

Make A Joyful Noise

Bible Background • PSALM 100

Printed Text • PSALM 100 | Devotional Reading • PSALM 66:1-7

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will UNDERSTAND why and how God is to be worshiped, as found in Psalm 100, APPRECIATE that God is worthy to be praised, and CREATE a psalm of praise for the Lord.

In Focus

As Noah strode forward from the stadium tunnel onto the football field, he resisted the urge to look for his parents in the stands. He needed to put his full focus on the choreography and his positioning in the band formations. The crowd was too big for him to be able to spot Mom and Dad anyway.

He knew exactly where they would be, anyway—in tier 2, section 34, their favorite spot. They would be singing and cheering along with the marching band in the halftime show. Proud alums of the school, Mom and Dad never missed a game and were more than thrilled that Noah chose to go to the same college where they had met and married.

Noah's childhood lessons turned his musical interest in into a passion. His college studies broadened his understanding of how music was constructed, but he already knew instinctively how music worked—how it can change one's mood and buoy the spirit. And there was hardly a greater joy than being on the field with over 200 band members, all polished and precise. The visual elements of that week's show dove-tailed perfectly with the songs.

The drum major blew her whistle, and Noah lifted his trumpet. Then the snare drummers tapped out the roll-off for their first number. Noah felt a happy smile welling up inside him as the players strutted across the field and the crowd—40,000 strong—roared with excitement.

Why is music integral to so many public events and celebrations?

Keep in Mind

"Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." (Psalm 100:3, KJV)

Words You Should Know

- A. Serve** (v. 2) 'abad (Heb.)—To serve or worship
- B. Truth** (v. 5) 'emunah (Heb.)—Truthfulness, faithfulness

Say It Correctly

Shema. shuh-MAH.

KJV

Psalm 100:1 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.

2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

3 Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

5 For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

NLT

Psalm 100: A psalm of thanksgiving.

1 Shout with joy to the LORD, all the earth!

2 Worship the LORD with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy.

3 Acknowledge that the LORD is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name.

5 For the LORD is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.

The People, Places, and Times

Gates and Courts. The gates and courts seem to be a reference to the First Temple and its complex built by Solomon (1 Kings 6). Yet there was not a true gate for the complex that could open or close. Instead, the gates seem to be a reference to entering the city of Jerusalem—the city in which the Lord chose to place His name.

Sheep. To this day sheep are a common animal in Israel. They are a commodity for their wool, and lambs are a commodity for their meat. The simple nature of these flock animals allows them to be a useful analogy for human life in the Scriptures. In Psalm 77:20, the writer recognizes Moses as one who shepherded Israel. False shepherds—false leaders—abounded in Israel and took advantage of God’s people (Ezekiel 34:1-6; Jeremiah 23:1-4). The people of Israel are God’s flock of sheep who have leaders who fail to tend to them. In Psalm 23, King David views himself as a sheep before God, his shepherd. More than in any other psalm, one sees here the care the Lord has for His sheep and the great privilege it is to be part of the flock under God’s care.

What are some other ways we are like sheep and God is like a shepherd?

Background

Psalm 100 invites God's people to join together in worshipping the Lord. It is both a hymn—a liturgical psalm (or a call to worship)—and a kingship psalm. As is common in such psalms, the people gather in Zion (“gates” are a reference to the city), the city of the Great King.

Three times each year, all of Israel was commanded to gather and feast together

(Exodus 34:23; Deuteronomy 16:16). The pilgrimages reminded Israel that they were the people of God united by their worship of the one true God. It also served as a reminder that they were looking forward to a day when they would meet God in Zion (Jerusalem) and enthrone Him as King forever. The pilgrimage made them long for their King, as did each call to come worship inside the gates of the Lord.

In what ways does your worship remind you of God's kingship?

