

Homiletics Analysis: Psalms 100

Content & Intent

This Text — Content

Psalm 100 is a compact, five-verse call to universal worship that moves through three interlocking commands and their corresponding reasons. The psalm opens with a summons to “all the earth” to shout joyfully to the LORD (v. 1), followed by an invitation to serve and come before Him with gladness and singing (vv. 2–4a). Verse 2 bridges command and motive by positioning joyful service as the proper posture of creatures before their Creator-King. Verse 3 provides the theological ground for that posture: the LORD is God; He made us; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture. The second half of the psalm repeats the summons with heightened liturgical specificity — “enter His gates with thanksgiving, His courts with praise” (v. 4) — and grounds the entire call in a final, cumulative confession of God’s character: “For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations” (v. 5). The psalm’s structure is thus command-reason-command-reason, with each reason deepening the theological foundation for the worship commanded.

This Text — Intent

God is using this psalm to interrupt whatever posture of indifference, routine, or joyless obligation the reader has toward worship and replace it with something different: awe-filled, grateful, gladness-saturated engagement with the living God. The final verse is not decorative — it is load-bearing. God’s goodness, lovingkindness (*hesed*), and faithfulness are presented as the inexhaustible fuel for worship. The intent is not merely that the reader know these things but that the reader *come* — enter the gates, cross the courts, stand in His presence — on the basis of who God is and what He has done. The psalm is an enacted summons. God is calling a people out of smallness, forgetfulness, and mere religious duty into the kind of joyful, wide-awake worship that reflects the reality of who they are (His people, His sheep) and who He is (good, faithful, everlastingly kind).

Subject Sentence: All the earth is summoned to joyful worship of the LORD on the ground of His eternal goodness and covenant faithfulness.

Primary Claim: God is calling His people — and through them, all the earth — out of joyless, forgetful, or obligatory worship into glad, grateful, and theologically grounded praise, because the God they approach is unfailingly good, His *hesed* is without end, and His faithfulness spans every generation.

Interpretive Evaluation

Scope of the Summons: Israel or All Nations?

The phrase “all the earth” (*kol-ha’aretz*, v. 1) creates a genuine interpretive question: is this a universal summons to all nations, or a hyperbolic way of calling God’s covenant people to worship? Some interpreters read the psalm as exclusively Israelite — its liturgical setting in the temple cult, the reference to “His people” and “the sheep of His pasture” (v. 3), and its placement within the Psalter all suggest a covenant community context. This reading deserves acknowledgment: the immediate context is clearly Israel’s gathered worship, and “all the earth” may carry the literary force of totality-language common in Hebrew poetry rather than a precise missiological statement.

However, this reading qualifies rather than overturns the broader scope. The Reformed reading, following the canonical trajectory of the Psalter itself (Pss. 96–99 form an eschatological chorus of nations brought under YHWH’s reign), understands “all the earth” as genuinely inclusive — not erasing the covenant context but anticipating its ultimate expansion. The nations are called to worship because the LORD who is Israel’s God is also Creator and King of all the earth. The New Testament’s development of this theme (Revelation 7:9–10; Romans 15:9–11) confirms rather than imposes this reading. The covenant community in verse 3 is not the limit of the psalm’s vision but its present locus — the people through whom the nations will eventually be drawn to worship.

The Imperative Mood: Command or Invitation?

Some traditions (particularly in pastoral and devotional usage) soften the psalm’s imperatives into warm invitations — “come, let us worship.” This is not wrong in spirit, but it loses something essential in the text. The psalm’s verbs are genuine imperatives: *shout*, *serve*, *come*, *know*, *enter*, *give thanks*, *bless*. These are not suggestions offered to a consumer who may decline. They are the authorized summons of the Creator-King to His creatures and covenant people. The Reformed reading insists on preserving the imperative force: worship is not merely a good idea or a felt-need resource — it is the fitting, obligatory, and joyful response of creatures who know who God is and who they are. Crucially, the imperatives are grounded in indicatives (v. 3, v. 5), which is the biblical pattern: the command to worship is fueled by the reality that grounds it, not issued in a motivational vacuum.

