

# Know that the LORD is God!

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now we come to our Bible reading. So let's take our Bibles and return to Psalm 100, which is our passage for today. Psalm 100. We quite often sing this in hymn form.

And in fact, we will sing it at the end of the service in its most, in its best known form. Psalm 100. Five verses only, but each verse is rich with truth about the Lord and about our response to him. So Psalm 100. It's on page 500 in our hardback Bibles. Page 500. 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. Amen. This is the word of the Lord, and may it be a blessing to us today.

[ 1 : 27 ] Well, let's turn again to Psalm 100 on page 500 in our church Bibles.

I'd like to begin with a quotation from the 19th century preacher C.H. Spurgeon, who wrote an enormous commentary on the Psalms. I think it runs to about seven volumes.

But let me say something, pass on to you something that he wrote about Psalm 100. This Psalm, he said, has been a great favorite with the people of God ever since it was written.

Let us sing the Old Hundredth. Is one of the everyday expressions of the Christian church. Is it? Perhaps it was in the 19th century, but we don't quite put it like that. But anyway, let us sing the Old Hundredth.

And it will be so, that is to say, one of the everyday expressions of the church. It will be so while men exist whose hearts are loyal to the great king. Now, listen to this sentence.

[ 2 : 34 ] Nothing can be more sublime, this side of heaven, than the singing of this noble psalm by a vast congregation. I think C.H. Spurgeon regularly preached to about 5,000 in London.

So I suppose when they were all singing together, it would have been a terrific thing. It is a great, great psalm. And if we can somehow, by the grace of God, incorporate it into our DNA, it will do us a lot of good.

Now, I've got five points to bring out of the psalm this morning. But let me first say one or two things by way of introduction. First, can we ask who it's addressed to? And the answer is not just to the people of Israel.

Look at verse 1. Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. It's the whole world. People of every nation, of every culture, and every language are summoned, commanded to make a joyful noise to the God of Israel, Yahweh, the Lord.

So Hindus are not being commanded to make a joyful noise to Krishna. Arabs are not being told to make a joyful noise to Allah. Every nation is being commanded to look to Yahweh, the Lord God of Israel, and to make a joyful noise to him.

[ 3 : 51 ] The assumption, of course, is that he is the only true God. Now, secondly, let's notice how full this psalm is of commands.

It's a psalm, you might say, of multiple imperatives. Look at them with me. Verse 1. Make a joyful noise. Verse 2. Serve the Lord with gladness.

Come into his presence with singing. Verse 3. Know that the Lord is God. And then you'll see verse 4 has three commands.

Enter his gates. Give thanks to him. Bless his name. Verse 5 has no commands in it. It's there to give reasons for the commands that precede it. So the unknown author of this psalm gives us seven commands in the first four verses of the psalm.

It's like machine gun fire. It's the artillery of the Bible. Bang, bang, bang, bang. But it raises a sharp question. And that is, why should we need to be commanded to do these things?

[ 4 : 57 ] Should we need to be commanded to make a joyful noise to the Lord? To sing in his presence and to thank him and to bless his name? After all, there are plenty of other things that we do without needing to be commanded to do them.

We eat and drink without being commanded to eat and drink. We just naturally want to. We go to bed and sleep without being commanded to. We cough and sneeze without being commanded to. So why should we need to be commanded to be joyful and thankful before the Lord? Well, the answer must be that we are not naturally thankful and joyful towards him.

Our fallback position is grumpiness and ingratitude. I'm speaking for myself here, but I imagine I'm speaking for most of us. Here's the kind of conversation that you hear in many a kitchen.

Kirstie, have you written to thank your Auntie Marjorie for those lovely DVDs yet? Uh, no. Kirstie, this is the 27th of January. Christmas was a month ago.

[ 6 : 02 ] Well, how about this? It's a children's birthday party. And you take your little boy, who's perhaps aged five or six, to enjoy the birthday party with his little friend from school. You drop him off at four o'clock, and you go and pick him up again at 6.30.

And you're standing at the door, just about to say goodbye. And you say to your son, Callum, what do you say to Mrs. McAllister? Vroom, vroom. I don't think Mrs. McAllister heard what you said, Callum.