At-A-Glance

1. The Call for all the Earth to Enter the Lord's Presence (Psalm 100:1)
2. Scenes of Celebration (vv. 2, 4)
3. Knowledge of the Greatness of God (vv. 3, 5)

In Depth

1. The Call for all the Earth to Enter the Lord's Presence (Psalm 100:1)

This psalm begins with a summons to worship: “Make a joyful noise... come ... enter into his gates... [and] into his courts with praise.” These are commands of exhortation, not imperatives. They are not part of the Law (e.g. “do not steal”). Yet the expectation is that the members of Israel will answer the summons with their presence. The exhortation goes to Israel and the nations. The full earth receives this summons. No one was excluded from this call, just as no one is excluded from the call of the Gospel. This was an Old Covenant call to all to meet with the one true God. Many other psalms of this type have the same call for a corporate body to worship the Lord (e.g., Psalm 46; 95; 124; 135).

Why is it important to gather as a group to worship God instead of worshipping individually?

2. Scenes of Celebration (vv. 2, 4)

“Joyful noise,” “gladness,” “singing,” “thanksgiving,” “praise,” “thankful,” and “bless.” The expectation was that the experience in the Temple would be a celebratory meeting with God. This would be a greater celebration than any post-election party for a winning candidate, or any ticker-tape parade for a national sports championship team. This is a call to celebrate the King of all. Those coming would not need to wait on any musician or priest to worship. They themselves, having been exhorted to worship with specific commands.

3. Knowledge of the Greatness of God (vv. 3, 5)

“Know” (v. 3) is the motivation for the celebration in verses 1–2. We worship that we might know Him relationally. The call for Israel to worship was not detached from personal intimacy with God. Likewise, “for” (v. 5) introduces the reason for the celebratory acts of verse 4: The Lord is good, His covenantal love is eternally secure, and He is faithful to His covenant people forever despite themselves. God’s love and faithfulness are the most paired traits of God praised in the psalms. It is only in knowing God as Creator and Shepherd, as one always good toward us, that our individual hearts will be stirred to celebrate Him. When everyone who has this knowledge comes together to speak, sing, and learn of Him, a celebration of great magnitude should take place.

What characteristics of God draw you to worship Him?

Search the Scriptures

1. What does the psalm writer mean by “come before his presence” (v. 2)?
2. What is the Lord’s “mercy” (v. 5) and what does it mean that this mercy is everlasting?

Discuss the Meaning

The Lord intends for worship of Him to begin before we get to His courts and gates. Yet we often are quite casual in our approach to our corporate worship gathering each week. How does our daily interaction with God contribute to how we approach our weekly gathering to Him?

Liberating Lesson

Because of the culture’s emphasis on personal comfort and freedom, we carry a strong sense of personal autonomy with us into both our walk with God and our worship of Him. It is common for us to think worship is something that should be guided by preference or feelings rather than being guided by the Scriptures. However, it should not seem surprising that God would dictate to us how to worship Him. By following God’s teachings in the psalms, we will worship in a way that honors Him rather than simply in a way that pleases ourselves.

Application for Activation

Make Saturday evening count by setting aside time to meditate on the Scripture to be preached the following morning (or a few verses of some psalms if the Sunday Scripture passage is unknown). Also try to go to bed early rather than late so that you will be rested enough to get to worship service long before it starts, and so that you can give your fullest bodily attention to worship without fatigue. Pray, too, for the morning service, for all who will participate in making the service honor the Lord, and for you and your family members’ hearts to worship in spirit and in truth.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

Psalm 100

The very first piece of information that the writer gives us for deciphering this psalm occurs before the opening sentence. This psalm's title lets the audience know that this is a psalm of todah (Heb. toe-DAH), which means praise or thanksgiving. There are various types of psalms. There are psalms of lament like Psalm 42. There are royal psalms like Psalm 2. Psalm 100, however, in no uncertain terms, is a psalm of praise and thanksgiving. The title line sets the tone for how to read the psalm and gives a glimpse into why it is one of the favorite psalms for inviting people to worship God, even in contemporary times. It is a psalm of praise.

