

Rev. Dr. Chris Montovino
Psalm 100
July 6, 2025

A Psalm of Praise

Good morning, it is good to be back with you all. Last weekend, Karen and I took the chance to slip away in our trailer to the Oregon Coast. The weather was incredible and we had a wonderful time being away just the two of us. I want to say a special thank you to the Reverend Aleida Jernigan who preached for me. Her message about loving our neighbor was an important reminder for today. And thank you to all of you who made last week possible by leading worship and such. It was such a special gift.

As Jerry mentioned, the scripture we are feasting upon today is Psalm 100. It is both an invitation and a command, calling all of God's people to joyful, grateful worship.

So imagine with me that it would take a three or more days journey by foot to come to the Jerusalem temple for worship. I would guess that we'd be tired, perhaps hungry, and maybe even a little grumpy... anyone who's backpacked can attest that sometimes one's fellow travelers get on your nerves.

But then, as you round the last bend and ascend the temple mount. All that frustration melts away. The pain in your feet lessens. Your focus is set on the temple and the worship flowing from it. You want to be part of that. Caught up in it. Swept away by it.

Last year, I spent two weeks walking 160 miles on the Camino de Santiago in Spain with fifteen other pastors. And this was our experience as we came into the Cathedral Square on our last day. Pilgrims from all over the world had made this trek by foot. There were shouts of joy. Cheers of elation. Gratitude for the journey. People fell on their face in worship.

But the ultimate arrival experience was to enter the cathedral gates for worship. It was exhilarating.

Today's psalm is one that I imagine would have been chanted by pilgrims as they arrived in the temple square after their long pilgrimage through the Judean countryside. As we worship today, let's recite these words together in the same way God's people might have ages ago. You can read along with me the bold faced print.

Reader: "Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

All: Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

Reader: Know that the Lord is God.

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

Reader: Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise;

All: Give thanks to him and praise his name.

Reader: For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;

All: His faithfulness continues through all generations.”

Let us pray. Prayer of Illumination.

This morning as we dive into Psalm 100, I'd like to consider several things. First is the universality of it. Then we'll answer how we are to serve the Lord? Well look at what do we learn about God's character and the reason for our praise? And finally, we'll ask how can we adopt this posture into our every day living?

Notice how Psalm 100 opens with this universal command that resounds through the ages: "Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth." This is not a private invitation for a select few, but a global summons. The psalmist calls every nation, every people, to lift their voices in joyful praise to the one true God.

The Hebrew word for shout is *hariau*. It means to make a loud noise. To cry out joyfully. To sound the battle cry if you will. So this is not a quiet private worship moment that we have in our car listening to the Christian radio station of choice, but a corporate one. It is one that is shared with people of all cultures, of all times, of all ages, of all race.

Like how John describes worship around the heavenly throne in the Book of Revelation.

John wrote, "After this I looked and before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

"Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."¹

And in the same manner, our worship here is not meant to be subdued or reserved; it is to be joyful, celebratory, and multicultural reflecting the diverse, colorful greatness of our God. This is why we try to feature a variety of worship songs, hymns, and genres of music. Our choir director Nancy and our worship leader Josh try very hard to vary this up.

When I was in the Navy, living in Japan, I would often go to Tokyo Baptist Church on Sunday's when I was in town. Even though it was about a two hour train ride, I didn't care because I loved going there so much. Tokyo Baptist was in

¹ Revelation 7:8-10

Roppongi or the heart of the International District where all the National Embassies were located. That meant that each Sunday was a multicultural display of people's Sunday best from around the world. I especially loved it when my friends from Africa would wear their colorful clothing.

It felt like this image which John just described for us...what heaven will be like. May we here at Cascades reflect that beautiful diversity more and more.

The psalm continues: "Serve the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs." Our service to God is not to be a burden, but a delight. The Hebrew word for "serve" also implies worship—reminding us that every act of devotion, every song, every prayer, should be marked by gladness. We are invited to approach God not with fear or reluctance, but with songs that overflow from grateful hearts.

The Hebrew word for gladness is *simchah*. It means exceeding joy, pleasure, or rejoicing. It sounds a lot like the how Luke described the early fellowship of believers in Acts. "As they met together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts."² This kind of fellowship is worshipful and winsome. Everyone wants to be part of a community that demonstrates "*simchah*." In fact, Luke reports "The Lord added to their numbers daily those who were being saved."

The Greek word for gladness is *agalliasis*. It also means exuberant joy. But it also has a welcoming component to it.

I think Cascades has both *simchah* and *agalliasis* which is why we've added as many new members as we have in the past two years. We are a very glad and joyful people.

"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." Here, the psalmist reminds us of two foundational truths:

First, God is our Creator: We did not make ourselves; our lives are a gift from God.

Second, We belong to Him: We are his people, the sheep under his loving care. Next week, are going to hear more about Psalm 23 which echoes this image of Jesus as our Good Shepherd who protects, guides, and provides. He leads us.

Which takes us to Verse 4. Pilgrim worshippers back in Jerusalem would have now arrived at the temple gates and were ready to enter for worship. The gate keeper who opens the door provides the protocol for entering into God's presence: "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise." Just as one would not barge into a king's throne room without proper respect, so we are to approach

² Acts 2:42-47

God with hearts full of gratitude and praise. Indeed, thanksgiving is the key that opens the door to deeper fellowship with God.

Notice how the worshipers respond by repeating the conditions for entry, “give thanks to him and praise his name.” These responses were confirmations that they got it planted in their hearts.

And then, comes the crescendo where the psalmist states the reason for this joyful, grateful worship: “For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;” To which the congregation responds, “his faithfulness continues through all generations.”

The Hebrew word for good is *tov*. It can also mean beautiful, kindly, or well-favored.

The Hebrew word for love is *cheved*. There are some 247 occurrences in the Old Testament which describe God as such. It means lovingkindness, steadfast love, or faithfulness.

These reinstate the very character of God and why we are compelled to worship him. God’s character is always good. God’s love is eternal. And God’s faithfulness is unbroken, stretching from generation to generation.

So we say, God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good. Repeat that after me.

God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good.

How can we adopt this posture into our every day living?

We can worship joyfully: Let our praise be enthusiastic and sincere. Worship is more than just singing. Right? It’s a heart posture. That way, if the worship music on a particular Sunday isn’t quite our bent, that’s ok. Because it might be our neighbor’s sitting next to us. Or vice versa.

We can serve gladly. I am happy to say that each person who accepted the nominating committee’s invitation to serve, is doing so gladly. No one was compelled or guilted into serving. So that if our serving is not marked by joy, then we perhaps ought to step back and ask why? How did we allow our hearts to get out of step with God’s goodness? When we serve out of compulsion, we can become burned out, grumpy, and bitter.

We can acknowledge God’s sovereignty in every and all seasons of life, both good and bad. We can remember we belong to Him, and be certain that what belongs to God will return to him one day.

And finally, we can practice gratitude. Make thanksgiving a daily habit, entering every day with praise. Create a gratitude journal writing down just one thing each for which you are grateful. Studies show that people who regularly express gratitude have greater mental health, better relationships, increased resilience, and overall greater life satisfaction. Gratitude is both happy and contagious.

So may we remember, as Psalm 100 teaches, that thanksgiving is not just a holiday, but a way of life—a continual response to the goodness, love, and faithfulness of our God. May we believe that whenever we gather for worship, we are waging war against the spiritual powers of darkness at work in our world. And may we worship the Lord with joyful hearts, serve gladly, and always enter God's presence with thanksgiving and praise. Amen.