

Make a Joyful Noise

Psalm 100

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

² Worship the LORD with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.

³ Know that the LORD is God.

It is he that 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.

Theme Statement

The book of Psalms is both hymnal and prayer book for Israel and the church today. Psalm 100 helps all believers express joyful praise and commitment to God as maker, ruler, and merciful and loving shepherd.

Exploring the Word

The Psalms are the hymn and prayer book of Israel and of the church today. They immerse us in the life of worship and faith. In the first quarter of our study, sessions 1–4, we celebrated God’s saving

power. Miriam and the women sang on the banks of the Red Sea. David danced before the ark, Bartimaeus received mercy and leapt up to follow Jesus, and at Pentecost believers came together in prayer and praise. The same faithful proclamation and praise of God’s saving power are captured in the psalms. Like our sessions before, sessions 5–9 will point to who God is, what God has done for God’s people and the world, and what is the faithful response of God’s people.

There is a great variety among the psalms. They can be community or individual hymns that express praise and thanksgiving, trust and lament. Many, like Psalm 100, make a joyful noise in celebration of and commitment to God as king and creator. The various types of psalms are all interconnected, which provides important context for understanding each type. They also help us understand ourselves and the world because they are human and honest. They express elation and praise as well as protest and despair. Most important, the psalms are clear that the Lord reigns in heaven and on earth. God is in charge of creation and faithful to God’s good purposes for all of creation. The psalms orient us toward God’s rule in daily life and in all creation. They help make for a spiritually healthy relationship with God and enable us to hear again all that God has done and is doing to bring life and salvation to Israel and the whole world.

Psalm 100:1-2 A loving summons

This is an invitation and command, perhaps shouted and sung as the procession of worshipers enter the temple court. There is no other God but Israel’s God, so not only Israel but also “all the earth” is invited into this celebration. We do not know the author and date of this psalm, but it is thought to be a royal or kingship psalm used as part of the annual new-year celebration. It is filled with confidence and joy. It highlights the sovereignty of God

and Israel's commitment to God. Psalms 95–99 are very similar to Psalm 100.

The command to come into the Lord's presence in verse 2 supports the command in verse 1. The command word *worship* may also be translated as "serve." Only Israel's God is worthy of worship and service. No other thing or person can be a god for God's people. At the beginning of the new year, Israel makes it clear that God is *the* God, worthy to be praised and obeyed. But why? What has God done?

Psalm 100:3-4 Know this!

"Know" is both command and proclamation. What does it mean to have the Lord God of Israel as king? It means that this king made Israel and the world. Israel did not make itself; God did. And God has chosen Israel to be God's people. Israel knows and trusts this because, although the psalm does not state it, God is the one who freed them from slavery in Egypt. This rescuing, faithful God is *here now*, in this temple and time. This is indeed a solid basis for making a joyful noise.

God, creator and liberator, is compared to an ordinary shepherd. This says more about God than the people. Unlike false gods, this God is willing to enter into the life of the people. God operates in the life of Israel and the world with mercy and care. This good-shepherd imagery is applied to God elsewhere (for example, Ezekiel 34:11-12) and later to Jesus (John 10:11). These references underscore that God willingly becomes involved in the life of the sheep in order to save them.

Psalm 100:5 God is good

Why worship? Why trust? Because God is good—the kind of good that changes everything for God's people and the world. Goodness gives and enhances life. Goodness is

"steadfast love," or "grace," as the New Testament says (John 1:14). It is goodness that endures and never runs out. The future is ruled by the concrete, pervasive lovingkindness of God for Israel for all generations and for the entire creation. Here is Israel's "true north" as they renew their praise and commitment during this annual celebration of the Lord at the new year.

The Word Today

Psalm 100 orients Israel and God's people today toward God and all God is doing and has done to save creation. It was most likely used at the new-year festival, Rosh Hashanah, a time of recommitment to Israel's God. Today we have our own new-year celebrations. How might they compare to this psalm and celebration? Do our celebrations involve renewed commitment, or maybe just a resolution to exercise more and lose weight? Or what about Sunday worship? How is each Sunday worship a time of recommitment? How does weekly worship help us "know" God and find our "true north"? We human beings struggle with focusing on all God is doing and has done to save us and all creation. How might Psalm 100 help us in this struggle?

It is most likely that the earthly king in ancient Israel presided over this festival celebration, but he was not the focus of Israel's praise. Israel made a clear distinction between the God of Israel and the current ruler. Earthly kings were responsible to God and were required to follow God's good purposes. When Israel demanded a king, the prophet Samuel, under God's direction, warned them about kingly abuse of power (1 Samuel 8:4-22). Both God and Samuel knew that earthly leaders tend to abuse power and that human beings can idolize power. Among Israelite kings, Solomon is a prime example of abuse of power. He

hoarded wealth, enslaved his own people, forgot the Lord, and chased after false gods (1 Kings 11:1-13).

Kingship psalms are a correction to such behavior by leaders. Psalm 100 provides an important correction by pointing to God as worthy of praise and as a shepherd (v. 3). The leader and the people stand *under* the Lord God and are called to be faithful to God's good purposes. The leader and the people are shaped by a shepherd king; they are the "sheep of his pasture." This celebration is not all about pomp and circumstance. It is about the praise of the Lord God who invites the whole earth into worship, who rescues those enslaved and oppressed, and who cares for the people of his pasture. Psalm 100 calls Israel's king and all Israel to live according to the will and rule of this God of steadfast love.

How does knowing God as a loving and merciful shepherd shape our own worship celebrations today? How do we keep the gates wide open so that "all the earth" may participate? In what ways is God's shepherding love in Jesus Christ made central to our worship practice and experience? How are we careful to keep the focus on God's grace in Christ and not on a king or current political official?

Questions for Discussion

Beginnings

1. In what ways do you celebrate the coming of the new year?
2. How does Sunday worship provide a "true north" for you and your congregation?

Exploring the Word

1. What are the words of command in Psalm 100? What is the purpose of each one?
2. Read and compare Psalm 98 to Psalm 100. How does it help you understand Psalm 100?
3. In four or five descriptive words, summarize what we know of God from Psalm 100.
4. What do you learn from the good-shepherd imagery in Ezekiel 34:11-12 and John 10:11?
5. How does Psalm 100 answer the question "Why worship God?"

The Word Today

1. Circle all the things below that you use to help orient yourself toward God and what God has done for you through Jesus Christ.

Prayer/meditation

Congregational worship

Bible reading and study

Making music

Time outdoors

Art/creative expression

Helping others in need

Other: _____

2. Is it important to draw a clear difference between God and earthly rulers or elected officials? Why or why not?
3. What is your favorite psalm? Why?

Closing Prayer

We praise and thank you, Lord God, for your steadfast love and faithfulness, especially in Jesus Christ. Call us together in his name so we may worship and serve you. Remind us of your goodness and works of grace and mercy, so we may live and worship in joy and thanksgiving. Amen.

Further Study

Philippians 2:5-11; John 10:11-18

Daily Readings

M. Psalm 95

F. Hebrews 13:12-16

T. Luke 19:28, 36-40

S. Psalm 66:1-7

W. 1 Peter 1:3-9

S. Psalm 100

T. Psalm 98

Memorization

Psalm 100:3

Know that the LORD is God.

It is he that made us, and we are his;

we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.