

# Thanksgiving Sunday

*“Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise!  
Give thanks to him; bless his name!”  
(Psalm 100:4 ESV)*

## **A Psalm For Giving Thanks**

**October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

**Psalm 100**

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### **Introduction:**

Good morning everyone! If you have your Bible with you, I would love for you to open it now to Psalm 100; that’s on page 500 in the church Bibles. As you find that Psalm you will notice that it has an ascription or superscription – that’s the title usually written in smaller font just above the Psalm - and this one says simply: A Psalm For Giving Thanks.

That sounds about right for this morning, doesn’t it?

We have an awful lot to be thankful for in this place.

We’re seeing our young people getting married, we’re hearing the cries of new-born babies – while marriage rates and birth rates out there in the world are falling off a cliff.

We’re seeing open Bibles in here – while out there in the world people are falling captive to lies, fantasy and deceit.

We’ve been blessed with harmony, health and wholeness in here – while all the world around us is giving in to conflict, division and hate.

The Lord has been GOOD TO US IN THIS PLACE – amen?

Amen. And there is no confusion in our hearts as to the source of all this blessing and bounty is there? None at all. The Scriptures say that:

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”(James 1:17 ESV)

Amen – are you thankful for that? In a world where EVERYTHING IS CHANGING – day by day, hour by hour, MINUTE BY MINUTE – in a world that is crumbling and falling apart IN HIM there is NO VARIATION or SHADOW DUE TO CHANGE.

He is the LORD – and he CHANGETH NOT – hallelujah!

So we are a THANKFUL people this morning, but even still, it is good to have in front of us this GUIDE, this PSALM for giving thanks. The Bible doesn't just EXPECT us to be thankful, it COMMANDS us to be thankful and it teaches us HOW to be thankful – and we thank God for even that, because our culture would have us enslaved to the ups and downs of our FEELINGS. Our culture conditions us to give authority to our feelings. Our culture says, if you don't FEEL THANKFUL today then it would be inauthentic to give thanks.

But the Bible cuts across that nonsense.

The Bible says: “Whether you FEEL LIKE IT OR NOT – GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD today. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. SHOUT to the LORD all the earth. KNOW that the LORD IS GOD and he is good. COME into his presence with singing – those are all commands. Everyone one of them. The Bible is telling you to SPEAK TO YOUR FEELINGS today. The Bible is telling you to TAKE CONTROL of your emotions – and we need to hear that don't we? Feelings aren't bad things, that's for sure, but they were designed for the BACK SEAT of the car, not the FRONT SEAT, and so even in the EXISTENCE of this Psalm and in the ASSUMPTIONS of this Psalm there is reason for us to be thankful – praise the Lord.

I want to read the Psalm this morning and then I want to talk about it from three different angles. This Psalm is a poem, it is not an argument, like we so often see in the Apostle Paul's letters, nor

is it a STORY like the ones we've been reading in Acts. It is a poem and as such it has several POETIC FEATURES. There is balance here – there are TWO parallel stanzas, each featuring several commands and also an important grounding. There is a JANUS HINGE or a CENTRE PIECE in verse 3 that holds it all together and then there is some MIRRORING in terms of how the 7 distinct imperatives are arranged – these are all typical features of Hebrew poetry and I'll try and draw your attention to those things as we make our way through it, but because it is a poem, I think it makes sense to READ IT as the author composed it and then to step back and ADMIRE IT from 3 particular vantage points, all in the hope that it will serve and EXPAND our own offerings of thanks and praise here this morning. So let's do that. Hear now the Word of the Lord, beginning at verse 1. This is a Psalm for giving thanks:

1 Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!

2 Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!

3 Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!

5 For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations. (Psalm 100:1-5 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

Alright, as I mentioned, I want to appreciate this Psalm from 3 distinct vantage points. I want us to consider first of all the COMMANDS, then I want us to see the RATIONALE and then finally I want us to think about the EXTENT.