Try again. Thank you, Mrs. McAllister. Now, why is he so reluctant to be thankful? Of course, grown-ups, we're just big children who have developed a layer of sophistication.

But our nature inside is rather similar. Much of the time, perhaps most of the time, we're not overflowing with joy and thankfulness and singing in the Lord's presence.

We're grumpy and ungrateful and low-spirited. And that is surely why we need to be commanded by the psalmist to sing and rejoice and express our thanks to the Lord.

[ 7 : 05 ] But how do joy and thankfulness begin to grow in a heart that is naturally gloomy? Well, those things won't grow if we spend all our time looking in at ourselves.

If you look inside yourself at your own heart and speak to your heart and say, Heart, come on, old thing, rejoice, chin up, be glad. It's surely not going to work because our hearts are as droopy as a punctured football.

In fact, they're rather worse than that. Much worse. Jesus said, out of the heart of man come evil thoughts, immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, envy, slander, pride. And he mentioned several other horrors as well. So how can an organ that produces that kind of outflow possibly respond to a command to sing and be glad?

However, if we look not inside ourselves, but out of ourselves at the Lord, and if our gaze is repeatedly focused on him and his character and his purposes, we will end up glad and joyful people.

[ 8 : 18 ] And that's what Psalm 100 is teaching us to do. Just look at the words again. It doesn't say in verse 1, make a joyful noise. It says, make a joyful noise to the Lord.

It doesn't say in verse 2, be glad, little heart. It says, serve the Lord with gladness. And in the same verse, it doesn't say, sing loudly and you might just hit a top A flat.

It says, come into his presence with singing. Do you see, it's all about him. Know that the Lord is God. Enter his gates and his courts.

Give thanks to him. So the human emotions of joy and gladness and thanksgiving will fill our hearts as we look outside ourselves at him. Somebody once said, for each look within, take ten looks at him.

It's pretty bad poetry, but it's terrifically good theology. For each look within, take ten looks at him.

The secret of a glad heart is that the heart keeps looking at him, thinking about him, seeking to know him better and better as life goes on.

[ 9 : 29 ] Now we need this teaching today because the secular world that we live in is always trying to turn our gaze in upon ourselves. As though the answers to life's great questions are to be found in self-discovery or self-analysis.

Now we do need to look inside ourselves from time to time. We need to examine our motives. We need to be honest about our sins so that we can confess them to the Lord. But the Bible's great emphasis is on looking at the Lord himself.

It's as we gaze upon him, it's as we learn the Bible's teaching about him, that we begin to experience joy and gladness and thankfulness.

And incidentally, mental good health and ultimately salvation. Well, let's turn to our seven points. Sorry, five points. It was to have been seven, but I've reduced it a bit because I thought we'd be carried out comatose.

So five points. And each of these points, drawn straight from the psalm, I hope will help us to sharpen our understanding of the Lord, of who he is and what he does. So we'll start in verse three. [10:39] We'll come back briefly to verses one and two, but I want us to start in verse three. Here's the first one. The psalm commands us to know that the Lord is God.

Verse three, know it. Now that's an order. The psalmist doesn't say you might care to know that the Lord is God. No, know it, he says.

He's much more direct and insistent. Acknowledge the fact. Ponder it. Think long and hard about it till your knowledge of it becomes deep and strongly built. I guess the implication is that we may know quite a bit about a number of things in life.

We may have picked up all sorts of knowledge. Mathematics, geology, music, chemistry, architecture, rugby. Not to mention gardening, cookery, how to drive a golf ball straight down the fairway.

Some of you know how to do that. But the central piece of knowledge that we all need to develop is the knowledge hidden from so many in today's world that the Lord, Yahweh, the one who has made a covenant with Israel, the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, he is God.

[11:51] So what happens when we develop or as we develop a deeply and strongly built knowledge that Yahweh is God? Well, this knowledge will give us stability and strength to our whole life.

That first phrase in verse 3 answers three of life's most important questions. First, is there a God? Answer, yes indeed.

Second, who is this God? Answer, his name is Yahweh. I am who I am. The God who revealed himself by name to Moses at the burning bush.

Third, are there any other gods? No. The Lord God, Yahweh, he is God. Establishing that he, the God of Israel, is God is something of fundamental importance.

