

The Way We Worship

Psalm 100

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A Psalm for giving thanks.

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

Serve the LORD with gladness!

Come into his presence with singing!

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.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving,

and his courts with praise!

Give thanks to him; bless his name!

For the LORD is good;

his steadfast love endures forever,

and his faithfulness to all generations.

- Psalm 100

Introduction: We All Worship

We all worship. When I was a boy, I worshipped the Lamborghini Countach and then the 1962 Chevrolet Corvette. I was convinced that if I had one of these awesome cars, my life would be complete: People would think I was cool, I would be able to get girls, and I would have a lot of fun! I had a huge poster of a yellow Lambo on my bedroom wall. I thought about the car, drew the car, and dreamed of riding in the car. Later, as an older teen, I would research how much a red-and-white 1962 Corvette convertible would cost, and dream of owning one some day.

Now this may seem very silly, and it was, of course, but it helps us understand worship: I not only saw inherent value in these cars, but I also saw benefits they could accrue to me if I had them. So, I was focused on what they were and on what they could do for me. My focus fueled my imagination, my creativity, and my aspirations. That is the very definition of worship.

When we understand this picture, we can see that we all worship, and we can even see what it is we're tempted to worship besides God – in other words, what the idols of our hearts are. I was a professing Christian when I was worshipping sports cars.

Worship involves three things: a belief in the inherent worth of something, a belief in the benefits of having that something, and the longing/desire/aspiration to have that something. Seen this way, we can

worship money, cars, power, prestige, pleasure, excitement, adventure, or almost anything really. If we think something is inherently valuable, we believe that by having it we will be blessed and will be better off than we are now, and we deeply long or desire it, we are worshipping that thing.

One simple way to detect your idols: Fill in this blank: “If only _____, my life would be so much better.” Or: “More than anything, I really wish I _____.”

What belongs in those blanks? God, of course! What else would you expect me to say from a pulpit on a Sunday morning. But what’s important is that my answer remains the same tomorrow morning and Thursday afternoon and Saturday night. “I only I knew God better” or “If only I was more like Jesus” or “If only I walked more closely with the Lord” or “If only I was more righteous and closer to God” or “More than anything, I really wish I was free from sin and more like Christ.”

We’re going to use Psalm 100 to explore this vital issue of worship more deeply: Who we worship, why we worship, and how we worship. It’s vital to understand that while we are talking in part about what we do together here on Sunday morning, we’re talking about so much more. We’re talking about what drives our lives.

A. Who We Worship

We begin with who we worship:

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

Serve the LORD with gladness!

Come into his presence with singing!

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.

We have two names for the One we worship in Psalm 100: “the LORD” and “God.”

I. The LORD

Four times in five verses, God is called by His covenant name, “the LORD.” This is the name of God. In Hebrew, He is YahWeH, sometimes rendered into English as “Jehovah.” I should clarify that we don’t really know how to pronounce God’s name as recorded in Scripture. That’s because we don’t know the original vowel markings. In Hebrew, words consist of large consonants that are then accented with vowel markings to help guide pronunciation. So, the original Hebrew didn’t actually have vowel markings. In fact, if you read a Hebrew newspaper in Israel today, it doesn’t have vowel markings either. People just know what the words are and how to read them. Vowel markings are like training wheels, helpful to beginners learning the language.

So, when it comes to the name of the LORD, we have two different kinds of manuscripts: Those that have no vowel markings at all and those that mark the name of the LORD with the vowel markings used for the word Adonai, a word which means “the Lord.” Why? Very simply, because Jewish people wanted to avoid the severe offense of taking the Lord’s name in vain, they began a tradition of saying “Adonai” whenever they were reading Scriptures aloud and came to the name of the Lord. We may think this is odd, but that’s largely because we live in a culture that has absolutely no respect whatsoever for the name of the Lord. Even most professing Christians think nothing of taking the Lord’s name in vain, not to mention the unbelieving world around us.

By the way, this is where the tradition of rendering the name “YaHWeH” as “the Lord” comes from - even the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament made 200 years before Jesus was born and used by the disciples as their Bibles had translated “YaHWeH” as Kurios, or “Lord” – the Greek equivalent of Adonai.

The pronunciation “Jehovah” comes from German scholars reading the manuscripts with the vowel marking for Adonai. But those are almost certainly not the original vowels, and we don’t really know what they were. YaHWeH is a good guess, and more likely than Jehovah, but it could be YiHVeH or YaHVeH or something like that.