1 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.

"Make a joyful noise" (Heb. rua', roo-AH) could insinuate that the psalmist is more interested in sound than substance. That is not the case. Rua' can mean to shout in anticipation or in celebration of victory. Only in the Psalms is it translated as "make a joyful noise." In other passages in the Old Testament, the texture of the word is clearer. An example of this is Joshua 6 at the battle of Jericho. After the Israelites march around the wall seven times on the seventh day, Joshua gives the people instructions to rua', because the Lord has given them the city. This shout was in anticipation of a military victory. It was also in celebration of a victory because Joshua announces in advance that the Lord has already given them the city. (Joshua 6:16). The psalm is saying more than make some noise, but the psalmist is calling the audience to simultaneously celebrate and anticipate God's victory.

2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

The psalmist next exhorts the audience to "serve" (Heb., 'abad, aw-BOD) the Lord with gladness. This Hebrew word is from a root meaning slave or servant. Some translations interpret this term as "worship" (NLT). That is in part because this word is often associated with the Levites and priests who perform service in the Tabernacle and Temple. They were God's property, and their life was committed to doing God's sacred work. The psalmist exhorts people of all lands to commit their whole selves to God, not out of obligation but in gladness. The language of slavery should not be taken lightly though. Images of slavery and serving must always be considered cautiously in the West, in America, and especially among Black communities whose history involves chattel slavery. In a world where sex trafficking and immigrant exploitation are modern

forms of slavery, we cannot be careless when we read or hear words about slaving, serving, and owning human bodies. Christians must reject all forms of humans owning or exploiting other humans for their own benefit.

In this exhortation, the psalmist joins a tradition that juxtaposes the Israelites' cultural heritage of serving the abusive Egyptians against serving Almighty God. Worshipers understand that the only One who owns them is God; they are not responsible to any other authority's demands on their life. The psalmist's call to serve the Lord with gladness is not only a reminder about one's disposition but also of one's position. God's people are not to be subservient to others, whether kings or gods. Rather they are to recognize that they are God's property and are to serve the Lord with gladness.

Hebrew poetry often involves couplets where the second line reemphasizes themes from the first line. The second line of verse two is an invitation to come into God's presence with singing, which reminds worshipers to acknowledge to whom they belong. They are to come before God's "presence," or more literally His "face." When worshipers are faced with God's face they recognize their unworthiness. At the same time, they can break out into joyful, triumphal "singing" (Heb. *renanah*, *ruh-naw-NAW*), because that radically other, holy God has given God's people victory. They sing a song of victory because they have a relationship with the divine. They are owned by One who cares for them. Often ownership may not seem like something to sing victoriously about. However, when it refers to God, it is worth singing about, because God does not own the worshiper so that God can take advantage of them. God owns the worshiper so that they can share in God's victory, and so that the worshiper has a place to belong even when the world and its exploitative systems want to make them feel like they do not. Belonging to God means triumphing over enemies that attempt to destroy the worshiper. This leads to coming before God's face with a song of victory.

3 Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

The word for "know" is *yada'* (Heb. *yaw-DAH*), which can also mean "to recognize." One recognizing something is not what makes the recognized thing true. It was true even before they recognized. That is the case for the statement that "the LORD he is God." This statement is particularly powerful because when Lord is rendered in capitals, the Hebrew reads with the sacred name of God: *Yahweh*. It is the self-existing God's sacred name revealed to Moses at the burning bush when God tells him that "I AM THAT I AM" (Exodus 3:14).

