

# THANK YOU AT YOUR SERVICE

PSALM 100 NOVEMBER 28, 2021

What makes a Thanksgiving meal? This week, some of you were able to enjoy special items that only come out once a year. Others had to endure traditional horrors that issue from the kitchen. Americans love Thanksgiving. When it comes to the feast we usually go *big*. 20% of *all* the turkeys eaten each year nationwide are eaten on that *one day*.<sup>1</sup> At the Thanksgiving table, the average American eats upwards of 3,000 calories.<sup>2</sup>

These last few years, between COVID and spiking food costs, maybe Thanksgiving dinner looked a little different for some folks. Or maybe you are the kind of person who wants to go non-traditional each year. One way or another, we had to think through what makes a thanksgiving meal.

In ancient Israel, there was a prescribed meal that individuals could bring to the Lord as an act of thanksgiving. It was known as the 'peace' offering or the 'fellowship sacrifice,' and it had some interesting features. First, it wasn't just the burning of an animal on the altar - it was to be presented *with* unleavened cakes, mixed with oil *and* leavened bread.<sup>3</sup> And it was an offering that you would *share* with the Lord. With the burnt offering, the whole animal was put on the altar. With a sin offering, part of the animal was burned outside the camp, some of its blood was sprinkled here and there, and the fat was dealt with on the altar. But the thanksgiving offering was a meal you shared. The Lord would 'consume' a portion on the altar, the priests would be given some, and then the offerer would take the rest to enjoy with his family or any other ritually clean person.<sup>4</sup>

This special act of worship even had a soundtrack provided in the book of Psalms. It's Psalm 100. Many Psalms are full of thankfulness, but this is the only one identified specifically for the giving of thanks.<sup>5</sup> Though it was the accompaniment for a ritual in the Lord's House, it is by no means limited to the tribes of Israel. It's a song given to all the world, inviting us to consider God, to be reminded of His love toward us, and then to praise Him with joyful thanks. But it doesn't only tell us to *do* it, it shows us how we can. It shows what makes a thanksgiving offering to the Lord.

## **Psalm 100:1 - A psalm of thanksgiving. <sup>1</sup> Let the whole earth shout triumphantly to the Lord!**

We can't imagine all nations unified in one heart, worshipping God. Mankind today is too divided. We see, in our own nation, the fracturing effect of sin and selfishness and pride. But this verse reminds us that, one day, all will be reconciled by the power of Jesus. In His Kingdom, all the nations of the world will flow to the Mountain of God to worship Him, in Person, in His house.<sup>6</sup> Instead of shouting *at* one another, we will shout *with* one another. That day is coming. For Christians, this verse is a prophecy *and* a keepsake. Since we know we will receive this coming

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.insider.com/thanksgiving-facts-food-consumption-americans-turkey-2019-11>

<sup>2</sup> <https://caloriecontrol.org/stuff-the-bird-not-yourself-how-to-deal-with-the-3000-calorie-thanksgiving-meal/>

<sup>3</sup> Leviticus 7:11-21

<sup>4</sup> <https://rightlydividedbible.wordpress.com/2014/12/16/leviticus-3-laws-for-peace-offering/>

<sup>5</sup> James Montgomery Boice *Psalms: Volume 2*

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 2:2

Kingdom, the book of Hebrews tells us to apply Psalm 100 now and to do so with thankfulness and worship.<sup>7</sup>

The first direction we're given is to "shout triumphantly to the Lord." Now, on average, we're a more conservative and reserved group. But there are times when we shout, right? In times of exhilaration or anticipation. We shout on roller coasters or when a home run sails over the wall. Imagine going to a concert where one of your favorite bands are playing. It would be strange if the lights dimmed and the band walked out to *silence*. When they enter, the crowd erupts in excitement and praise.

God has made each of us with personalities and peculiarities, but He gave us emotion on purpose - because He is an emotional Being. God's desire is that we be enthusiastic when we worship Him. Not for show - not to draw attention to ourselves - but that our worship be lively in our hearts. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* puts it this way: "[We] are not to be subdued in [our] praise to Him."

When we gather, the attitude of our hearts should be one of anticipation and triumph because we are coming into the presence of God Himself. Because we have been ransomed by Jesus, saved from sin and death. Because our Lord is the One Who will, one day, wipe away every tear from our eyes. By Him we are victorious over sin and suffering and struggle because our God is true and He is alive and He is with us. For individuals, the thanksgiving sacrifice was a freewill offering, just as you are freely gathered here today and the spiritual thanksgiving offering begins with a mindset of anticipation and triumph and enthusiasm for the Lord.

