

# BaptistWay Bible Series for October 22: God's goodness is worthy of praise

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### God's goodness is worthy of praise

- Psalms 100, 103

**By David Wilkinson**

*Broadway Baptist Church, Fort Worth*

Whenever I'm the husband I ought to be, I praise my wife. Out of a heart of gratitude, I give thanks for who Melanie is and for what she does. These twin expressions of her unique personhood are inseparably intertwined. I love her for what she does. And I love her for who she is.

In a similar way, when we gather for worship, we offer our praise to God, giving thanks for who God is and for all God does. Psalms 100 and 103 are liturgical psalms—songs of gratitude and praise—that give voice to our worship. When we read them and repeat them, meditate on them and sing them, we join the mighty chorus of God's people who have gone before us in worship.

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## **Psalm 100**

Psalm 100 has been among the church's most popular psalms, often used as a morning prayer in monastic communities and as a call to worship in the church. It was written and used as a joyful processional song recited by worshippers as they moved through the gates and into the courts of the temple to enter into God's presence. In four poetic lines of three measures each, worshippers offer their praise and thanksgiving to God. The heading or superscription—"A Psalm of Thanksgiving"—suggests the psalm was intended for the todah, a Hebrew word that incorporates both a thank offering or sacrifice and an act of praise. In worship, the two are closely related.

Through its litany of verbs, Psalm 100 reminds us that worship is both an attitude and an act. It calls us to enter, worship, praise, sing, thank and bless (vv. 1, 2 and 4). Worship involves purposeful intent; it is something we do.

Worship also is a reminder of who God is, who we are and who we are in relationship to God. The worshippers in procession proclaim that "the Lord is God" (v. 3), an allusion to God's gift of God's name to Moses (Exodus 3:14-15), often rendered, "I Am Who I Am." Both "I Am Who I Am" and its related form, Yahweh, are derived from the Hebrew verb "to be."

In worship, we acknowledge or confess that the Lord (Yahweh) is God, the one God who is creator of all and sovereign Lord over all. God made us, and we belong to God (v. 3). An alternate reading of this second measure of line 2 (v. 3)—“It is he that made us and not we ourselves” (NRSV)—suggests that the emphasis in both measures is on who God is. The attitude of worship is grounded in the humble confession that God is the Creator, and we are God’s creation.

Finally, the third measure of line 2 affirms our relationship to God. We know to whom we belong: We are God’s people; we are sheep tended, guided and protected by the Great Shepherd (v. 3).

The psalm ends (v. 5) with praise for the qualities of God’s divine nature that are repeated time after time in the Hebrew Scriptures: God’s eternal goodness, steadfast love (*hesed*) and faithfulness (*‘emunah*). We come to God in worship with the confident assurance that God’s goodness, mercy and love will never end; they will “endure forever ... to all generations.” Worship always invites God’s people to “taste and see that the Lord is good!” (Psalm 34:8).

### **Psalm 103**

This praise for a God whose steadfast mercy and love are never ending is repeated and expanded in Psalm 103, another of the most beloved hymns of worship. In many ways, Psalm 103 is like a hymn based clearly on a worship text and sermon, picking up and elaborating on their theological themes.

The psalm also expands on the theme of praise grounded in the character of God and our relationship to God. Like Psalm 100, this psalm resounds with praise for a God who acts. Again, the verbs trumpet God’s actions in salvation history (“He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the

people of Israel," v. 7) and lead the worshippers to sing their praise.

In worship, we celebrate with gratitude all God has done and continues to do. We praise the God who forgives, heals, redeems, crowns, satisfies, and works vindication and justice (vv. 3-6).

The flip side of God's character, the psalmist declares, is seen in what God out of mercy and love chooses not to do—namely, to "deal with us according to our sins" and "repay us according to our iniquities" (v. 10). Instead, like a father who loves his children, God has compassion on the children he has created (v. 13), offering immeasurable mercy, love and forgiveness (vv. 11-12).

Like Psalm 100, the praise of Psalm 103 also emerges from the relationship between Creator and creation—a relationship made possible only out of God's everlasting love and mercy. Worship is a covenant act by a covenant people that leads us from the sanctuary into the world to live as God's children in obedience to God's commandments (vv. 17-18).

Finally, the praise of worship is both private and public and personal and corporate in nature. It is a spiritual act that wells up from the soul (vv. 1 and 22 that serve like bookends for the psalm). Yet the soul's praise always is echoed in the worship of the community as seen in the psalmist's repeated use of the inclusive word "all" (five times in the first six verses and four times in the last four).

So, we sing: "Now thank we all our God, With heart and hands and voices,  
Who wondrous things hath done, In whom his world rejoices."

### **Discussion questions**

- Identify (from memory or by scanning a hymnal) hymns that celebrate

both who God is and what God does. In what other ways do these hymns reflect the themes of Psalms 100 and 103?

- In what ways is our praise lived (Psalm 103:20-21) as well as spoken and sung?



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