

# Always Giving Thanks

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## Psalm 100:1-5

<sup>1</sup> Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth. <sup>2</sup> Worship the LORD with gladness; come into his presence with singing. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name. <sup>5</sup> For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

### 1. Thanksgiving

How was your Thanksgiving? Were you and your family full of thankfulness? Or were you gloomy, lonely, and sad? Do you still feel grateful or perhaps not that very happy now? As you may know, I have three children. This year, my daughter Ahreum from Korea, my older son Chris and daughter-in-law Lisa from Washington D.C. spent Thanksgiving with us. I was very happy when they were with us but after they left yesterday, I felt a little gloomy and lonely.

I know what Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, “**Give thanks in all circumstances.**” The biggest challenge for me and for all Christians is to give thanks to God in all circumstances. We are thankful for the circumstances we like. But if we do not like our circumstances, it is not easy to give thanks to God. Can we have thankful hearts when we grieve, hurt, get sick, are disappointed and our beloved one has passed? The Bible says that it is possible if we give thanks to God not based on our circumstances, but based on who God is and our relationship with the Lord. How can we express our thanks to God? Can we send thank-you cards, text messages, emails, or send gifts to express our thanks to the Lord?

### 2. Psalm 100

Today’s scripture Psalm 100 is called “A Psalm of Thanksgiving.” Verse 1 says, “**Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.**” “Make a joyful noise to the Lord” means “shout praises to the Lord” (CEV). The author’s joy is so big that his invitation goes not only to the Israelites but also to beyond Israel. It goes to all human beings and every creature in the world.

This time of year, we are blessed to hear our choir sing in our Christmas Cantata on December 24. Our choir has about 13 people. When I meditated on today’s verses last week, an image came to my mind. The image is that not only our choir members, but also you and I, all the trees, water, fish, animals, insects, houses, clouds, our church building, and everything in our area of Sagamore Beach sing together like a choir. You may think such singing is not

possible. But listen to what Psalm 98:7-8 says. **“Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it. Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy.”** The author of Psalm 98 seemed to hear music from a heavenly choir.

Who will be the audience of this music? God is the audience. Verse 2 says, **“Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing.”** The author invites every creature to come to the Lord and praise his name in front of him. We are called upon to praise God and rejoice in him. Psalm 122:1 says, **“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord!’”** The Israelites were filled with great joy when they came to worship the Lord with the Gentiles at the Jerusalem Temple.

### 3. Reasons for Shouting

Why does the author of Psalm 100 invite all the earth to worship and praise the Lord? It is because he learned who God is and what relationship he has with God. Verse 3 says, **“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.”** As I said before, the meaning of “know” in the Bible does not mean intellectual knowledge or consent to something or someone. The Hebrew word “yada” has a very intimate context. Genesis 4:1 says, **“And the man knew his wife Eve and she conceived and bore Cain.”** The author says that our relationship with the Lord is the closest relationship that husbands and wives experience on earth. The relationship is also the same closeness that we feel as parents with our children. And like parents, God cares for us unconditionally and gives us an intimate relationship. God is like our shepherd who searches for one lost sheep.

Psalm 98:1 says, **“O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have gained him victory.”** God is the one who goes before us and is always advocating and working on our behalf. So we never fail. Even in the worst situations we are able to give thanks because God is still there with us, and we can overcome all situations even when things look bad.

### 4. Living Funerals

Last week, I read a very interesting article from Japan. A well-known 80-year-old retired CEO was diagnosed with cancer. Instead of having radiation treatment, he decided to invite his family, relatives, and friends and thank them for their support and love. The CEO put an open invitation in the newspaper and invited those who knew him. During the gathering, people shared stories and memories of him. And the man talked about his life and expressed his thanks to those who were at the gathering.

I learned that such an event is called “a living funeral.” A living funeral is like a regular funeral but the goal is to celebrate the life of the person while he or she is still alive. I believe this kind of gathering would be very meaningful to the person and his or her family and friends. For Christians, it would be a wonderful opportunity to witness our faith, sharing the grace of God that we have received through Jesus Christ.