Verse 3 — “We Are His” (*lo’ anachnu*): Textual Variant

Verse 3 contains a well-known textual variant. The *Kethib* (written text) reads *lo’* (“not”) — “we ourselves did not make us” — while the *Qere* (traditional reading) reads *lo* (“his”) — “we are his.” Both readings are grammatically defensible and theologically compatible. The *Kethib* emphasizes creaturely dependence: we did not originate ourselves, we owe our existence entirely to God. The *Qere* emphasizes covenant belonging: we are His people,

His possession. Most English translations follow the *Qere* (“we are his”), which fits the parallel with “the sheep of his pasture” and the psalm’s movement toward belonging as the ground of worship. The Reformed reading adopts the *Qere* but notes that the *Kethib* adds a complementary truth: our belonging to God rests not only on His sovereign choice but on the prior fact that He, not we, is the source of our existence. Either reading grounds the same response — joyful, humble worship.

No significant tradition refutes the psalm’s central claim. The primary differences are matters of scope and emphasis rather than substantive hermeneutical divergence.

Key Canonical Support

- **Psalm 95:1–7** — The closest parallel to Psalm 100 in the Psalter; similarly opens with a call to joyful worship and grounds it in the LORD’s creatorship and the people’s identity as “the sheep of his hand,” confirming that the pattern of command-grounded-in-indicative is a deliberate theological structure.
 - **Revelation 7:9–10** — The ultimate fulfillment of “all the earth” worshipping the LORD: a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before the throne, crying out in precisely the kind of glad, loud, grateful worship Psalm 100 commands — confirming the psalm’s eschatological horizon.
 - **Romans 15:9–11** — Paul quotes from the surrounding Psalms (including Ps. 117, which shares Ps. 100’s *hesed*-and-faithfulness ground) to demonstrate that the Gentiles’ inclusion in worship was always God’s purpose; the universal scope of Psalm 100’s summons is not post-Pentecost novelty but embedded in the Psalter itself.
 - **Lamentations 3:22–23** — “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” — the direct Old Testament elaboration of Psalm 100:5’s *hesed* and faithfulness confession, showing these are not liturgical phrases but hard-won theological convictions about God’s character under pressure.
 - **Hebrews 10:19–22** — The New Testament’s liturgical fulfillment: believers now enter the Most Holy Place through Christ’s blood with full assurance of faith — the “entering the gates” of Psalm 100 realized eschatologically, underscoring that joyful access to God is grounded in something greater than temple ritual.
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Aim: To lead the reader to understand that joyful, theologically grounded worship is not merely the appropriate response to God’s goodness but the inevitable result of truly knowing who God is and who His people are — and to expose whatever substitutes for that worship are currently occupying its place.

Content Table

Verse(s)	Content	Notes
1	Universal summons: “Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth”	<i>Hāri’û</i> — a shout of joy or acclamation; the summons is to <i>all the earth</i> , not merely Israel; sets the scope immediately
2	Three commands: serve the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful singing	Service (<i>’ibdû</i>) is the language of worship — the same word used for Israel’s covenantal obligations; gladness is structural, not merely emotional
3a	Theological assertion: “Know that the LORD Himself is God”	<i>Da’û</i> — imperative; this is not passive knowledge but an active, life-orienting acknowledgment; the ground of all the commands
3b	“It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves”	Creaturely dependence: we owe our existence to Him; the <i>Kethib/Qere</i> variant (“not we” / “his”) — both reinforce the same creaturely posture
3c	“We are His people and the sheep of His pasture”	Covenant belonging: the identity that grounds worship; “sheep of His pasture” carries provision, care, and guidance — Ps. 23 resonance
4a	Second summons: “Enter His gates with thanksgiving, His courts with praise”	Liturgical concreteness: <i>shaar</i> (gate) and <i>chatserot</i> (courts) — specific temple language; the approach to God is defined and structured
4b	“Give thanks to Him, bless His name”	The content of the approach: thanksgiving (<i>toda</i>) and blessing (<i>barkhu</i>) — active verbal postures,

Verse(s)	Content	Notes
5a	Theological ground: “For the LORD is good”	not passive attendance <i>Tob</i> — foundational; goodness is not merely a disposition but a character claim about who God essentially is
5b	“His lovingkindness is everlasting”	<i>Hesed</i> — covenant love, loyal faithfulness, steadfast kindness; “everlasting” (<i>le’olam</i>) removes the temporal limit on His love
5c	“And His faithfulness to all generations”	<i>’Emunah</i> — reliability, trustworthiness; spans not just this worshiper’s lifetime but every generation — the ultimate foundation for perpetual praise

Divisions Table

Division	Verses	Label
1	1–2	The Summons: Come with Joy
2	3	The Ground: Know Who He Is and Who You Are
3	4	The Approach: Enter with Thanksgiving and Praise
4	5	The Foundation: He Is Good, Faithful, and Everlastingly Kind

Subject Sentence & Primary Claim (*restated*)

Subject Sentence: All the earth is summoned to joyful worship of the LORD on the ground of His eternal goodness and covenant faithfulness.