Commands. Rationale. Extent.

Let's begin with the commands.

### **The Commands:**

There are 7 imperatives – 7 command verbs – in this Psalm and I want to point them out to in order before we go through each of them because, as I mentioned, the ORDER they are given in is part of the message. So here they are – look at your Bibles and you should be able to see all of these very easily. If you have a highlighter, a good way to understand this Psalm would be simply to highlight each of these 7 imperatives. Here they are:

(Note to visuals team: just show the bolded imperatives and the numbers. Leave my commentary out of the slide. Thanks!)

1. **Shout** (verse 1) The ESV has that as “make a joyful noise” whereas the NIV has that as SHOUT and SHOUT is actually the more accurate translation. We’ll come back to that in a minute.
2. **Serve** (verse 2a). The NIV has that as “worship” but actually, I think SERVE is a little better and in fact I think you get the fullest understanding by putting those words together, which is a decent argument for owning TWO good English translations – or learning Hebrew, which ever you find more convenient. ☺
3. **Come** (verse 2b)
4. **Know** (verse 3a). This is the JANUS or the HINGE portion of the Psalm. KNOW is the middle imperative. So think of this like a ziggurat or a triangular stair case. Three steps UP to a platform or focus point, and then three steps down. KNOW is the focus. KNOW is what holds it all together – we’ll come back to that.
5. **Enter** (verse 4a)
6. **Give thanks** (verse 4b)
7. **Bless** (verse 4c)

Now notice in that arrangement how the 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> imperative mirror each other, as do the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, as do the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. That’s mirroring and it further intends to direct your attention toward the centre.

Alright, let’s go through each of those commands in order.

## 1. **Shout**

I mentioned that this is the better translation over the ESV's "make a joyful noise" – that's not WRONG it is just misleading to the reader. When I hear "make a joyful noise" I think of noise makers – like a little rattle or a tambourine or those two clapping hands at the end of a stick. Do you remember during the pandemic when we could gather but we weren't supposed to sing? Do you remember when we tried handing out noise makers to everyone as they came in? Man, that was awful - whose idea was that? It was my idea actually and it was terrible. The ribbons were great though; do you remember those? Maybe the best thing about the pandemic was watching big, beefy, construction workers waving tiny little purple ribbons in church – I'm not saying that made it worth it, but it was definitely a significant compensation. That was awesome – but that's not what this is saying. Derek Kidner is wonderful here, he says:

"The *joyful noise* is not the special contribution of the tone-deaf, still less of the convivial, but the equivalent in worship to the homage-shout or fanfare (98:6) to a king, as in 95:1 or the almost identical 66:1."<sup>1</sup>

I like that – HOMAGE SHOUT. This is a LOUD PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE. This is the Christian equivalent of the Marines' OORAH! Have you ever seen that in a movie? When two marines encounter each other on the street they say OORAH! You don't say that to a sailor in the navy or to a soldier in the army or to a pilot in the air force. OORAH is the special CRY of LOYALTY and ENTHUSIASM of the MARINE CORPS. That's what the Psalmist is calling for here. He is saying – MAKE YOUR ALLEGIANCE KNOWN! Don't be a fence sitter. Don't be a waffler. The Lord is good. He made you. He saved you. He changed you. He rescued. So let's have a nice, loud shout for TEAM JESUS, amen?!

You've got to better than that this morning. This Psalm is telling us to SHOUT, so how about a LOUD AMEN for team Jesus – amen? AMEN.

That's better. Don't be shy brothers and sisters. MAKE YOUR ALLEGIANCE KNOWN. That's the first imperative.

The second one is:

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<sup>1</sup>Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 16 of Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. IVP/Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 388.