Paul says to the Corinthians in his first letter. “***Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed...***<sup>55</sup> ***‘Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?’***<sup>56</sup> ***The sting of death is sin...***<sup>57</sup> ***But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ***” (1 Cor. 15:51, 55-57). Since Jesus is risen from the dead, Paul emphasizes that death is overcome by Jesus. Paul reminds us that even when we face death, we can give thanks to God who has given us victory through Christ.

## 5. Hymn No. 95

Our reading for today, Psalm 100, tells us that this psalm was sung by the Israelites whenever they entered the temple with thanksgiving offerings. Although they may have experienced all kinds of challenges and hardships before coming to worship the Lord as the pilgrims did, the people were full of joy because they were reminded of the goodness of God even in their difficult situations. This is why the psalmist invites everyone and everything on earth to join him in praise and to give thanks to the Lord. The author of Psalm 100 still calls us to join him in worship.

This morning, I’d like to ask you a question. Do you know which hymn is best-known around the world? There is a hymn that each week, around the world, thousands of Christian congregations sing. Which hymn do we sing every week? The answer is hymn number 95, “Praise God, from whom all blessings flow. Praise him, all creatures here below; Praise him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.” In many languages, this “Doxology” is treasured. Yet, not many people know the story behind these words. This hymn was written based on Psalm 100 by Thomas Ken in 1709.

Thomas Ken was an Anglican Bishop. Until becoming Bishop of Bath and Wells in 1684, Ken spent most of his life at Winchester College and Cathedral. In 1674, Ken published a Manual of Prayers for the use of the Scholars of Winchester College. In it, he charged his readers to “be sure to sing the Morning and Evening Hymn in your chamber devoutly.” In the 1695 edition, the words to these hymns were published as an appendix. The “Doxology” we sing today was the closing stanza of each of these three hymns (“Awake, My Soul, and with the Sun,” “All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night,” and “My God, I Now from Sleep Awake”).

## 6. Conclusion

What does the author of Psalm 100 try to tell us? The author calls the Israelites and us to know how wonderful our Lord is. The author invites us to come before the Lord and worship him and give thanks to him. If we remember who our God is and what he has done for us, we will be filled with songs of praise and thanksgiving.

In verses 4 & 5, the author says, “**Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name.**”<sup>5</sup> **For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.**” We praise the Lord and give him thanks for his steadfast love and his faithfulness that lasts forever.

What does “steadfast love” mean? We notice that the phrase is used throughout the Bible. Psalm 136 especially uses the phrase whenever the author talks about God. “**O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.**” The Hebrew word for “steadfast love” is “*hesed*,” which is a deeper kind of love and a unique covenant love that only God can give. This is a love that never changes and never fails. This is a love that we can trust in regardless of what our circumstances may be. We may not deserve such a wonderful love, but God gives it to us anyway because He can’t break his promise to love us no matter what. Therefore, God is worthy of being worshipped by us.

## 7. Application

Can we give thanks to God always? And how can we express our thanks to God? Psalm 100 tells us that God is good and dependable always so that we worship Him with thanksgiving and praise. What is worship? Let me share with you my experience yesterday. While I was coming back home after I dropped my son and daughter-in-law off at the airport, I saw a sign on the highway. It says, “Mom wants you to be home for dinner. Drive sober.” Our worship is like a dinner table where we have a wonderful meal with our parents.

Our children may leave for their homes after the Thanksgiving celebration is over. But God is always with us and shares with us in our joys and sorrows, our loneliness, and even our despair. And He encourages us and helps us overcome any situation and gives us happiness in any circumstance.

To express our thanks to God, Psalm 100 invites us to come before God and worship the Lord with gladness. St. Paul tells us that to give thanks in all circumstances is possible. He reminds us that giving thanks to God always is the will of God. I pray that this will of God passes on through the generations as we continue to live as a people of God. “**For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness continues through all generations**” (Psalm 100:5, NIV). Amen.