

A Heavenly Call to Worship

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- [0 : 00] Herman Bavink once famously said, God and God alone is man's highest good. Similarly, our Westminster Shorter Catechism in its first question asks what man's purpose is on this earth, and the answer is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. However, as we come to Psalm 100, it could certainly be said that these ideas of glorifying God are put to the center. I am sure many of you, if not most of you, are familiar with these words. This is the old 100, and I remember on various occasions I have been in crowds, vast crowds sometimes of thousands, thousands of voices lifted up singing these words. It is a psalm rich with the splendor of God. It is a psalm ringing with joy and gladness. And it is a psalm which brings home the reality that the worship of God for the believer is sweetness and joy.
- [1 : 16] This psalm is made up of four stanzas, which if you are using an ESV is clearer, and each of these stanzas are very rich in their contents. Verses 1 and 2 make up the first, then verse 3 the second, verse 4 the third, and verse 5 the fourth. And in this psalm, in this famous psalm, a scene is depicted where the faithful are worshiping God, the king of the temple, with joy and gladness where they worship him under his rule and protection. And through reflecting on this, my prayer is that we will find more and more joy in the worship of our God and an assurance that we will enjoy him for all eternity. So we will consider this psalm stanza by stanza. Firstly, in verses 1 to 2, we are to worship the Lord with joy. In verse 3, we worship the Lord as king. In verse 4, we worship the Lord in his temple. And finally, in verse 5, we worship the Lord for eternity. So firstly, in verses 1 to 2, we worship the Lord with joy.
- [2 : 39] We worship the Lord with joy. Read verse 1. Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him with joyful songs. In these verses, we are commanded to do three things. Firstly, we are commanded to shout for joy to the Lord. And the shout in view here is a loud, jubilant shout. It is often used in the context of battle. And it is not just limited to the human voice. Sometimes it is used to refer to that of a trumpet. I don't know if many of you have been in a relatively small space and you hear a trumpet blast. Or maybe in Scotland, a bagpipe go off. It can be absolutely definite, can't it? And this is the kind of volume and tone in view here when we are called to shout for joy to the Lord.
- [3 : 42] It is a loud and triumphant shout. And when we consider all that our Lord has done for us, how much reason we have to shout for joy to the Lord. He is the one who, according to his foreknowledge, has saved us and purchased us with the blood of Christ. He defeated the powers of this present evil age by the cross.

And he has freed us from our bondage to sin. I recall a few weeks ago walking to church here. And just across the road before we arrived, we could hear cheering and celebrations.

Now, if you can hear that at this time in the year, you know there is a fairly good chance that the English national football team are playing. And that they have probably just lost a goal. And that's exactly what happened.

I looked up my phone and right enough, that's exactly what happened. Sorry if there are any English people here. This is probably too soon. But we know what this type of triumphant celebration is like.

[4 : 50] And that's football. This is our eternal salvation and a glory that we will share in for all eternity. How much reason we have to shout for joy to the Lord.

In verse 2, we are commanded to worship Him with gladness. Worship the Lord with gladness, it says. If you are using an ESV, it may say serve the Lord with gladness.

But the idea here is really the same. Throughout the Old Testament, Israel were to serve and worship the true God, Yahweh. We are to worship Him alone.

We are to worship Him as He has demanded. We are to give Him the praise due to His name.

Throughout the Old Testament, we read the Israelites were so often guilty of doing this in all the wrong places. They so often serve the false gods and other idols.

[5 : 58] But the call here is to serve and worship Yahweh, the Lord, not all these other false gods. And we are to do so with gladness.

We are to do so with gladness because worshiping the God, worshiping the Lord is a good thing. It is the reason why we were made. And it is the only thing in which our hearts can know rest and satisfaction.

And when our hearts are rightly tuned to this truth, oh, how blessed we are. In Christ, we have the forgiveness of sins.

He redeems our life from the pit and crowns us with love and compassion. Oh, how much does that enrich our hearts in worship.

Charles Spurgeon writes, The invitation to worship here is given is not a melancholy one, as though adoration were a funeral solemnity, but a cheery, gladsome exhortation, as though we were bidden to a marriage feast.

[7 : 14] Now, I know for many of us who are Presbyterian and proud, this may be a hard one to hear. But how true it is. How true it is. We have been made co-heirs of the kingdom of God.