One good explanation is “that God's name is a combination of "He will be (**Y**ihyeh) - He is (**H**oveh) - He was (**H**ayah)", in Hebrew "**(Y'hovah)**". It's believed that this explanation of the name of the LORD is behind the name for God used in Revelation 1:4; 1:8 and 4:8:

“Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne”

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

*“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!”*

This understanding certainly fits the evidence and makes sense. God’s name thus reflects His unchanging nature. As Hebrews 13:8 says of Jesus, showing that He is fully and truly God: *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”*

Yet the origin of the name YaHWeH or Y’HoVaH emphasizes another aspect of God’s character. In Exodus 3, God speaks to Moses from the burning bush and commissions Moses to lead his people out of Egypt. Moses asks God who he should tell the Israelites God is, what His name is:

Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" ¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. (Ex. 3:13-15)

Here, the emphasis is on "I AM who I AM." The verb aspect here is timeless and could also be rendered "I WILL BE who I WILL BE." Thus, in God's own self-disclosure, He is powerfully emphasizing to Moses both His self-sufficiency, His eternity, and His unchanging nature, or His immutability.

The Lord is who is He. No one has made Him who He is. He will always be who He was and who He is. He is eternal, unchanging and self-sufficient. That makes Him totally different from us. We are created beings, who once were not and now are, not by our own power. We also change constantly. I am not who I once was, and I will not always be who I am now. And yet there is a core of me that persists even through the changes, which reflects the image of God in me. I remain me, even as I change. Yet God remains truly and perfectly who He is and never changes.

This is vitally important because it is the core reason why all of our idols always disappoint us. Have you ever been disappointed? It was likely due to one of two reasons:

1. The person or thing you were trusting changed.
2. The person or thing you trusted was not adequately self-sufficient; he or it did not have the ability to keep his or its promises.

In other words, compared to the Great I AM, the One who was and is and is to come the Almighty, all idols are unreliable and insufficient. They will always disappoint.

2. Who Alone is God

The other name used for the Lord in Psalm 100 is God. We are told "Know that the LORD, he is God!" This word "God" is Elohim, and it refers to the all-powerful creator. We are being told that we should worship the LORD – YaHWeH or Y'HoVaH – because He is God, and He alone is God. He is the Creator of all, the all-powerful One. He is not only self-sufficient and eternally unchanging, but He is the powerful Creator of all!

And this truth about the Lord leads us from focusing on who we worship to pondering why we worship Him.

B. Why We Worship

Verse 3 of Psalm 100 gives us two vital reasons for worshipping the Lord:

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.*

I. For He Made Us

The first reason is very simple: He is the Creator who made us. He gave us life. Unlike God, we are not self-sufficient. We did not make ourselves. We are creatures utterly dependent on our Creator, and the very fact that God has made us means we should worship Him. As the late Dr. R.C. Sproul said, “The very fact that God made a creature at all puts that creature in debt to the Him as Creator and created the obligation to worship Him.”

2. We Are the Sheep of His Pasture

But Psalm 100 gives us more. We are not only the creatures of God, but we are His people. He has not only created us, but He has made us His. “*We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.*” Not only do we owe God worship for the fact that He is our Creator and we are dependent on Him, but also because He has redeemed us, made us His. So we worship God as our Creator and our Redeemer, our Maker and our Good Shepherd.

Can you worship the Lord not only as your Creator but also as your Redeemer and your Good Shepherd? Jesus said . . .

“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep . . . My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.” – John 10:14-15,27-30, ESV

Do you know Him? Is He your Shepherd? Have you heard His voice, speaking in Scripture? Are you following Him and receiving eternal life from Him? Are you kept securely in His hands? If you know that He is yours and you are His, you have very good reason to truly worship Him. If you don't know Him as your Good Shepherd or you don't know for sure that you know Him, I wonder if you hear Him speaking this morning through His word. Would you call out to Him today and ask Him to save you and keep you?

C. How We Worship

So, we know who we are to worship and why we should worship Him, but how do we worship Him?

I. Praise for Who He Is

Well, first and foremost we should praise God for who He is. At its heart, worship is true adoration and high appreciation. If you adore and appreciate anything, you know about it and you can very easily celebrate its wonderful attributes. Ask someone you know about something they love and see if they can tell you about what makes it so great – whether a favorite food, movie, song, artist, car, sports team, athlete, whatever. If we love respect, or admire anything, celebration of its attributes comes easily and flows passionately from us.

My favorite story from the Westminster Assembly’s crafting of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms comes from the committee that was charged with defining God, by drafting an answer to the question: “What is God?” which became the fourth question and answer of the Shorter Catechism. As the committee met to deliberate, the story is told that the youngest member of the committee, George Gillespie, rose to pray for wisdom, and His prayer began, “*O God, thou art a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in Thy being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.*” After his prayer, someone wrote down the first sentence of it and the words were kept as a beautiful, succinct summary definition of God.