Do you remember that great contest on Mount Carmel between Elijah, the true prophet of the Lord, and the 450 prophets of Baal who were false prophets? Now, it was Elijah himself, the prophet, who designed how the contest was going to be followed through.

[12:59] But he started off by saying to the people of Israel, how long will you go limping between two opinions, two different opinions? If the Lord is God, if Yahweh is God, follow him.

But if Baal is God, then follow him. The people of Israel were torn between the true God and Baal. How long will you go limping between two opinions? And then Elijah threw down a most daring challenge.

He arranged for two bulls to be brought, and the bulls were slaughtered and cut up, and each of the bulls was laid upon a great pile of wood. The prophets of Baal were then to call upon their God, and he, if he was the true God, was to answer by setting fire to their sacrifice.

And Elijah was to call upon the name of the Lord with the same request. Now, you know how the story went. The prophets of Baal, they hopped about, they stamped, they hollered, they shouted, they cut themselves with knives for several hours till the blood gushed out.

But nothing happened. Nothing. And then finally, towards evening, Elijah called gently to the Lord, O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel.

[14:17] Answer me, O Lord, that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God. It's exactly the same phrase that we have here in Psalm 100 verse 3.

Let them know that you are God. And as soon as Elijah prayed that prayer, the fire of the Lord fell from heaven and consumed everything. The burnt offering, the wood, the stones of the altar, the dust, and the many gallons of water that Elijah had poured all over the sacrifice to make the point that this really was from heaven.

And when the people saw it, they fell down on their faces and they cried out, the Lord, he is God, the Lord, he is God.

Psalm 100 verse 3. So there's the first thing. The psalmist commands us to know that the Lord, that is the God of the Old and New Testaments, is God.

There is no other. Now, secondly, and still in verse 3, the psalmist teaches us a lesson that he first learned right back in the first chapter of the Bible.

[15:20] And that is that the Lord, Yahweh, is our creator. It is he who made us. There it is halfway through verse 3. He is our creator.

Now, our secular contemporaries don't like that idea one little bit. From their point of view, if you admit that the Lord has created you, there are consequences.

And they're pretty unpleasant consequences for the atheist or the agnostic. Just think of the atheist as he ponders this question. He says to himself, if I admit that I'm created, that involves belief in a creator.

And I have no intention of going down that route. My atheism is non-negotiable. And secondly, if I'm created, it means that I'm dependent. And I'm not going to swallow that one because my independence is one of the central planks of my whole philosophy.

And thirdly, if I'm created, it must mean that there is a purpose for my life not decided upon by myself. And I'm certainly not going to buy that one because nothing will persuade me that I'm going to be directed by anyone but yours truly.

[16:32] Secular man defines himself by his sense of independence. I'm in charge around here. No one is going to push me about. I will make up my own moral rules.

I will screw up every faculty of credulity in my being to convince myself that I'm descended from apes, which came from fish, which came from something wriggling about in an extensive warm marsh in Botswana ten and a half billion years ago.

Or something like that. Now, don't you think the Bible's account is so much easier to believe? The Lord created us. He created the human race corporately and each of us individually.

Each one of us is a masterpiece of breathtakingly wonderful design. How great must the mind be that made the minds of each of us?

And it brings us joy and strength to know the truth about our creator. And the truth is, first, we have been created. Second, we've been created to depend upon one far greater and kinder and wiser than we are ourselves.

[17:44] Third, we've been created to follow his will and purpose. Our lives work well, properly, when we follow the maker's instructions. But when we bend the rules to serve our selfish purposes, we leave the rails and we crash.

So the psalm is telling us, first, that Yahweh is God. Second, that Yahweh is our creator. Third, that Yahweh is our owner. Now, we're still in verse 3 here.

It is he who made us and we are his. And the idea is repeated in the next line. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Do you see how three times that little word his comes in the one verse? It's a small word, but the implications of it are very great. Now, when you think a little bit more widely through the Bible, I think we realize that the Bible shows us that the people of God are his, his possession, on four different levels, or if you like, for four different reasons.

First of all, we're his by creation, as we've just seen. Because to make something is to have a right of ownership over it. If you make a coffee table, for example, it's your table because you've made it.