And very often we come to church as though someone had just died. I certainly fall into this trap so often. It could be said that though we are spiritually millionaires, we very often come to church and sing as though we were paupers.

Now, let me be clear. I am not commending a certain style of worship over another. I am not saying we must come to church and lift the hands right in the air in every song.

You know, for some of us, including myself, that's just not in our DNA. But the question I want to ask you this evening is, as you worship and sing to the Lord, is your heart filled with gladness?

Is your heart filled with thankfulness for the joys and the wonders that your Lord has shown to you? In verse 3, we are also called to enter His presence with joyful songs.

[8 : 34] We are to come before Him. And the idea here, as the ESV captures well, is to come into His presence with joyful songs. Psalm 84, which we sung, verse 2, captures a similar idea.

If you'd flick over a few pages, Psalm 84, verse 2 says, My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord.

My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. As we think about coming into God's presence with joyful songs and gladness, can I ask, do you come into His presence longingly?

Do you yearn to enter into His presence? I remember when in the UK we have had hot weather.

Yes, I know the one week of the year that happens. I have sometimes decided to go out for walks, and I think, huh, it's the UK. It's fine. I don't need to bring a water bottle with me.

[9 : 42] I go out on the walk, and my mouth goes dry very, very quickly, and I'm absolutely dying to get back home for a drink. Maybe you've had similar experiences too.

But in a similar way, does your soul long to be in the presence of the Lord? Or do you long to be elsewhere? Maybe there are other things that would take away your attention from the worship of our Lord on His day.

Maybe it's something that would take you away from church, but maybe it's not. And even in church, it's a distraction on your hearts and minds.

Do you long to gather together as a body of believers as you receive Christ in His Word and sacrament?

Because that is what is happening this evening. As we gather together, God is present among us by His Word. And if we know this, how we should not neglect to gather together.

[10 : 52] How wonderful is this opportunity week by week to enjoy His presence in worship. So we worship the Lord with joy.

Moving on to verse 3, we worship the Lord as King. We worship the Lord as King. Verse 3, 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. For those of you who know your Bibles well, you will know that when you see Lord in all capitals, that is standing in place for the covenantal name of God, Yahweh.

This is the name which He revealed Himself by at the burning bush to Moses in Exodus chapter 3. And the call here is to know that He is God.

It is not all the other false gods. It is He, Him, and it is Him alone. And this theme is a theme which has occurred many times before in the Scriptures.

[12 : 05] In Genesis chapter 1, one of the chief purposes of Genesis chapter 1, the account of creation, is to establish the covenantal Lord Yahweh as King of creation.

This was supposed to be in sharp contrast to all the pagan gods. The pagans, of course, had a God for just about everything. They had a God for the seas.

They had a God for the sun. They had a God for the stars. And just about anything you could imagine. And I suppose that in this way we may say that Genesis chapter 1 has a polemical function.

That is, it is attacking all of these other false gods, and it is asserting Yahweh as King of creation. And this, we know, is the foundation for the covenant relationship that Yahweh has with His people.

In Exodus chapter 19 and 20, it is because God rescued the Israelites and showed Himself to be the one true God above all other false gods that they are to be set apart to Him.

[13 : 15] We see, and we see something similar in Psalm 100. In verse 3, we read it as He who made us, and we are His.

It is because He is the maker of heaven and earth that He alone deserves our worship. This is the foundation of our relationship with our maker.

It is because He is our creator that we can trust He will be a faithful Lord to us. Verse 3 continues, we are His people, the sheep of His pasture.

And when we read texts such as this, we like to think of images of cuddly sheep following after a relatively good-looking guy. But we need to understand what this biblical metaphor is beyond face value.

Throughout the scriptures, the shepherd metaphor is used to communicate kingship. In Jeremiah chapter 13, verse 20, it says, Look up and see those who are coming from the north.

[14 : 25] Where is your flock that was entrusted to you, the sheep of which you boasted? Ezekiel chapter 34 gives us a similar idea where it describes to us the bad shepherds.

In other words, the bad leaders of Israel who abused their people. And in the Bible, this metaphor is used and it is applied to the Lord, to Yahweh.

And it is used in contrast to all of these bad shepherds. Notably, if you flick the page over to Psalm 95, in verse 3, God is described as the great king above all other gods.

And then in verse 7, it describes his subjects as the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.