Primary Claim: God is calling His people — and through them, all the earth — out of joyless, forgetful, or obligatory worship into glad, grateful, and theologically grounded praise, because the God they approach is unfailingly good, His *hesed* is without end, and His faithfulness spans every generation.

Applications (Five)

1. Reframe what worship is for. (Mind/Belief) Psalm 100 commands joy, gladness, and thanksgiving — not as the emotional weather required to earn access, but as the fitting response of creatures who know they belong to a good and faithful God. If your posture toward corporate worship is dutiful attendance, passive observation, or merely showing up, you have misunderstood what you are doing and Whom you are approaching. Worship is not a service you consume — it is the creature's proper and glad acknowledgment that God is God and you are His. The corrective is not to try harder to feel something but to *know* more clearly (v. 3) — to revisit the theological foundation until the response it demands becomes natural.

2. Let God's goodness, hesed, and faithfulness be the fuel you actually burn in worship. (Affections/Worship) The psalm's final verse is not a doxological decoration — it is the engine. "For the LORD is good; his lovingkindness is everlasting; his faithfulness to all generations." The *for* is doing load-bearing work: this is *why* you enter the gates, why you shout, why you give thanks. Ask yourself honestly what you are actually running on when you come to worship. If it is habit, social expectation, emotional mood, or the quality of the music, you are burning the wrong fuel. Psalm 100 points you to an inexhaustible source — a goodness that does not vary with your circumstances, a *hesed* that has no expiration date, a faithfulness that has outlasted every generation before you and will outlast every generation after. Come to worship having reminded yourself of these things, and let them generate the response the psalm commands.

3. Receive your identity as "His people, the sheep of His pasture" before you try to perform anything for God. (Affections/Worship) The command to worship in verse 2 is grounded in the identity statement of verse 3 — you worship *because* you are His, not in order to become His. Many people approach God functionally as orphans: trying to earn favor, prove devotion, or secure standing through the quality of their worship. Psalm 100 dismantles this. The sheep do not make themselves belong to the shepherd — they already belong. The worshiper does not create the relationship by approaching the gates — the relationship already exists and is the reason for the approach. Let this sink in before you sing a word: you are His. You belong. The pasture is already yours. Now come.

4. Bring something specific into the gates. (Will/Behavior) "Enter his gates with thanksgiving, his courts with praise" (v. 4) is specific: you enter *with* something — not empty-handed, not vaguely spiritual, not merely present in body while absent in mind. Thanksgiving requires an object: thanksgiving *for what*? Before your next gathering for worship, identify three specific things you are thanking God for — not generic categories ("family, health, salvation") but specific, dated, concrete realities. Come to worship having already done this work, so that when you enter the gates you are bringing something real. The psalm envisions worshipers who have already engaged their minds and memories before the first note is sung.

5. Recover the missionary scope of your worship. (Mind/Belief) “All the earth” in verse 1 is not rhetorical hyperbole to be domesticated into “my church community.” The psalm envisions something vast: a worship that draws in every nation, every people, every corner of creation. This means that the gathering of God’s people on Sunday morning is not a private club for the already-converted — it is a foretaste and an announcement. If you are praying for, working toward, and expecting the nations to be included in this worship, your participation in gathered worship carries a different weight than if you view it as a personal devotional practice. Ask how your life outside the gates — your relationships, your witness, your generosity — is either advancing or contradicting the claim that all the earth should worship this God.

Theological Importance

Theological Importance: Psalm 100 makes a comprehensive claim about God’s character that is the foundation of all worship: He is good (*tob*), His lovingkindness (*hesed*) is everlasting, and His faithfulness (*’emunah*) extends to all generations. These are not three separate attributes loosely assembled — they are a cumulative portrait of the God who is intrinsically, reliably, and inexhaustibly oriented toward His people’s good. The psalm also establishes the Creator-creature and Shepherd-sheep relationship as the permanent framework for worship: we come to God not as peers approaching an equal but as creatures approaching their Maker, as sheep approaching their Shepherd. This means worship is always already an act of receiving before it is an act of giving — we come to One who has already made us, already claimed us, and already proved faithful across every generation. The theological move of verse 3 — “know that the LORD Himself is God” — insists that true worship is irreducibly cognitive: it requires knowledge, not merely feeling, and that knowledge must include both who God is and who we are in relation to Him.