## 2. Serve

Or as the NIV has it: “WORSHIP”. Both are good. The Hebrew word here means MORE than what we typically mean by “worship”. In English the word “worship” has become almost a synonym for “SING” but this Hebrew word is BIGGER than that. It includes SINGING but it stretches as wide as your entire LIFE, as the Apostle Paul shows us in Romans 12. He says:

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” (Romans 12:1 ESV)

Now in many of your Bibles there will be a little text note attached to the word “worship” there suggesting that it could equally be translated “spiritual service”. The idea here is that the worship that matters to God is WHOLE LIFE SERVICE. Yes sing – but after you sing SERVE. Give him your voice and your whole LIFE as well. Live for him. Be his man or his woman wherever you go this week. SING the LANGUAGE of your homeland throughout the entirety of your sojourn here on earth. That’s the idea.

We’re going to SHOUT, we’re going to SING, we’re going to SERVE.

The third imperative here is:

## 3. Come

That’s in verse 2b. Now I mentioned that this 3<sup>rd</sup> imperative mirrors the 5<sup>th</sup> imperative which is ENTER – we’ll get there in a minute, but the idea here is that of COMING IN. You need to come INTO THIS PLACE WITH US. Now, of course, there is a sense in which you CAN worship out there. We just talked about how you can sing the songs of your homeland AS YOU SOJOURN OUT THERE in this world. Of course you can! But you can’t **ONLY** DO THAT. You can’t SING OUT THERE if you don’t SING IN HERE. It is worship HERE that FUELS worship there. You have to bring your coal back to THIS FIRE or it will burn out and die – I trust you understand that.

COVID reminded us of that, didn't it?

Our coals were burning low during the dog days of COVID. Maybe that was God reminding us that it is not good for a man or a woman to be alone. Maybe that was God shaking our cage – because evangelical Christians had begun to drift away from this principle of GATHEREDNESS before the pandemic. When I was a boy evangelicals went to church! You went 9 Sundays out of 10, allowing for vacation and legitimate sick days – and in my day, the bar was pretty high for a sick day. You had to VOMIT or BLEED in the Carter house in order to stay home from church, and my mother would check. You couldn't just say that you threw up, you needed to keep a sample. It was hard core – and it was pretty standard across the board, but then something changed. We started drifting to 3 times a month, and then just before the pandemic, it was 2 times a month for evangelicals in North America. We were talking about that as a Board of Elders in 2019. We started addressing it from the pulpit – if you were here back then you will remember that.

So what did God do?

He put us on starvation rations for almost 2 years.

Why?

Because as the old saying goes: "Hunger is the best sauce."

Are you hungry now, church?

Then COME. COME! COME like we used to. COME like we OUGHT TO. Come every week. Come 9 Sundays out of 10. COME. COME because you need to. COME because you want to. COME because you HAVE TO.

Come.

Come into his presence with singing – praise the Lord!

Alright, now here we come to the JANUS section or the CENTRE PIECE of the whole Psalm. The fourth or middle imperative is:

#### 4. **Know**

That's in verse 3.

**“Know** that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.” (Psalm 100:3 ESV)

The only praise, the only thanksgiving that matters to God is that which is rooted in personal understanding. Pagans can sing worship songs – but that doesn't matter to God. AI can write beautiful Psalms – but that doesn't matter to God. What matters is when the people who KNOW HIM express their LOVE FOR HIM. That's what matters.

Do you know him?

Do you know him as your Creator? Or do you think you are a God unto yourself? Do you understand that you are a creature? A human being! Made in the image and likeness of God? REAL WORSHIP is the response of CREATURES to their CREATOR!

So do you know him?

Do you know him as your MAKER?

But then the Psalmist goes one further – he gets intimate. He says WE – speaking on behalf of all true worshippers – WE are his creatures AND we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. So the psalmist confesses here that: “God is our covenant LORD and our personal LEADER.”

Do you know him like that?



Because THAT is who God wants to receive worship from. From people who confess him as their Creator, Savior and Lord. When those people GATHER, GOD DRAWS NEAR – praise the Lord!

That's the theological centre of the Psalm. God wants to be worshipped by those who KNOW HIM.