And of course, this language was used famously in Psalm 23 to describe the unique relationship between God and his people Israel. But notice that in verse 3 in Psalm 100, this covenantal language is used in reference to all the earth.

[15 : 41] We lose the gravity of this. For the Israelite, the idea that the pagan nations would worship God would be absolutely mind-blowing. It would be like if you turned up to your workplace this coming week and you found all your colleagues or classmates worshipping the Lord, you would probably be a little bit confused.

But the wonder of Christianity and the mystery of the Scriptures is that God has broken down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile.

He has destroyed human divisions and has united for himself a people in Christ, which is the New Testament church.

So with God as our covenantal king, we know that as we gather to worship him, we are in safe hands. We face many persecutions and pressures as brothers and sisters in Christ.

If you keep up with Open Doors or other missionary organizations, you will know about some of the horrendous persecutions, some bear for bearing the name of Christ. Even in our own lands, you may face tremendous persecution or pressure to conform to this world's way of thinking and living.

[17 : 11] A few weeks ago, I was preaching on Psalm 29, where God rules over creation by his powerful and majestic voice. And Christian, this is your God.

This is your God. He's enthroned over the world, in this world that so often seems chaotic and evil, that seemingly prevails. You are his.

Read that again. Verse 3, And we are his. And because of this, be assured that you are held by him.

And as you participate in his worship, you anticipate the day in glory when no evil power will ever touch you again. And until then, you are surely held by his loving arms.

The psalm envisages a scenario where God's people worship him as king under his rule and protection. And this is what we will do for all eternity.

[18 : 19] We worship the Lord with joy. We worship the Lord as king. And thirdly, in verse 4, we worship the Lord in his temple.

We worship the Lord in his temple. Verse 4, Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name.

As we found in verses 1 to 2, we come with joyful songs to the presence of the Lord. And here in verse 4, we find that we are coming to his temple.

The language in verses 1 and 2 does hint towards this. Many of the praise, much of the praise described in verses 1 and 2 is often used of the priests in Old Testament worship.

And here we find this idea that we worship God in his temple much, much clearer. The temple in the Old Testament was where God dwelt.

[19 : 29] It was his house among his people. If you want fun bedtime reading, you could go and read Exodus chapters 25 to 30 or perhaps 1 Kings chapters 5 to 8 where the very detailed instructions for the tabernacle and the temple are given.

And we see in these passages that these were magnificent structures overlaid with gold. It was made as a place for God to dwell.

Of course, not even the highest heavens could contain God, but in his grace, he has chosen and has been pleased to condescend to dwell with his people, to dwell with sinners in these holy places which signified the temple in heaven where he dwells in light inaccessible.

And this is the scene which we have before us. We read of his gates. We read of his courts.

These were features of the temple. And we enter his gates with thanksgiving. Again, another image of temple worship. The idea here may be similar to that of the thank offerings made in the Old Testament, such as in Leviticus chapter 7, verse 12, where this kind of thankfulness is used in the context of sacrifices at the temple.

[20 : 58] And the picture here is that of God's dwelling in heaven, which is where we believers are headed towards. The new creation is depicted as a temple.

It is a place where we will worship God in his presence for all eternity. Friends, this is where we come to in worship.

We come to the heavenly temple of our God, and we come to worship in none other than the dwelling place of God. As we gather this evening, we join in this worship.

We join in the eternal song. We also have to understand that this stanza follows from the last.

That is, the stanza which proclaims to us the royalty and kingship of God is followed by the one which describes to us a temple scene.

[22 : 01] It is a common theme, especially in this altar, that God is king in his temple. It is his temple where he sits enthroned as king over his people, giving them his peace and protection.

History and circumstances, they change, but God's rule over his dwelling place will never cease.

Friends, if you worship the one true God, he cannot disappoint you. He cannot disappoint. If you worship other things, they will fail you.

You know, in the world, we have many general elections going on, and in these elections, these can sometimes completely take over us.

People on both sides, or not on all sides, are prone to view their candidate as some sort of Messiah figure. Governments will pass.

[23 : 07] political candidates will pass. But God's rule in his heavenly dwellings will never fail or pass. It will never cease.

And therefore, we can approach his dwellings with thanksgiving, and we can enter his courts with praise and bless his holy name.

Finally, in verse 5, we worship the Lord for eternity.

We worship the Lord for eternity. Verse 5, for the Lord is good, and his love endures forever. His faithfulness continues through all generations.