Reformed Theological Significance

Reformed Theological Significance: Psalm 100 is a paradigm case of the Reformed *sola gratia* logic applied to worship itself. The commands of the psalm (shout, serve, come, enter, give thanks, bless) do not generate the relationship they presuppose — the relationship is already given, established by God’s creative and covenantal initiative (“He made us... we are His people”). This is the Reformation’s insight rendered in doxological form: we do not worship our way into God’s favor; we worship *from* His favor already extended. The *hesed*-faithfulness confession of verse 5 maps directly onto the Reformed insistence that God’s covenant love is unconditional and persevering — it does not fluctuate with the worshiper’s performance, nor does it expire with any particular generation. The psalm’s universal scope (“all the earth”) anticipates the Reformed understanding of the covenant’s expansion through the gospel: the God of Israel is the God of all nations, and the worship He commands is ultimately the eschatological gathering of

all His elect from every tribe and tongue. In this way, Psalm 100 is both a liturgical text for the gathered covenant community and a missiological vision for the church's calling in the world.

Main Takeaway

The LORD your God is good — not occasionally, not conditionally, not until further notice. His *hesed* toward you has no expiration date, and His faithfulness to you is older than your oldest ancestor and will outlast your youngest descendant. You belong to Him — He made you, He claimed you, He keeps you. Given all of that, there is only one fitting posture: come to Him gladly, loudly, gratefully, and with everything you have. Stop treating worship as an obligation to be discharged and start treating it as the most reasonable response to the most extraordinary reality in the universe.

Preaching/Teaching Pitfalls

Preaching/Teaching Pitfalls:

- **Treating verse 5 as a tagline rather than the theological engine.** The most common homiletical failure with Psalm 100 is rushing past “for the LORD is good; his lovingkindness is everlasting” as though it were a familiar motto to be acknowledged and moved past. But verse 5 is the *causal ground* for everything commanded in verses 1–4. The entire structure of the psalm moves toward this verse — it is not the closing flourish but the theological foundation. Preachers should spend significant time here, unpacking *hesed* and *'emunah* as concrete theological realities with weight and history, not as warm devotional impressions.
- **Moralizing the imperative verbs into a behavior checklist.** The psalm does command: shout, serve, come, enter, give thanks, bless. But these are not a worship-improvement program. If the sermon becomes “here are six things you should do in worship,” it has evacuated the theological indicatives that give the imperatives their force. The commands must be preached from within the identity established in verse 3 and the character confessed in verse 5. Application must be grounded in what God has already done, not in what the worshiper must now perform.
- **Domesticating “all the earth” into the local congregation.** Verse 1's universal scope is routinely shrunk, in both preaching and application, to mean nothing more than “all of us here this morning.” This loses the psalm's missiological vision — the expectation that the nations will worship — and removes the missionary dimension from a text that is inherently outward-facing. Preach the psalm's full scope: it anticipates Revelation 7.

- **Ignoring the cognitive weight of “know” in verse 3.** “Know that the LORD Himself is God” (*da’û*) is an imperative directed at the mind. Reformed exposition should resist the cultural pressure to make worship primarily about feeling and recover the psalm’s insistence that authentic worship is grounded in clear theological knowledge. If people do not *know* that God made them, that they are His people, that He is good and faithful — they cannot worship in the way the psalm envisions. The cognitive dimension is not a cold preliminary to be dispensed with before the emotional content begins — it is integral to the worship itself.
- **Skipping the textual variant in verse 3 without pastoral payoff.** The *Kethib/Qere* discussion need not become a technical detour, but both readings deserve homiletical attention because they address complementary dimensions of the worshiper’s condition. “We did not make ourselves” addresses self-sufficiency and pride; “we are his” addresses alienation, orphan-spirit, and the fear of not belonging. A preacher who handles verse 3 carefully can speak to both the self-made person and the person who doubts they belong — using the text’s own ambiguity as a pastoral opportunity.
- **Treating Psalm 100 as a “simple” psalm requiring little exposition.** Its brevity and familiarity make it easy to assume it needs only a brief survey. In fact, the psalm is theologically dense — *hesed*, *’emunah*, creaturely identity, covenant belonging, universal scope, and the command-grounded-in-indicative structure are all present in five verses. The preacher who gives it a light touch will underserve the congregation. The discipline here is to let the familiar text become strange again before making it plain.