

Seven ways to praise the LORD * Psalm 100

Thanksgiving 2019 (October 13, 2019) * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

Start with Corner Room's Psalm 100 video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9mCiHOjGC50>

I really love that song. I think that they've captured the spirit of the psalm and matched it to just the perfect music. It brings Psalm 100 to life in a really powerful way. And given that the heading for this psalm is 'a psalm for giving thanks,' it seems like a perfect psalm to think about today.

Before we dig into it though, I have one more thing to show you. See if you remember this – (show footage of Blue Jays 1993 world series victory).

Remember that? I sure do. (I wanted to show footage of the last time the Maple Leafs won the Cup but video cameras hadn't been invented yet ;) so I went with the Blue Jays instead. That was October 23, 1993. What an exciting moment! You can see it on their faces, you can hear it in the crowd – so much excitement and jubilation - the fireworks go off, the crowd goes wild – what a joyous occasion!

The psalm that we're going to look at today begs the question – how come our worship time's not like that? If a baseball game can drum up that kind of joy, then surely our loving Creator deserves even more!

Turn with me to Psalm 100 and I'll show you why I say that. Psalm 100 in your Bibles.

Now, I've called this message 'Seven ways to praise the LORD' because if you look really closely, there are seven verbs here – seven commands – seven different ways that psalmist tells us to praise the LORD.

The first one - Verse 1 - Shout for joy to the LORD...

2 - Verse 2 - Worship the LORD with gladness;

3 - come before him with joyful songs.

4 Verse 3 - 3 Know that the LORD is God.

5 Verse 4 - 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving...

6 give thanks to him and

7 praise his name. Seven ways to praise the LORD.

Now if you look even closer, you'll see that the psalmist has actually created a chiasm – matching pairs that move towards a middle point – in order to highlight that point. The psalmist makes a series of statements leading up to the big one and then retraces his steps in reverse order. It's like half an 'x' or if you're Greek, half a chi, which looks like an X, and that's where that name 'chi-asm' comes from. That's not a form that we use very much in English – we tend to default to ABAB rhyming – like "Roses are red, violets are blue; go get some Timbits and I'll have some too" - but it's actually pretty common in Hebrew/ancient literature.

So if you look at the outside pairs – shout for joy/praise Him name – those are pretty broad, pretty general calls to worship. Take a step in – worship the LORD and give thanks to Him – those are a bit more specific and I'll explain why in a minute. So we have broad calls to worship, specific calls to worship; the next step is relational call to worship – come before Him/enter His gates – it's actually the very same verb in Hebrew, so literally it would be 'enter into His presence/enter His gates' – it's a very specific call to appear before God to worship and then finally the middle – the key point – the crème

stuffing in the oreo that everybody wants – Know that the LORD is God. That’s the reality that inspires all the others. So we have here a very carefully crafted general call to praise, a specific call to praise, a relational call to praise and then a reason why, so we’re going to unpack this psalm with those headings, starting with the general call to praise.

So this is verse 1 and verse 4 – ‘Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth’ and ‘praise His name.’ These are very broad calls to worship – they’re not confined in any way – the psalmist simply says – ‘if you call earth home, praise the LORD!’ ‘If you are alive and breathing, praise the LORD!’ ‘Give glory to Him for who He is’ – that’s what ‘praise His name’ means.

But it’s not simply – ‘praise the LORD’ is it? It’s not just quietly and politely recite the hymns - It’s SHOUT to the LORD. It’s make the kind of noise that filled the Sky Dome when the Jays won – because God deserves it! One of the commentators I read this week points out that this word ‘shout’ is actually the word for a ‘war cry’ or ‘a shout of triumph’ in other parts of the Bible and he adds: “The Hebrew verb used here is strongly *vocal*! There is nothing polite or moderated about this call to praise. The worshipping community – Israel and the whole earth – is to hold nothing back in raising the roof in their praise of Yahweh” (Tucker and Grant, NIVAC, 451).

We are called to praise His name and to shout – for joy – to the LORD! That’s important. Worship shouldn’t be a slog; it shouldn’t be something where we just go through the motions. If want to be loud, you should be loud. If you want to raise your hands, you should raise your hands. If you want to clap, you should clap. I always say ‘let your outward posture reflect the inner disposition of your heart’ – that is – let your joy for the Lord come out through your body in worship. Our worship time here should be a heartfelt expression of joy to the LORD.

Nobody in the SkyDome had to drum up excitement in their hearts – it just flowed out of them in the moment – the psalmist says – cultivate joy in your heart, knowing God’s love for you – and let that flow out in your praise and in everyday life.

So we have these broad calls to worship – ‘make a joyful noise to the LORD all the earth’ and ‘Praise His name.’

Now from here, we get more specific calls to worship – ‘Worship the LORD with gladness’ and ‘give thanks to Him.’

Let’s talk about these – ‘worship the LORD’ first.