The word for "God" in our psalm here is *'elohim* (Heb. *eh-lo-HEEM*), which is the term used by cultures all around Israel to refer to their "gods." Even though this word is plural, *Yahweh* is singular. The Israelites have no pantheon, no long list of gods to appease. They only have *Yahweh*. This is the chief of all doctrinal statements in Judaism, the *Shema*, found in Deuteronomy 6:4—"Hear O Israel, the LORD is your God." None of the so-called gods of other nations created humanity. And none of the other gods continue to lovingly care for the world. Many cultures speak of gods who make humans but then do not care for them, and even mistreat them. *Yahweh*, on the other hand, takes humanity as His own people and gently

shepherds them in pleasant pastureland. Worshipers know that they are God's people because they recognize their sheep-like tendencies: misdirection, vulnerability, and short-sightedness. The Lord, however, provides shepherd-like guidance, protection from enemies, and a pasture that the worshipers do not have to look for. Worshipers know from experience that God has made them and that the Self-existing One has provided for all of their needs. This type of knowledge goes deeper than intellect and resonates with the soul.

4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

The themes of victory resurface in this verse and bring us back to the very beginning of this psalm. Entering into God's gates with "thanksgiving" brings us back to the title of the psalm. The same word today is used again here as the gift that the worshipers bring with them through the gates. This reminds us that the war shout was a shout either to anticipate victory or to celebrate victory. It seems that at least by this point in the psalm, the worshipers should be in a place of celebrating God's previous victories. They are implored to give thanks to the Lord.

They are not told to wait to praise until they receive special favor while in the court. They are instructed to enter with thanksgiving and to go in with praise to bless God's name. Their praise or blessing of God involves saying positive things about God. The word *barak* (Heb. *baw-ROCK*) or *bless* often involves a superior speaking highly of their inferior or gifting their inferior something that they do not have. One may wonder how this can apply to God. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof (Psalm 24). However, what God does not have, until we give it, is our praise and blessing. Hence, the psalmist implores the worshiper to bless God's name.

5 For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

We bless God by saying about God what God has already said about Himself. This manifests in the two last claims of the final verse. The first statement that "the LORD is good" is elaborated on by the final two statements about God. The goodness of God is revealed in God's name. When God revealed His glory to Moses (Exodus 34:6), God introduced Himself as, "The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." Therefore, a portion of the formula for blessing God is to say what God has said about Himself: God is merciful. God has everlasting mercy or *khesed* (KHE-sed), which is often translated as lovingkindness or unfailing love. We can bless God by celebrating God's *khesed* to us, which manifests by God forgiving us when we do not deserve it, or being patient with us when we are taking our time, for being just when we or others need to learn from our mistakes. We are loved unconditionally because God's love is unfailing. We bless God because God has blessed us. The psalmist also blesses the Lord by saying that God's "truth endureth to all generations."

There are parallels to that in Exodus 34 as well. Although the generations change, God remains the same. Some translators interpret *'emunah* (eh-mu-NAH) as faithfulness, which attempts to grasp the same notion as "truth." The idea is that God's faithfulness is so sure that it is the ultimate truth. God is so reliable that people do not have to and cannot separate truth from God's faithfulness. It is so trustworthy that it is timeless and universally applicable. God is

faithful. God's faithfulness is not conditional, based on each generation, but it endures. It is not rushing to find others who are more qualified; it is resilient from generation to generation. Worshipers bless God by acknowledging the traits of God that are constant and therefore, bigger, larger, and more superior than they are. Worshipers only have a glimpse because they cannot even comprehend the full view of God's mercy and love, which have existed for generations before us and will exist generations afterward. Saying what God has said about Himself already puts words into worshipers' mouths that they cannot even fully understand. Therefore, it is difficult to say anything higher about God than what He already says about Himself.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Praise the Rock of Our Salvation
(Psalm 95)

TUESDAY

Stones Shout Out!
(Luke 19:28, 36-40)

WEDNESDAY

Indescribable and Glorious Joy
(1 Peter 1:3-9)

THURSDAY

Sing to God a New Song
(Psalm 98)

FRIDAY

A Continuous Sacrifice of Praise
(Hebrews 13:12-16)

SATURDAY

Rejoice in God's Mighty Rule
(Psalm 66:1-7)

SUNDAY

Enter God's Courts with Praise
(Psalm 100)