[19:02] If you paint a picture of a vase full of peonies and you hang it up on the kitchen wall, it's your picture because you made the effort to produce it. And in the same way, the Lord who created us has a creator's right of possession.

But secondly, we are his by redemption. We are blood bought. We're purchased by Christ at the cost of his life.

As Paul says to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 6, you are not your own, for you were bought with a price. The apostle Peter says in his first letter, you were ransomed from the futile ways of your forefathers, not with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.

Therefore, we have been paid for. And without that ransom payment, we would be lost beyond recovery. Then third, we're his by preservation.

As verse 3 puts it, we are the sheep of his pasture. In other words, he feeds us. He sustains our life. He preserves us. All our material needs are met by him.

[20:13] He satisfies our stomachs with food and our minds with so many delightful things. Music and art and literature, the company of friends, even the pleasure we get from our dogs and cats.

It all comes from the hand of our God. And fourthly, we are his by marriage. One of the great themes that runs right the way through the Bible is the theme that God is our heavenly husband and we are his bride.

Corporately, we're his bride. And we know that one of our joys as a church family is to see our young adults and occasionally older ones as well getting married.

Think of the typical wedding service that we come to. We witness their vows, don't we? Will you be mine for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health till death us do part?

Yes, I will. And a bond is forged. And the depth and tenacity of that bond deepens wonderfully with the years.

[ 21 : 17 ] Paul says to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians, I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. In a sense, that's what evangelism is.

It's getting people betrothed to the Lord Jesus. Look again at that powerful phrase in verse 3. We are his. His by creation.

His by redemption. His by preservation. His by marriage. So you might say quadruply his. To know that we are his is a thrilling and stabilizing piece of knowledge.

Just think of it. Many folk today feel adrift as though they don't belong anywhere or to anybody. But Christians are able to say we are his. Yahweh is our owner.

And then fourth. Yahweh is our shepherd. Now we're still in verse 3 here. So we are the sheep of his pasture. Now notice that even at the end of verse 3, we're still feeling the weight of the command at the beginning of verse 3, which is the command, know.

[ 22 : 27 ] It runs right the way through the verse. Know that the Lord, he is God. Know that it is he who has made us. Know that we are his. Know that we are the sheep of his pasture. The command runs right the way through.

So the psalmist is not just gently telling us that we are the sheep of his pasture. He's commanding us to know the fact. In other words, this is not just a curious but unimportant piece of information. This is essential obligatory knowledge for the people of God. Know that you are his sheep. Now do you like being likened to a sheep?

It doesn't just happen here. It happens at several parts in the Bible. Sheep without a shepherd is one of the phrases Jesus used. Do you like being a sheep? Sheep have earned a reputation for silliness.

And they do deserve it. My family and I live out in the country and we have a lot of sheep in the fields around us. And quite often I've seen that if one sheep does something silly, like going through the wrong part of the fence at the wrong moment, the others simply follow it.

[ 23 : 29 ] They don't think for themselves. They just follow the next one. And we people are very much like that. We pride ourselves often on being individualists.

What do the young people say today? Indy. Indy. But we all follow trends and fashions, don't we? In clothing and hairstyles.

The way we use language. The older ones, of course, just as much as the younger ones. There are certain fashions, aren't there, that we follow. But in Bible language, sheep are more than just silly and thoughtless.

Much worse, they're sinful. They go astray. The prophet Isaiah says, all we like sheep have gone astray. And they need to be rescued. The shepherd in Jesus' parable leaves the 99 sheep and goes searching for the one that is lost.

Sheep need to be protected as well from robbers and wild animals because they're weak and vulnerable. They need to be disciplined and ruled. That's why the picture of Psalm 23, the shepherd there carries a rod and a staff, not just for cosmetic effect, but to keep the sheep in order, to rule them.

[ 24 : 44 ] But despite our silliness, our sinfulness, our weakness, our vulnerability, and our indiscipline, the Lord's sheep in the Bible are of immense value to the shepherd.

Think of the words of Jesus. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. That's how much we're valued. Jesus was prepared to lay down his life so as to save our lives.