Now, if you’re using a Bible other than the NIV, like the King James or the ESV, you’re going to notice something right away. It doesn’t say ‘worship the LORD,’ does it? It says ‘serve the LORD.’ And you might be thinking – ‘well, wait - worship/serve – aren’t those two different things?’

In the Hebrew mind, they’re not. Worship AND service are two sides of the same coin and they have one word to express both. Worship, when offered to God is an act of service and service that we do for the glory of God, is worship. Our ‘real world’ actions are just as much worship as our songs and prayers here – assuming that they’re honouring to God.

And so the psalmist here is really calling us to worship the LORD/to serve the LORD with all that we are – not just with our lips, but with our lives: all that we do offered in service to the LORD.

The psalmist then is saying to us – serve the LORD with gladness, not just on Sunday mornings, but every day of the week.

And then he says in the second pair – give thanks to Him. This lifestyle worship – this wholehearted, whole person orientation towards God doesn't start with us [is not drawn out of the blue?], it's a response to who God is. Each of us can think of ways that God has blessed us – today, this week, this month, this year. The psalmist is saying to us – count your blessings one by one – see just what the Lord has done – and in light of what He has done – give thanks. Give thanks with your lips and give thanks with your life. Serve the LORD with gladness and give thanks for all that He has done.

Now the next pair is the relational pair. I guess you could call it spatial too, because it has to do with drawing near to God, but what's the implication of that? God calls us to come close to Him because He wants to be close to us.

Think about how you treat a salesman or somebody who comes to the door wanting something from you – you keep him at a distance – maybe you go outside to create a boundary or kind of hide behind the door. With Finn it's kind of nice – he's our dog – but he's a bit of a horse so some people kind of shy away lest they get bowled over – but compare that to how you receive your children or parents or friends – you throw the door wide open – you welcome them in with open arms – you're glad to see them.

That's how it is with God. He throws the door open for us and invites us in.

And so verse 2 – come before Him with joyful songs and verse 4 - 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.

“Come to me” God says “with joy, not with fear. Enter in and spend time with Me; get to know me more so that your hearts will be filled with joy and so that you WILL be able to see all that I give you.”

So that's the relational call to worship.

And then the final way to worship – the reason that anchors it all - 3 Know that the LORD is God.

There are lots of people in this world who would like to pretend that there is no god, and yet the psalmist says – the most basic way that you can worship God is to know that there IS a god and that that God is YHWH. The God of the Bible, the Creator God, the Redeemer God, the sustaining God – the three in one – He is YHWH. Get that settled in your heart; get it rooted there and everything else flows out from it.

And it's important to know who He is and who WE are in relation to Him and so the psalmist tells us, again in verse 3. And really, this is the reason *why* we ought to praise the LORD in seven ways -

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

Why should we praise the LORD? Why does He deserve exuberant praise and everyday worship?

Because He made us and we are His. And since we are His, He takes care of us.

Now there are two senses in which that's true.

'It is HE who made us' – that's literally true. We exist because God made us. Yes, your mother and father had a part to play in that but according to Psalm 139, God was at work, knitting you together in your mother's womb. (13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. (Psa 139:13-14 NIV).) You are not an accident, you are not the product of an assembly line cookie cutter process – God knit you and you and you together to be exactly the person He intended, with unique abilities and inherent value. We are each precious in His sight as His creation and He deserves praise because of that. 'It is He who made us and we are His' – that's LITERALLY true.

But for us as believers, there's another sense in which that's true. Through creation, He makes us people. At the Cross, He makes us HIS people.

See, we're all created beings and so we all belong to God. If I make something, it's mine, by virtue of the fact that I made it. God made us, we are His. And all of us creations resist His will. We go our own way. We act as though we know better than God.

Now tell me, what would you do if something you made wasn't doing what it was supposed to?

Some people would toss it. Get rid of it. Start over. Some people would redeem it – put in the extra effort to set it back the way it should be.

That's what God did. God chose to redeem His Creation. He entered into the world that HE Himself made and died on a Cross made of wood that He had created, in order to reconcile us to Him. Jesus' blood paid for our rebellion, so that when we believe in Him, we will be restored to the intimate, caring relationship that God intended for us to have. That's how He makes us – by faith in Him, He makes us HIS people. He makes us – HIS children. And He commits to caring for us the way a good shepherd cares for his sheep; protecting, restoring, providing.

Why would He do that? Well, it's right there in verse 5 -

5 For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

God made us because He is good. God redeemed us because He is good. He deserves our wholehearted praise because He is good, and His steadfast love for us endures forever. He offers His love to us and that love will never fail us, because it is never-failing and never-ending.

The Israelites had access to it, the apostles had access to it, your ancestors had access to it, your parents and their parents and their parents – and God offers it to you today.

Do you know that YHWH is God? Is YHWH your God? Have you turned from sin and from self to soak in the never-failing, never-ending merciful love of God?

If you have - 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.

(Psa 100:1-5 ESV).