



## Week 1: Psalms of Praise and Thanksgiving

### Day 1

#### **Psalm 100**

*A Psalm of Thanksgiving*

- <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 for ever,  
and his faithfulness to all generations.

#### **Commentary**

We're starting our summer series on Praying the Psalms and this week is all about psalms of prayer and thanksgiving. It's only natural to begin with Psalm 100.

Psalm 100 is the biblical standard of what it means to praise and give thanks to God. We could measure all our attempts at gratitude in life by using this psalm as the norm. The recipe for thanksgiving as laid out here is clear and concise, as easy as breathing for children but for adults as easy to forget as algebra.

1. Just be glad. Gladness is more than just a feeling; it's an attitude, a posture of the heart, a way of being in the world. Gladness is mindful of the entirety of life as one giant blessing. Gladness is unlearned as we grow up and see too many things no one should be glad about. As adults we

have to make some effort to be glad again. Gladness is no accident. That's why Psalm 100 is here, to remind us of our birthright: be glad that you have a life and a world you didn't create.

2. We belong to God. The sense of being claimed by God leads effortlessly to praise. The same God who made black holes, the same God who chose the colors of the sunset claims you as a child, as a forever member of God's family. Doesn't that make you *want* to give thanks?
3. Bless God. One of the spectrums of spirituality has God blessing us on one end and us blessing God on the other. Psalm 100 invites us to do some of the blessing, for when we become blessers of God we become more grateful people.
4. Remember you are loved. You are loved no matter what. God's love for you is a law of the universe; it cannot be undone or the galaxies would unravel. Let's your belovedness lead to praise.

### Reflection Question

How can you bless God today with your life?

### Day 2

#### Psalm 121

*A Song of Ascents*

<sup>1</sup> I lift up my eyes to the hills—  
from where will my help come?

<sup>2</sup> My help comes from the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth.

<sup>3</sup> He will not let your foot be moved;  
he who keeps you will not slumber.

<sup>4</sup> He who keeps Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.

<sup>5</sup> The Lord is your keeper;  
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

<sup>6</sup> The sun shall not strike you by day,  
nor the moon by night.

<sup>7</sup> The Lord will keep you from all evil;  
he will keep your life.

<sup>8</sup> The Lord will keep  
your going out and your coming in  
from this time on and for evermore.

### Commentary

Psalm 121 belongs to category of psalms called Songs of Ascents. Remember all psalms are songs, they were mean to be sung, not read, and this particular kind of song would have been sung on a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem. All the members of Israel were supposed to make the journey, or pilgrimage, to Jerusalem at least three times a year and offer a sacrifice in the Temple. Jerusalem literally sits on top of a hill, which explains why the psalms lifts up his eyes. He's walking up toward the Holy City, and his eyes can't help but move up.

The psalmist uses the word “keep” six times. The word in Hebrew is *shamar*, meaning to keep, guard, or protect. Why give thanks to God? Because God is your keeper, your guard in your waking and sleeping, your protector in life and death. God is not far away. God is not a million miles up in the air, above the clouds. No. God is as close as your shadow (v. 5). This God can be trusted to keep you, because this God will always be close by.

### Reflection Question

Will you lift up your eyes today when life gets tough and give thanks?

### Day 3

#### Psalm 145:1-9

*Praise. Of David.*

- <sup>1</sup> I will extol you, my God and King,  
and bless your name for ever and ever.
- <sup>2</sup> Every day I will bless you,  
and praise your name for ever and ever.
- <sup>3</sup> Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;  
his greatness is unsearchable.
  
- <sup>4</sup> One generation shall laud your works to another,  
and shall declare your mighty acts.
- <sup>5</sup> On the glorious splendour of your majesty,  
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
- <sup>6</sup> The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed,  
and I will declare your greatness.
- <sup>7</sup> They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness,  
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.
  
- <sup>8</sup> The Lord is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- <sup>9</sup> The Lord is good to all,  
and his compassion is over all that he has made.

### Commentary

Here we have a Psalm by, or for, King David (the Hebrew there is ambiguous). Many of the psalms have this prescript, “of/for David”, meaning King David wrote that psalm or it was written for him. The psalms are worship songs, and David took his worship seriously enough to write his own music or commission new music. He was truly a patron of the worship arts.

Why is David praising God in this psalm? Maybe because he has just won a military battle. Maybe his son or daughter was just born. Or maybe none of the other worship songs could articulate his feeling of gratitude to God, so he picked up a pen and spoke what he felt. Any of these could be true. What matters is that praise and thanksgiving for David was deeply personal. What are they “mighty acts” of God that David has experienced in his own life? An event must have happened in his life that he *had* to give thanks for, not out of duty or obligation, but because it was the only natural response. Praise and thanksgiving are not just good ideas; they are in direct response to what God is doing in our lives.