If you ever feel that you're not worth very much, look at the cross in your mind's eye. And picture that figure stretched out upon the cross. And then you will realize just how much you are valued by the Lord Jesus.

Now, this is a point which hasn't always been well understood. And in connection with this, I'd like to show you something in our hymn books. I wonder if you'd turn with me to hymn number 699.

699. Now, this is a rather fine 19th century hymn.

[ 25 : 49 ] You'll see the author was a woman called Elizabeth Clefane. And it's a hymn about the cross of Jesus. I don't think we sing it very often, but perhaps we should a little bit more often. Now, look with me at the fourth verse, which I'll read out.

Verse 4. Now, that's a good verse.

But one important word has been altered from the original form. And one or two of the older folks here might remember how it used to be.

That was the last word of the verse. If you look at an older hymn book, you'll see that those last three lines read, Two wonders I confess, the wonders of his glorious love, and my own worthlessness.

Worthlessness. Now, John Stott, in his very fine book, *The Cross of Christ*, which came out, I guess, about 30 years ago, he sharply criticizes this hymn author for that one word.

[ 27 : 07 ] He says, don't call the Lord's people worthless. Unworthy? Yes, indeed. But not worthless. Jesus would never have gone to the cross to die for something that had no value.

And John Stott is right, isn't he? Our value, our great, great value, is measured by the cross. We are incalculably valuable to the Lord Jesus.

The good shepherd laid down his life for the sheep. And I strongly suspect, I don't know this, but I suspect that when this hymn book was edited about 15 years ago, the editor of this particular hymn must have read John Stott and, I guess, had taken his point on board.

Unworthy, we certainly are, but worthless, never. To say that we're worthless denies the ultimate price that was paid for us. So, to go back to the psalm, when we read in Psalm 100, verse 3, that we are the sheep of his pasture, we are being commanded to know and to savor the fact that our shepherd cares about us with a depth of compassion and love that we are only just beginning to understand.

We're now fifth, fifth and last. Yahweh is good. As you look at the five verses of the psalm, you'll see that only verse 3 and verse 5 teach us about God's nature and character.

[ 28 : 34 ] Verses 1, 2, and 4 are all about our response to him, about our rejoicing and thankfulness and singing and praise. It's verses 3 and 5 that teach us about the God we're praising and thanking.

And you'll see that verse 5 is about his goodness. And this verse dwells upon just one aspect of his goodness. There's much more that could be said about his goodness, but this verse picks up just one thing, and that is that his steadfast love and faithfulness endure forever to all generations.

Now, that phrase, steadfast love, is almost a technical term, and it means the enduring love expressed in the Bible covenant. And the word faithfulness is also a covenant word.

It has marital overtones. The Lord God is the faithful heavenly husband of his people, and his faithfulness to his bride can never be and will never be compromised.

Now, the bride, the people of God, may prove unfaithful at times, but God is saying the husband never will. Now, there's great comfort in this final verse of the psalm.

[ 29 : 47 ] The covenanted, promised, pledged love of the Lord for his people endures forever, and his marital faithfulness endures to all generations.

Now, just contrast this with human weddings and human marriages. Human marriage is lovely where there is faithfulness and enduring affection and commitment.

But we know that every family, certainly every extended family, has sad tales to tell of marriage covenants, marriage vows that have not been kept. Even if it hasn't happened in your own immediate family, you'll have had cousins or uncles or some other relative where a marriage has come apart, and you'll know the sadness of it.

But once we are members of God's people, we are bound into a marriage that is unbreakable, both in this life and in the world to come.

It's God who creates this marriage bond. It's God who brings us into the marriage. In fact, to submit to Christ as Lord is to become part of his bride immediately.

[ 30 : 54 ] Now, our verse 5 here, just look with me at the wording. It's a verse that seems to join time and eternity together. The marital faithfulness of the Lord endures to all generations.

That surely is time and history. Our generation, the generation of our children and our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren, and so on, until time and history as we know it ends with the return of

the Lord Jesus.

But you'll see that verse 5 leads us also into eternity. His steadfast love endures forever. All generations speaks of time, whereas forever speaks of eternity.

And for all of us, a time is coming when time will cease to exist and eternity will become our dwelling place. When did God first declare his steadfast love and his covenanted faithfulness to the human race?

