist expects volume and excitement (compare also translations of triumphal cries in Psalms 41:11; 60:8; and 108:9). Such 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 (compare Psalm 98:6; see 100:2, below). This is the first of four appearances (in a psalm of only five verses!) of the divine name Yahweh, identified in English translations as “LORD” in small caps (see 100:2–3, 5, below). 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. all the earth.

The word *earth* in this context refers to the world in its entirety (compare Psalms 8:1; 24:1; etc.). This word can also refer to specific nations or territories when used with parallel terms that speak of such groups (example: 74:8). Sometimes a doubled usage will refer to both in poetic parallelism (example: 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—a theme that appears frequently in the psalms (examples: Psalms 22:27; 117:1). This theme complements the motifs of Israel proclaiming the Lord’s name among the nations (examples: 96:3; 108:3) and of his reign over the nations (example: 47:7–9).

B. Come with Gladness (v. 2)

2a. Worship the LORD with gladness;

Given that this psalm is associated with Psalm 90 (see Lesson Context), 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 (Exodus 1:11–14; 5:17–18). Whereas their labors for Pharaoh caused the people to cry out to God in distress (2:23–24), service to God is accompanied by *gladness* (Numbers 10:10; 2 Chronicles 30:21; etc.). David expressed a similar thought in Psalm 68:3.

2b. come before him with joyful songs.

If this verse alludes to the exodus, then coming *before him* can very 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 (Exodus 25:8–9; 2 Chronicles 6:1–2, 11).

Throughout the centuries, the people of God had experiences worthy of song. Israel sang in celebration of their rescue at the Red Sea (Exodus 15; see lesson 1). David had issued instructions for leading Israel in praising God for “all his wonderful acts” (1 Chronicles 16:7–9). Paul directed Christians to sing to one another (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). In all 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)

A. Who God Is (vv. 3a)

3a. Know that the LORD is God.

This, the fourth command of this psalm, occupies the central position. It provides a rationale for all the other commands. The word *know* in this context suggests a profound awareness beyond mere intellectual perception (Deuteronomy 34:10; 1 Samuel 3:7; Psalm 139:2).

The Lord is God is a central affirmation of Old Testament faith (examples: Deuteronomy 4:35, 39; 1 Kings 8:60; Psalm 118:27). 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. It was a scandal. Yet any saving faith in the Lord must begin by confessing that he alone is God.

B. Who We Are (v. 3b)

3b. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

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.” Another close parallel is Psalm 79:13.

The metaphor of the nation of Israel as the Lord's sheep draws on ancient imagery. Kings were depicted as shepherds and their subjects as the monarch's sheep (example: 1 Kings 22:17). God is often referred or alluded to as shepherd as well (see Genesis 49:24; Psalm 23:1–3; Jeremiah 31:10; Ezekiel 34:11–12).

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 (Genesis 49:24; Psalm 80:1; Ezekiel 34:31). 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 (see Acts 17:28). We do well to remember that it is Christ who has created the church (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47; 20:28). And the one who created the church is also the Creator of everything (John 1:1–3; Colossians 1:16).

The shepherd-sheep imagery carries over into the New Testament. We recall that 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 (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1–4; compare John 21:15–17).

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 also 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)

A. In God's Presence (v. 4)

4. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

The dedication of Solomon's temple took place during the Festival of Tabernacles (1 Kings 8:2, 65; see Lesson Context). 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 (examples: Jeremiah 36:10; 2 Chronicles 23:5; Nehemiah 8:16).

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 (contrast Hebrews 10:19–22).

Those approaching God in the temple courts needed to bring appropriate offerings (examples: Deuteronomy 16:16–17; Psalm 96:8). What better than *thanksgiving* and *praise* (compare Micah 6:6–8; Hebrews 13:15)? The terms *thanksgiving* and *give thanks* refer to a proclamation or confession of what God had done (compare 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

(examples: Psalms 18:1–3; 96:2–3; 1 Chronicles 16:23–29). To *praise* the Lord's *name* is to acclaim his power and reputation with all due respect.

The Hebrew term translated *praise* is used in a variety of ways by Old Testament writers. These included proclamation or confession of what God had done (example: Psalm 26:7).

B. For God's Greatness (v. 5)

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

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. his faithfulness continues through all generations.

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 (Psalms 96:13; 98:3; 143:1). 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 long-standing relationship with his people demonstrates his reliable goodness, mercifulness, and truthfulness. Pairings of the words translated "love" and "faithfulness" occur frequently in the psalms (example: Psalm 57:3). 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 (examples: Exodus 2:24–25; 6:8; Joshua 23:14–15; 1 Kings 8:23–24). 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 (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; Hebrews 10:23; 1 John 1:9). Indeed, Jesus is called "Faithful and True" (Revelation 19:11).

Conclusion

A. Because the Lord Is Good

Enthusiastic joy is fitting for those who have come to experience God as described in Psalm 100. Here the psalmist calls the reader to a life of joyous thanksgiving and praise in the presence of our Lord. When we ponder who God is and who we are, then praise and thanksgiving are called for. The call to worship in this regard is a call away from the mundane distractions of life and

toward the holy and loving God. The concerns of the preceding week should fade as the congregation at worship focuses minds and affections on the ever-present Lord.

The Lord is God, he is the Creator, he is our shepherd. He is good and faithful. We are his people, the sheep for whom he cares. Generations before us have experienced his goodness. And until our Lord Jesus returns, all generations who follow us are invited to experience his steadfast mercy and kindness as well.

How can we not join the psalmist in singing, rendering thanks and praise to the good and faithful God who calls us his own?

B. Prayer

Our Father, we rejoice knowing that we belong to you! We praise you for your constant faithfulness. When we are tempted to drop our gaze to the troubles of this life, remind us again to lift our focus and our praise back to you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

Be joyful! The Lord is good,
and we belong to him.¹