Something must have happened in David's life that called his attention to the utter greatness of God. Here is another reason to praise God: God is too great not to be praised. But we don't just know God's greatness is our brains like a concept out of a textbook. We know God's greatness in our hearts like David, because we've tripped over God's greatness in our lives and we can't help but say, "Wow!"

### **Reflection Question**

When have you tripped over God's greatness and you couldn't help but say, "Wow!"

### **Day 4**

#### **Psalm 148**

<sup>1</sup> Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord from the heavens;  
praise him in the heights!

<sup>2</sup> Praise him, all his angels;  
praise him, all his host!

<sup>3</sup> Praise him, sun and moon;  
praise him, all you shining stars!

<sup>4</sup> Praise him, you highest heavens,  
and you waters above the heavens!

<sup>5</sup> Let them praise the name of the Lord,  
for he commanded and they were created.

<sup>6</sup> He established them for ever and ever;  
he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.

<sup>7</sup> Praise the Lord from the earth,  
you sea monsters and all deeps,

<sup>8</sup> fire and hail, snow and frost,  
stormy wind fulfilling his command!

<sup>9</sup> Mountains and all hills,  
fruit trees and all cedars!

<sup>10</sup> Wild animals and all cattle,  
creeping things and flying birds!

<sup>11</sup> Kings of the earth and all peoples,  
princes and all rulers of the earth!

<sup>12</sup> Young men and women alike,  
old and young together!

<sup>13</sup> Let them praise the name of the Lord,  
for his name alone is exalted;  
his glory is above earth and heaven.

<sup>14</sup> He has raised up a horn for his people,  
praise for all his faithful,

for the people of Israel who are close to him.  
Praise the Lord!

### **Commentary**

Those familiar with the old hymns of the faith might hear the echo of “All Creatures of our God and King” by St. Frances of Assisi. Both the hymn and the psalm are worship songs to God as the Creator of all things.

Why is God worthy of praise? Why should God be worshipped? If we had no other reason than that the sun, moon, and stars exist, then that would be reason enough. That creation exists in all of its beauty and balance is reason enough for us to praise God. When you hear a piece of beautiful music, you can't help but give thanks to the songwriter in your heart. Or when you're at a concert and you're swept up into the music, you can't help but praise the people who made this experience possible. Creation itself is a concert we can lose ourselves in, and it's only natural that we give thanks to the songwriter.

There's an impulse to thanksgiving that tunes up inside of you without you thinking about it. That's the impulse of praise, and all creation has it. Note that in the psalm, the sun and moons and mountains themselves are praising God. Though they are inanimate, they too have the impulse to praise the God who made them possible. Think about it: *God would be praised even without us*. The rocks give thanks to God even if we don't. It's only we humans who ever say no to praising God, and when we say yes, we get to join the creation symphony that is happening all around us.

### **Reflection Question**

Look up “All Creatures of our God and King” online and listen to it. How can you join the sun and moon in praising God today?

## **Day 5**

### **Psalm 150**

<sup>1</sup> Praise the Lord!

Praise God in his sanctuary;  
praise him in his mighty firmament!

<sup>2</sup> Praise him for his mighty deeds;  
praise him according to his surpassing greatness!

<sup>3</sup> Praise him with trumpet sound;  
praise him with lute and harp!

<sup>4</sup> Praise him with tambourine and dance;  
praise him with strings and pipe!

<sup>5</sup> Praise him with clanging cymbals;  
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!

<sup>6</sup> Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!  
Praise the Lord!

### **Commentary**

It's only fitting that we end this week with Psalm 150, the last psalm in the Book of Psalms. Here we learn of the where, why, and how of praise.

1. Where? In God's sanctuary. In time when this psalm was written, God's sanctuary was the Temple in Jerusalem. But in this time, God's sanctuary is wherever you encounter Jesus.
2. Why? For what God has done and for who God is. You praise God because of what God has done in your life. This is personal business. When has God set you free? When has God given you a gift you didn't see coming? When has God saved your life? We all have deep experiences of God at work in our lives, and we praise God for acting in those concrete moments. And we praise God for being God. God is too great not to be praised.
3. How? With any instrument you can find. We praise God with trumpet and lute and harp, and with guitar and piano and organ, and with choir and worship band and jamming out in the car. We praise God with our voices. But most importantly, we praise God with the way we live our lives. Our very lives can be Hallelujah to God.

**Reflection**

Is the way you're living a Hallelujah to God? If not, what needs to change?