Sadly, we don’t know if the story is true or not, but someone who would pray like that, whose heart would overflow with such wonderful language about God, is someone who worships God in spirit and in truth, someone who knows and loves and adores God for who He is. Regardless of the exact source, for over 350 years, the first four questions of the Shorter Catechism have stood at the core of a biblical world and life view, what it really means to see life as God frames and defines it, leading up to this beautiful definition of God:

Q. 1. *What is the chief end of man?*

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

Q. 2. *What rule has God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?*

A. The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.

Q. 3. *What do the Scriptures principally teach?*

A. The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.

Q. 4. *What is God?*

A. God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.

2. Thanksgiving for What He Has Done

So, we worship God by praising Him for who He is, but we also worship God by thanking Him for what He has done. Thanksgiving is vital to all aspects of our worship. Psalm 100 is “A Psalm for Giving Thanks,” and is the only psalm to have that title.

Psalm 100 closely ties praise and thanksgiving together – praise for who God is and thanks for what He has done –

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

*For the LORD is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.*

“Give thanks to Him” & “bless His name” – What God does flows from who God is, and so we “bless His name” – that is, we praise Him for who He is and we “give thanks to Him.” And why exactly do we do these two things together? Well, we could come up with a very long list, but Psalm 100 focuses on what’s most important –

*For the LORD is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.*

Three things – of most core importance to our thanksgiving:

The LORD is good. God is so good that He defines what goodness is. Think about our goodness, such as it is – it is fickle, often self-serving, harmed and diminished by other people’s actions and attitudes and our changing circumstances. His goodness is perfect, undiminished by human sin, unchanged by any external circumstances, lying at the very heart of who He is.

God’s steadfast love is His *hesed*, which we’ve talked about many times before in our times in the psalms. God’s covenant faithful love and committed compassion toward His people. In the 1500’s, Miles Coverdale was putting together the first complete English translation of the Bible from the original languages. He took William Tyndale’s New Testament translation and finished Tyndale’s Old Testament. He coined a new word in English to translate *hesed* – “lovingkindness.” The ESV uses “steadfast love” to highlight the committed, covenantal nature of God’s love. God’s wonderful *hesed* endures forever – It persists and perseveres unchanging, despite repeated failures and frustrations of His people.

His faithfulness to all generations. God’s covenantal *hesed* is generational, faithful to all generations. God has pledged Himself to be our God and the God of our children after us. This doesn’t mean that all children of believers will automatically and definitely become believers themselves, but that God will continue to be faithful to His covenant promises from generation to generation. We sit gathered here

3,000 years after this psalm was written, and the same God who inspired these words is here with us, saving and keeping us as His own.

And so we worship God by giving thanks to Him for His goodness, for His enduring *hesed*, and for His generational faithfulness. Yes, He gives us many other blessings and benefits, but these are the most important reasons we have for giving thanks to Him. As we continue in the psalms, we'll be looking more at giving thanks, so I won't say more than what is here this morning.

3. Glad Service

Not only do we praise God for who He is and thank Him for what He has done and how He has regarded us – with goodness, lovingkindness, and faithfulness – but we also worship God by our glad service.

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

Serve the LORD with gladness!

My friend, Shane Bennett, pastor of Faith OPC in Fawn Grove, is taking a call to pastor a new church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on the campus of Calvin College. He has a wonderful way of responding to people who compliment him or thank him for his preaching. He says, "It's my joy to preach." And it is a joy to be blessed to preach God's word. But Shane uses this particular expression because he wants to help God's people see all of their service in the church as a joy. He was very blessed a few weeks ago when he thanked a lady in his church for doing something, and she responded, "It's my joy to serve."

Psalm 100 calls us to serve God with gladness, with joy, with delight. This makes our service worship, whatever that service may be.

4. Joyful Singing

And the final way we worship that's spelled out in Psalm 100 is singing:

Come into his presence with singing!

God's redeemed people have always been a singing people. If you know how great God is and how good He has been to you, how can you not sing? We sing for the joy and delight of knowing the Lord who is self-sufficient and who never changes. We sing for the fact that He has made us, and that He has made us His own. He has power to create us and love to redeem us, and for all of those reasons and more, we SING!

You don't have to sing well to sing in a way that pleases God and delights your soul in Him. If you forget about being self-conscious and focus on who God is and what He has done, you will be able to sing with God-pleasing delightful joy!

Notice how throughout Psalm 100, worship is characterized by delight, joy, gladness and loud rejoicing, and not by duty, drudgery, and somber obligation. Worship should be proper and fitting for God's holy character, but it should also be wonderfully joyful as is fitting for God's love and our gratitude.

So . . .

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

Serve the LORD with gladness!

Come into his presence with singing!

Know that the LORD, he is God!

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

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