

Shout for Joy

Bible Reading: Psalm 100 NIV

Psalm 100 is a great hymn of praise to the Living God. It was first sung by the Israelites in the Temple and then in the synagogue services. It has been loved by Christian worshippers down the ages in the hymn version, *All people that on earth do dwell*.

It has only 5 verses, but it's a beautiful summons to worship, to **Shout for Joy**. Joy should be a main characteristic of our worship, as we serve the Lord and come before him.

It has been said (Spurgeon):

The world will never be right until with one unanimous shout it adores the only God.

Something which will only be fully realised in the New Heaven and New Earth.

The Psalm is about Jehovah, the God of Israel, but the Psalmist recognises that the Living God is not Israel's monopoly.

He's not a tribal God, he's the Living God, and Sovereign Ruler over all the nations. So as we meet to worship we desire that all peoples, of every language, colour, culture, circumstance should join us.

We give thanks because we:

Know [are certain] that the Lord is God.

This is not a private belief alone, but a public truth. Our worship and thanksgiving is not only to be joyful, it's to be intelligent. Because how we worship depends upon what we know, and we don't worship an unknown God.

What distressed the Apostle Paul most about what he found in Athens was an altar to an unknown God. Our God is not unknown. He's a living God who reveals himself clearly, plainly and truly.

His chief activity for the Psalmist was that he's to be found in the history of the people of God. He had acted in the past, freed his people from slavery in Egypt, entered into an agreement with them at Mount Sinai, led them across the wilderness, and settled them in the Promised Land.

So Psalmist says:

It is he who has made us, and we are his.

He's our Creator and Redeemer. Knowing God, knowing ourselves, and experiencing salvation all go together.

Two vivid illustrations are given of the Living God.

Firstly, he is the Potter. He has made us and shaped us. God is likened to a craftsman. We think here of the awesome creativity, skill and infinite patience of the divine potter.

Jeremiah 18 describes God as a potter having trouble at his wheel because the people refused to obey Him. This was a familiar image to people in biblical times, because they could see the potter's wheel in the marketplace of virtually every village and town.

The raw material with which he chose to deal was unpromising and rebellious. He didn't give up on his people despite their setbacks and disappointments. He went on fashioning them, making them fit for his own use and glory.

Secondly, God is seen as the loving Shepherd.

We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

The Potter who made and shaped them was the Shepherd who protected, guided, watched over and tenderly cared for them. We have all been called into a right relationship with God, through faith and trust in what Christ has done for us at Calvary.

He has rescued us from sin and death and brought us to himself. He is our Potter who has shaped us, and our good Shepherd who cares for us.

Such is the wonderful sovereign grace of God. We owe it all to him. It's he who made us. We belong to him. We are his people.

By the grace of God we are what we are. This isn't a cause for pride; but for praise, thanksgiving and worship.

And so the Psalmist bursts into another call to worship:
Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.

Our worship is to be deeply joyful, because we have so much to give thanks for! *Give thanks to him and praise his name.*

William Temple, a former Archbishop of Canterbury, once defined worship as:
...quickenning the conscience by the holiness of God, feeding the mind with the truth of God, purging the imagination by the beauty of God, opening the heart to the love of God, and devoting the will to the purpose of God.

More recently, Richard Foster has described worship as *...our response to the overtures of love from the heart of the Father.*

And so the Psalm ends by focusing our minds on the greatness, goodness, faithfulness, love and constancy of the living God.

We praise and bless him, not only for what he has done for us, but for who he is:
For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Unlike us, he is neither fickle nor faithless.

His word can be depended upon.
His promises are true.
He remains the same forever.
From everlasting to everlasting He is God.
His is an enduring love.
He keeps his promises.
He is utterly faithful.

God has been good in the past, and he will always be good. He will continue his work in us and through us, to create something beautiful for his glory.

We are safe in his hands. What a God! He is great and good and faithful beyond compare.

What can we do? Our only response can be to praise, adore and serve him, then to come eagerly into his presence through our Lord Jesus Christ – for the innermost court of his presence is now open to all his people.