And how the Bible is a witness to these things, where time and time again God saves his people from their distress. How he was faithful to his promise to Abraham in sending Christ the Son, the only mediator between God and man, to die as a ransom for many.

[24 : 23] How we experience and know his mercies anew every day. Charles Spurgeon again says, on this verse, this sums up his character and contains a mass of reasons for praise.

He is good, gracious, kind, bountiful, loving, yea, God is love. John Calvin, likewise, verse 5 points out, there will always be cause for praise.

What base ingratitude, therefore, for us to weary in giving thanks. Yet so foolish are we that God must open his holy lips to declare his care for us, though he silently maintains it every day.

how prone we can be to forget the grace of God. How easy it is to fail to render the praise that is due to his name.

Christian, God is good. Let us not forget this truth. God is good. Let us not forget the love that he has shown us in Christ Jesus in saving us from our bondage to sin, and let us not forget his work in sustaining us every day as our great high priest.

[25 : 53] His love endures forever, and this is what we find throughout the rest of the scriptures. This psalm leaves us with an element of anticipation.

We have to realize that as we read these verses that the believers reading this psalm before the advent of Christ, or we're singing it rather, we're not singing with our New Testament perspectives.

This psalm envisages all the earth praising God, but as we will know, this had not happened yet. Of course, throughout Old Testament history, it was anticipated that by the Abrahamic promise that all the nations would be blessed in that promise, the time was not yet.

And as we have seen, this psalm also has the language of victory. In verse 1, we saw that the shout was often used as a battle cry.

It is military language. But when we read the psalms in the Old Testament history books, we read that the Israelites did not always enjoy this victory. even just the psalms.

[27 : 11] Psalm 100 is in book 4. And before book 4 is book 3, where Israel suffered much devastation. Psalm 88 gives us but a glimpse into their suffering, where it ends in verse 18, you have taken from me friend and neighbor.

Darkness is my closest friend. Friend. The people of Israel were longing for the restoration of their kingdom.

They were yearning for the day when God's promises would fully and finally be fulfilled. Psalm 20 verse 5 would express this desire, may we shout for joy over your victory.

And of course, a few psalms later we read of the, we read Psalm 24, where the Messiah is exalted as king in his victory.

And as we read our New Testaments, we begin to see this picture as fulfilled. After Jesus died and rose from, died on the cross and rose from the dead, he achieved victory for his people.

[28 : 28] Colossians chapter 2 verse 15, Christ triumphed over the powers of this age by triumphing over them by the cross. After this, Christ was exalted as king in his ascension.

And after he sent the promised Holy Spirit, we read something very striking in Acts chapter 2 verse 46. Turn with me in your Bibles to Acts chapter 2.

Acts 2. Acts chapter 2, after Peter has given his sermon to the crowds, where in verse 41, those who accepted his message were baptized and about 3,000 were added to their number that day.

We read this from verse 42. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day, they continued to meet together in the temple courts.

[29 : 50] They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. After the exaltation of Christ, we read that the New Testament church were depicted as the worshiping temple community of Yahweh.

We find in verse 46 of Acts 2 that they were serving one another with gladness. In the picture, we have an Acts, and in the wider New Testament, is the fulfillment of Psalm 100.

As we gather together this evening, we are joining in the worship presented by this psalm in light of the victory that Christ, by His blood, has bought for us.

How marvelous, marvelous, how wonderful, and my song shall ever be. How marvelous, how wonderful is my Savior's love for me.

[31 : 04] Friends, as we read our New Testaments, we read that Christ is the one who is King in the heavenly temple. He is the object of our worship and the one in whom we are secure.

Our lives are hidden with Christ, our good shepherd in God. However, the picture in Psalm 100 is only partially fulfilled.

The final fulfillment of Psalm 100, where all the earth worships the Lord in His presence, is depicted by Revelation chapter 5, where in verse 9, it says, you are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you are slain.

And with your blood, you purchase for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom of priests, to serve our God, and they will reign on earth.

Christ, Christian, this is what Christ is guiding you towards. You are His, and He will keep you secure until that day when He comes again in glory, where you will worship Him with all the joy and with all the gladness that you could imagine.

[32 : 34] as I close, let me close with the words of the famous hymn. When He comes, our glorious King, all His ransomed home to bring, then anew the song will sing, hallelujah, what a Savior.

Let us pray. Amen.