Now, this *can* be the attitude of our hearts any time, but when Christians gather together there is a wonderful, unique ability for us to praise God and for Him to minister to us. Joseph Benson writes:

*"In all acts of religious worship, whether in secret or in our families, we may be truly said to come into God's presence; but it is in public worship especially that we enter into his gates, and into his courts, as expressed [in] Psalm 100."*<sup>8</sup>

### **Psalm 100:2 - <sup>2</sup>Serve the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.**

To worship God *is* to serve Him. That's not the *only* way we serve God, of course, but bringing an offering of thankful praise to God is an act that He delights in. *Singing is serving!* We've all had to learn to bring certain things with us when we go out, right? Depending on where you want to enter, you have to think, "Do I have my mask? Do I have a vaccine passport?" When we come into the assembly of God's people, this verse would have us ask, "Do I have my glad and joyful song?"

It is often difficult to *feel* joyful. We are hurting. Those around us are suffering. We have shortages and concerns and pressures and fears. God knows these things. So how could He be so callous as to ask us to be glad? Is He some cosmic Marie Antoinette who is ignoring the real problems we deal with? We know that isn't true.

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<sup>7</sup> Hebrews 12:28

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Benson *Commentary Of The Old And New Testaments*

**Psalm 56:8 (NLT) - <sup>8</sup> You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.**

The Bible shows us that our sufferings, though unpleasant, are immensely useful when it comes to forming us into the people God wants us to be, in demonstrating the power of God to a lost and dying world, and in personally drawing us *nearer* to God. To give way to joy in the midst of sorrow is one of the greatest abilities of the Christian life. Beaten and bleeding, fastened in agonizing stocks, we listen in as Paul and Silas sing praises in the dark. The world was changed because of it.

Verse 2 also helps us to remember something tender and precious: We come before God with joyful singing because that's what *He* is doing for us.

**Zephaniah 3:17 - <sup>17</sup> The Lord your God is among you, a warrior who saves. He will rejoice over you with gladness. He will be quiet in his love. He will delight in you with singing."**

Now someone might ask, "How can I be happy to worship in this way if it is an obligation?" Well, first of all, the choice is yours. The Lord calls us to this life and this mindset for our good, but He will not force us. But maybe you came in today thinking, "Lord, it hurts so bad, I just can't be joyful." The Lord understands. He loves you. And He invites you to worship Him gladly all the same. Think of it this way: If you were being asked to dig a hole all day, it would seem a chore. But what if you were asked to dig a hole alongside those who love you the most and that, at the bottom of that hole you knew you would discover a priceless treasure? I imagine we would happily take up the shovel.

**Psalm 100:3 - <sup>3</sup> Acknowledge that the Lord is God. He made us, and we are his—his people, the sheep of his pasture.**

Worship is more than just a feeling of exuberance and gladness. To be *true* it must find its source in Who God is. That pumpkin pie you ate had more ingredients than just pumpkin filling. In this verse we move from the heart to the head. We are to acknowledge Who God is, who we are in relation to Him, and what His intentions for us are. We can't worship rightly or effectively unless we know the truth about God. This is why Church worship that is purely emotional without proper theological content or understanding is ultimately unsatisfying. If it's all about our feelings or eliciting a certain kind of behavior from the congregation, then it won't be on target, because the aim is wrong. The Lord must be the focus because He is God and He is to be the object of our adoration.

Of course, the unbeliever says, "there is no God." Or, "*I'm* god." Or, "It doesn't matter if there is a god." But this is a matter of supreme consequence. We must pause and acknowledge not only that God exists, but Who He is. He is the Creator - and therefore Owner - of all things. It's *His* breath in your lungs.<sup>9</sup> It is by His grace that the sun rose this morning and our hearts keep beating (more than 5,000 times before our service is over). This God has called out to us - all the people of the earth - and He has invited us to know Him and follow Him and give ourselves to Him.

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<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 42:5

Why did God make us? He didn't have to. He *wanted* to. He made us as *special* creations - exceptional above any other creature - so that He might love us and so that we might commune intimately with Him. He made us to be His chosen people and so that He could adopt us into His family. We are *His*. And the Bible, page after page, shows that He is our Maker, our Master, our Father, our Redeemer, our Friend, our King. And, as this verse says, our Shepherd.