Now climbing back down from this pinnacle we have three more imperatives that mirror the three that led up to it. The 5<sup>th</sup> imperative here is:

## 5. Enter

We talked about how this goes with COME, imperative number 3. Here we are told to:

“Enter his gates with **thanksgiving**, and his courts with **praise!**” (Psalm 100:4 ESV)

Those words rhyme in Hebrew: *todah* and *tehillah* and they are very much overlapping in terms of their meaning – for more so in Hebrew than in English. If there is a difference it might be that PRAISE focuses on God's attributes whereas THANKSGIVING focuses on his actions. We praise God for who he IS and we thank God for what he has DONE – and so we need to ENTER THE ASSEMBLY so as to be reminded of those things so that we can respond to God as we should.

The sixth imperative here is:

## 6. Give thanks

That's just one word in Hebrew though it takes two words to get the idea across in English. I want to read you the definition of this word here because I think it is really interesting. According to the dictionary this Hebrew word means:

“to express praise, give thanks, extol, make a public confession, make an admission; to praise is to speak of the excellence of someone or something; to give thanks has a focus on the gratitude of the speaker.”<sup>2</sup>

This sounds very close to what we mean when we talk about giving a testimony in church. It means to speak about the excellence of someone publicly. I’m going to warn you right now: we are going to DO this at the conclusion of the message. There is no point in reading this Psalm if we aren’t going to DO what it says. This is a MANUAL for how to give thanks in a way that pleases God, and apparently part of that is standing up – in public – and speaking about God’s excellencies toward you. It is to give thanks with a focus on the GRATITUDE of the speaker – so we’re going to do that.

If your palms are already starting to sweat that’s FINE. Nobody ever said that obeying God was easy. But it’s good. It is GOOD FOR US to encourage one another with stories and testimonies about the power and kindness of God – amen?

Amen.

So we’re going to save some time for that.

And now finally, the 7<sup>th</sup> imperative is:

## **7. Bless**

You can see that in verse 4c:

“bless his name!” (Psalm 100:4 ESV)

To BLESS God’s name means literally to speak GOOD of GOD. It means to speak at some length about him. By the way, that’s what a EULOGY is at a funeral. The prefix “eu” means “good” so a EULOGY means to speak GOOD about the deceased – and that’s what a sermon is.

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<sup>2</sup>Kohlenberger/Mounce *Concise Hebrew-Aramaic Dictionary of the Old Testament*, s.v. “,” paragraph 6790.

It is a EULOGY but in this case, we aren't speaking GOOD of the DEAD but of the LIVING. A worship service culminates and climaxes in GOOD SPEAKING ABOUT GOD.

Bless his name!

Alright that's our blueprint for thanksgiving! This is a PSALM FOR GIVING THANKS. This is how we do it!

Now I also want to take a minute to consider WHY WE DO IT. I said that we would consider the COMMAND, the RATIONALE and the EXTENT. The last two will be shorter.

In terms of rationale or reason we see two things mentioned in the text. There are multiple layers of structure in this little poem – we've talked about the 7 imperatives and the HINGE or JANUS portion in the middle, but on top of that there is an external structure. There are two basic STANZAS and each of those STANZA contains multiple imperatives followed by a rational.

### **The Rationale:**

The first one is found in the second half of verse 3:

“It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.” (Psalm 100:3 ESV)

So this is part of KNOWING GOD as we talked about a minute ago, but it is also one of the WHYS of WORSHIP.

Why do we worship God?

Because HE MADE US. We belong to him. We are his people GENERALLY and if we are in covenant relationship with him then we are his people personally – we are the sheep of his pasture.

So we worship God, first of all:

## 1. Because he is our Creator and Redeemer

And by the way, the RATIONALE for worshipping God NEVER CHANGES. According to the Book of Revelation this is WHY we will worship God 80 billion years from now in eternity. In Revelation 4 and 5 the Apostle John is given a vision of the worship that is happening in heaven – in the very throne room of God. Listen to what he hears the 24 elders saying as they worship God. They say:

“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.” (Revelation 4:11 ESV)

So why are they worshipping God?

Because he is the Creator!

And then a few verses later in Revelation 5 John hears the elders and the four living creatures worshipping God and they say:

“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,  
10 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.” (Revelation 5:9-10 ESV)

They’re joined by thousands and thousands of human worshippers and they all say together:

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Revelation 5:12 ESV)

So why ELSE is everyone in heaven worshipping God?

Because he is our REDEEMER.

That's why we are worshipping God here today and 80 billion years from now that is why we will be worshipping the Lord in eternity. Because his is our CREATOR and because he is our REDEEMER – praise the Lord!

Now, there is a second rationale given in Psalm 100 that reinforces the first. You can see that in verse 5. We should be entering the assembly, we should be giving thanks, we should be blessing God's name:

“For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.” (Psalm 100:5 ESV)

## **2. Because he is good**

We worship the Lord because he is GOOD – his STEADFAST LOVE – that means his COVENANT LOVE – endures forever. God is GOOD and if you are in covenant with him then you will ENJOY his goodness forever. And if that doesn't make you want to raise your voice in praise then you have a serious problem.

Do you see this world that is dying and fading away?

Imagine it completely reborn and made new. Imagine all sin and all causes of sin removed. Imagine a river coming out of the throne of God bringing the desert back into bloom. Imagine no more sea – only peaceful lakes and gentle rivers. Imagine LIONS LYING DOWN WITH THE LAMB. Imagine children that don't get sick. Imagine friendships that never spoil. Imagine work that is never wasted or frustrated. Imagine families that are never torn apart by distance, disease or death. And in the centre of it all imagine JESUS.

That's the undying WORLD – that is the EVERLASTING GOODNESS that God has prepared for those who love him.

So PRAISE the LORD!!! BLESS THE LORD! THANK THE LORD! For he is good and his steadfast love endures forever – hallelujah!!

And then lastly – and quickly, let’s talk about the EXTENT. How wide and how far is our praise and thanksgiving TO GO?

### **The Extent:**

We see two things here and they serve as bookends on the entire Psalm. First of all, in verse 1 we are told:

“Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.” (Psalm 100:1 NIV11)

#### **1. All the earth**

So this is an invitation FOR EVERYONE; “all the earth”. The plan in the Bible is for US to come in here – to enter the assembly – and to speak GOOD of GOD and to GET FIRED UP – and to have our COAL REVITALIZED through contact, encouragement and community – and then for us to SHINE and INVITE out there in the world.

Biblical religion is BOTH “come and see” AND “go and tell”. We sometimes set these things at odds, but they are not. These are friends. We will have nothing to go and tell if we do not first come and see. And what we are TELLING people when we go and tell is that they can COME WITH US TO SEE the goodness and the glory of their God and Redeemer – so it is EVER and ALWAYS BOTH/AND.

We want to GO so that the NATIONS can COME.

Will you say amen to that?

Amen.

Now you need to do it. Go and invite someone to COME here with you next week. That’s your homework.

And then secondly, this invitation is to go to all the earth AND to all generations.

## **2. All generations**

Church is not just for old people. It is not just for the ladies. It is not just for the kids. It is for men and women, boys and girls, young and old. There is no such thing as TARGETED CHURCH in the Bible. The whole point is for us to WORSHIP GOD with ONE ANOTHER – specifically, with ALL GENERATIONS. Children need to see their parents worship and grandparents LIVE to see their grandchildren worshipping – don't you grandparents? Church should not divide families, it should help to bring them together.

And if you don't have a family then the church will PROVIDE ONE. Jesus said to Peter that in the church he would have 100 hundred mothers, 100 brothers, 100 sisters.

This is a family. This is our family, and we can be thankful for that as well today, can't we brothers and sisters?

So shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Thanks be to God! Let's pray together.