When did he first breathe words of that kind to mankind? Well, it was back in the Garden of Eden. He didn't say much, but it started there. And then his covenant became clearer and more focused and detailed when he spoke to Noah in Genesis chapter 9 and set the rainbow in the clouds.

[ 32 : 12 ] And he said to Noah, while the earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease. Then, centuries later, he spoke to Abraham.

And he said to Abraham, I will make of you a great nation. I will give you the promised land. And in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. All the families of the earth.

So that's a covenant promise, not only for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles, given to Abraham back in Genesis chapter 12 in around 1800 BC, give or take a century.

Then some 400 years later, nearer to 1400 BC, God spoke to Moses and threw him to the whole nation of Israel. In his grace and mercy, he gave them laws and statutes for their great benefit. He led them through the wilderness and brought them into the promised land, despite their waywardness. And then some 400 years after Moses, in about 1000 BC, the Lord God extended the terms of his covenant to King David.

[ 33 : 20 ] And he promised King David, 2 Samuel chapter 7, that a king of his line, a direct descendant of David's, would eventually rule Israel, not just for a few years, but forever.

As Isaiah put it, some 300 years after David. Of the increase of his government and of peace, there will be no end.

On the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness, from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts, that is his unconquerable, unchallengeable zeal, will do this.

Now back to Psalm 100 verse 5. His steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations.

That is why the Lord is good. Think again back in history. A thousand years after David, Jesus was born. And through the shedding of his blood in death, the blood of the new covenant, Jesus established this new extended covenant, which involved not the abolition of the law and the prophets, but the fulfillment of them.

[ 34 : 36 ] The bringing of everything that God had been doing for 2,000 years in Israel, to its glorious consummation in the death, the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus, so that men and women of all nations and tribes could be brought into this unbreakable relationship with the Prince of Heaven, the Son of God.

This is why the Lord is good. His steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations. What have we seen then?

Well, we've seen the commandment, which is at the center of the psalm, verse 3, and that is the commandment to know, to get certain things deep into our understanding, into our hearts and our minds.

We're commanded to know, first of all, that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is God, the only God.

Secondly, that he's our creator. Thirdly, that he is our owner.

We are his. Fourth, that he is our shepherd. And fifth, that he is good, because his steadfast love endures forever. And it's these great facts about God laid out for us in verse 3 and verse 5, which lie behind the psalmist's commands to us in verses 1 and 2 and 4, to make a joyful noise to the Lord, to serve him with gladness, to sing unrestrainedly in his presence, to thank him, to praise him, and to bless his name.

[ 36 : 06 ] So, friends, let's decisively reject the attitude of secular society, which is craning its neck every which way to look within, as though joy and praise will somehow arise in the human heart by discovering something deep inside ourselves.

That's a recipe for despair in the end. The Christian life is not about being angled in upon oneself. It's about learning to look at the Lord.

Only by looking at him will we find the joy and meaning and purpose for which we were made. Only by looking at him will we find gladness and joy and singing and praise and thanksgiving.

The great command of Psalm 100 is in this word, know this command, know him. Become deeply acquainted with him.

The great adventure of human life, the great romance of human life, is coming to know him. That he is God, he has made us, we are his, we are his sheep.

[ 37 : 08 ] And as we come to know and understand these things about him, a wonderful sense of melody and joy and praise will inevitably develop in our hearts. And we shall know that he is good, because his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Let's bow our heads and we'll pray. We thank you so much, dear Heavenly Father, that because of who you are, and of what you have done, and of what you have promised, we're able to make a joyful noise with people from all around the earth that we're able to serve you not with a gloomy and bowed-down spirit, but with gladness.

That we're able to come into your presence with singing. That we can enter your gates with thanksgiving and your courts with praise, giving thanks to you and blessing your name, because to know you thrills us and gives us stability and joy.

And a sense also of your eternal purpose and of our eternal belonging to you across the generations and into the new creation, into eternity itself.

So please, dear Father, take these words from Psalm 100 and write them deep on our hearts and use them, we pray, to change us and to help us to love you and to rejoice in you and in our Lord Jesus more and more deeply.

[ 38 : 56 ] And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.