We're a lot like sheep. We're not too smart, not too strong, we like to group up, and we need to be cared for. By the way, research shows that we are getting dumber as a species.<sup>10</sup> But that's ok, because we have a Good Shepherd Who knows how to care for us - One who has made it His business to lead us to green pastures, still waters, places of rest and growth. Sadly, we all, like sheep, have gone astray. That's what sin does. It drives us from this loving Shepherd. We've gone our own way. But that's why Jesus came - to pay the penalty for the wrongs we've done, to stand in our place and receive the punishment for our rebellion against God. He died and rose again and now He is our Shepherd, gathering us and tending us and carrying us in the folds of His garment.<sup>11</sup> You *belong* to God. He looks at you and says, "You are *Mine!*"<sup>12</sup>

**Psalm 100:4 - <sup>4</sup>Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and bless his name.**

You can't just go to the houses of 'important' people. There are lots of rules when visiting the White House or the Vatican. J.K. Rowling was in the news last week because some activists posted her address online.<sup>13</sup> *J.K. doesn't want you coming to her house!* Now consider what God has done. The King of kings has flung open the doors to His house and invited all the world to come in.

But who may enter? David asked that question in Psalm 24. The answer: The one who has clean hands and a pure heart. That presents a problem. Because there is none righteous, no not one. But, in addition to opening up the way into His house, God has *also* taken it upon Himself to give us cleansing. In Isaiah 1 God says something dramatic and astonishing. He says, "Come, let's settle it. Though your sins are scarlet, I'll make you white as snow." It is accomplished by the power of His grace through the blood of Jesus for those who will believe and receive His salvation. When we approach Him in faith and obedience He will take us, poor and wretched as we are, and He will clothe us in *His* garments of salvation, His robe of righteousness and thereby we can enter into His presence unafraid and undefiled. Knowing what God has done, how could we *not* rush in with thankfulness and praise?

Verse 4 shows that once in, our duty is not to try to *prove* ourselves before God or work to *keep* the robes He's freely given us. Our duty is simply to receive from Him and worship Him and love Him. Charles Spurgeon writes, "So long as we are receivers of mercy we must be givers of thanks."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.inc.com/jessica-stillman/we-are-all-getting-dumber-new-science-proves-no-one-is-sure-why.html>

<sup>11</sup> Isaiah 40:11

<sup>12</sup> Isaiah 43:1

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-news/jk-rowling-slams-transgender-activists-posting-home-address-twitter-rcna6375>

<sup>14</sup> Charles Spurgeon *The Treasury Of David*

The proper, spiritual thanksgiving meal includes blessing His *name*. It's not just that we're generally happy to be alive, or generally thankful that God exists, but that the focus of our praise be God Himself and His holy name. The Name of Jesus, which is above every other name in greatness and power and authority. His name is "perfumed poured out."<sup>15</sup> At His name, demons tremble and are subject and there is salvation is no other name, but in the name of Jesus - a name which means Yahweh is Salvation. His name is Emmanuel, which means God *with us*.

As we come into the Lord's presence we should fill up our thoughts with Who God is and what He has done. His power does not abate. His greatness does not diminish. His Kingdom will never end. And His love will never fail!

**Psalm 100:5 - *For the Lord is good, and his faithful love endures forever; his faithfulness, through all generations.***

We've heard again and again that God is love, but what would it matter if the *quality* of His love was lacking? Don Juan was a fictional character who devoted himself to "loving" many women, right? Or we see famous womanizers today, who - in some sense - have a great capacity for what *they* might call love. But it's an impure love - a love of self. That is not how God loves. His love is faithful. It is characterized by *mercy* and *loyalty* and *acts of deliverance*.<sup>16</sup> He has bound Himself to us with this love, not because of what we can do for Him but because of His desire to lavish us with His salvation and help and kindness. This love is the standard by which we measure goodness and compassion and affection. And, in reflecting on it, our hearts should well up with thanksgiving.

In 1875, Christina Rossetti wrote a poem titled, *In The Bleak Midwinter*. Speaking of our Lord, Jesus Christ she wrote:

*What can I give Him, poor as I am?  
If I were a Shepherd I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a Wise Man I would do my part,  
Yet what I can I give Him, Give my heart.*

This is what we can offer when we gather together to be in God's presence: Hearts that are full of thankfulness and understanding of what God has done. Psalm 100 shows us that one way we can give our hearts is through singing together the praises of our King. No longer do we have to cart in sheep or bulls. Now we are able to bring melodies in a banquet of worship, knowing that as we sing to Him, He sings over us. Knowing that every hurt, every sorrow, every fear will one day be dealt with, because our Lord, our Shepherd, has overcome them all. And now we can live life in His presence, as members of His house, full of strength because of the joy He has given us.

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<sup>15</sup> Song of Solomon 1:3

<sup>16</sup> *Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament*