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## PSALM 99-100

Psalms – Book IV – Series

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, your word is described in a number of ways. It's described as water that washes us. It's described as a lamp that guides us. Lord, we come before this mirror of your word today and we ask you to speak to us and teach us. In fact, we come expectantly that you're going to reveal something in your word to us that applies to us as students as we go to school this week or as those who go into the business world or those who are at home or whatever we're doing. Lord, we know that your word applies to our lives, so we're eager to hear what you have to say to us. We know that even though we read some of these passages in the past, we come to them again and we learn something new. We're grateful that your word, the Bible, is new and that you give us your mercies new every morning. So Lord, we ask that you would teach us now as we look at your word. In Jesus' name, amen.

I would like to share a story with you. The psalms are songs. That's what they are. This is a story written by my brother Mark. My father passed away in late January, but two weeks before that we had a family reunion. We all got together at that reunion. My brother had a special time with my dad. After the rest of us were gone he had a special time with my dad.

He had showed us all a video called *Alive Inside*. I want to recommend that video to you. It's a YouTube video called *Alive Inside*. It's about how much music impacts the brain, especially taking music into the lives of patients with dementia to bring alive those who are almost unresponsive at all. The music does something to them. Now we're studying the psalms, which are songs, and music does something to us.

My brother tells the story this way after he spent this last time with my father:  
"Tonight was a very profound experience for me. I spent time with my dad who was in a nursing home with dementia for probably the last time. His mind has been slipping fast.

The night before, our biological family gathered together, parents and siblings along with my children and other cousins, in-laws, and family members. When we went to the nursing home, my dad was not able to recognize anyone, including his own wife and also including me. But tonight when I walked into his room, he immediately recognized me.

After seeing a documentary called *Alive Inside* where a man used music to connect with nursing home residents suffering from Alzheimer's and dementia, I wanted to sing and play the guitar for my father. So I gathered a bunch of hymns that I knew he would recognize and love, borrowed a guitar, and came prepared to make a connection.

Over the course of a half hour, I played hymn after hymn. Most of them he was able to recognize by name. In between I asked my dad to quote familiar portions of scripture that I knew he had memorized over his years of being a pastor. He was able to recall John 3:16, Romans 3:23, and parts of other scriptures. All in all, he was very lucid and focused during our time together. I was grateful that my daughters, Taylor and Rylie, could be there to see their grandpa one last time and experience this with me.

After a while it became obvious that he was getting tired and it was time for me to bring the evening to a close. I planned to say my peace with my dad and asked my kids and my mom to give me some privacy.

When they left the room, I knelt by his bed, held his hand, and got close so he could hear. I told him that I was grateful that he was my dad and thanked him for all that he had done for me, from supporting my interests to supporting my career. When I started to talk to him I noticed that he began to cry. It was then that I knew that he was understanding my every word.

I told him that he could rest in the fact that he did accomplish great things. I told him how proud I was of what he had done in his life and that now that I'm older I have come to realize how amazing he was to start a business and ministries from scratch and move from state to state without fear of failure that kept his vision stifled. Fighting back the tears, I also apologized for giving him such a hard time, for arguing with him and not being grateful as I should have been.

And then on a whim, because I had not planned to say this, I asked him for the blessing. Now to understand the importance of the blessing, you had to have known my dad and his teachings over the years. He believed in getting the blessing from your parents and he taught receiving the blessing from portions of scripture where the father would bless his sons in traditional Hebrew culture. So in that moment, the idea of receiving the blessing popped into my mind. So I asked for it. And he said to me, 'I give you the blessing.' It was done. Nothing more needed to be said.

Of course I was emotional and it was all I could do to not cry uncontrollably. I was able to keep my composure for the most part. I was grateful that he was lucid enough to understand and be emotionally and intellectually present with me for that moment in time.

Twice during the time that I talked to him and I asked him, 'Dad, do you understand what I'm saying?' and both times he said, 'Yes. I understand.' Tonight was a very profound experience for me."

My brother has been a musician and a worship leader for over thirty years. He's a great worship leader. I've learned a lot about worship leading from him. In this case, he wanted to take songs and bring them to my father to see what would happen and an amazing thing happened in my dad. He became more lucid in those moments. He became more interested, more alive inside, so to speak.

As we study the psalms we're looking at songs. Now that story is really important for this reason. I want you to understand something about music. Music has the ability to bypass the

intellect and go straight to our hearts. It connects to the receptors in our brain in a way that kind of bypasses the intellectual barriers that we sometimes set up.

Now that's especially important, young people, I want you to know, if you are inclined to listen to music that is not Christian music. Because you've got to know, you might like the beat, you might like the tempo, you might like the melody, but you've got to know that something's going on in your brain and it's going past the intellectual part. Some of the guards that you have there or some of the truths or things that are said in those songs can impact you. You've got to be careful. I'm not saying that listening to music that is not Christian music is wrong. All I'm saying is you better be careful what you're listening to because music has this profound ability to pass the intellect and move right into our hearts and take truths then and do that.

So the psalms are those. Now we don't have the beat, we don't have the tempo, we don't have the drums, we don't have the instruments, we don't even have the melodies. We have the content. But imagine those things taking place in the context of a song and they are powerful.

Let's look at Psalm 99 and see what God has to say to us today.

Verse 1 says this: *The LORD reigns, let the nations tremble; he sits enthroned between the cherubim, let the earth shake.*

Can you feel the message? You might if we had the melody and the instruments tuned and the drums playing. But let's look at the message that he's saying there. He's saying God is in control. He *reigns* and when God reigns the *nations tremble*. It's terrifying for them.

I find great encouragement when I look at the Old Testament stories and I see heroes from the Old Testament. I see the things that happen and how God works in amazing ways. It's encouraging for me to look at those stories and read my Bible because as I do I'm encouraged about what God wants to do today.

I'll share just one of those stories from the life of Jehoshaphat. *Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful."* I like all of that.

*After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army.* So you've got to imagine this army's going out to fight and they put musicians out in the front thinking about and drawing people into God's holiness. What a fascinating picture. And they are saying: *"Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever."*

*As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.* The people are Israel, the armies didn't even do anything yet. *The Ammonites and Moabites rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another.*

*When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked toward the vast army, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground; no one had escaped. So Jehoshaphat and his men went to carry off their plunder, and they found among them a great amount of equipment and clothing and also articles of value—more than they could take away. There was so much plunder that it took three days to collect it. On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Berakah, where they praised the Lord. This is why it is called the Valley of Berakah to this day.*

Now you ought to remember the name Berakah it comes from *baruch*. *Baruch hashem hamashiach*. *Baruch hashem*. It means to bless. That's why it is called the Valley of Berakah to this day.

*Then, led by Jehoshaphat, all the men of Judah and Jerusalem returned joyfully to Jerusalem, for the Lord had given them cause to rejoice over their enemies. Wow. That's the God I believe in. That's the God who does miracles. That's the God who does miracles in our lives today. They entered Jerusalem and went to the temple of the Lord with harps and lyres and trumpets.*

*The fear of God came on all the surrounding kingdoms when they heard how the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel.*

Verse 1 says, *The LORD reigns, the nations tremble*. People hear what God is doing and they're excited about it. They want to be a part of what God is doing in that place.

I've got to tell you this story of Tom Amidon's father. He's not a Christian. He's passed away since then. But early when we started Calvary Chapel Mercer County, Tom Amidon was a part of our church and the church was just getting ready to start. We had lots of people coming, but we didn't actually start on Sunday morning yet. We were going to be a mobile church but we didn't have a trailer.

I put the word out (since we didn't have any money either). I said, "We need a trailer." Tom Amidon's father (who's not a believer or wasn't a believer at the time) said, "God's doing something there. I want to be a part of it." So he gave 1500 dollars for the trailer.

That's what he's saying here. *The nations tremble*. They see what's going on when they see the Lord reigning. We're the ones who revealed that the Lord is reigning. *The LORD reigns, let the nations tremble; he sits enthroned between the cherubim, let the earth shake.*

Verse 2: *Great is the LORD in Zion* (Zion is another name for Jerusalem); *he is exalted over all the nations. Let them praise your great and awesome name—he is holy.*

Wow. The reminder of God's holiness right there. Because holiness is foundational to who God is and it's based on that holiness that we end up with these other qualities about God.

When Jesus came to earth He came to die for us so that we could have salvation. But while He was here for thirty-three years He did a lot of miracles, He did a lot of teaching, He did a lot of modeling. His disciples said to Him, "*Teach us to pray.*"

Jesus gave us a model prayer, which I'm sure you know. It starts – *Our Father, which art in heaven*. What's the next words? *Hallowed be thy name*. Holy is your name. Jesus started that prayer, first by introducing God as Father, but how holy is He and His name. That His kingdom would come; we'd be part of bringing that as we're praying and asking God to bring that kingdom down for us. Wow. Amazing. The holiness of God is powerful.

Verse 3: *Let them praise your great and awesome name—he is holy*.

Now logically, out of God's holiness, a number of other things come and they're mentioned in verse 4. *The King is mighty, he loves justice* (that comes out of God's holiness)—*you have established equity* (that's fairness that comes out of His holiness); *in Jacob you have done what is just and right*. So this idea of holiness becomes foundational to who God is and we understand and are drawn to worship Him.

Then we have the call to worship now in verse 5, calling us all to come and worship. Look at verse 5. It says, *Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his footstool; he is holy*.

This is not just a psalm or a call to worship for Sunday morning. It is a call to worship for all of our lives, wherever we are every day. We get up in the morning and we exalt the Lord. That's what it's saying.

Do you see *exalt* in verse 5? Lift Him up. We lift Him up so high that it pulls up above our circumstances for the day and we can rejoice in who God is. *We exalt the LORD our God and worship at his footstool; he is holy*.

Now in the next verse we're given the illustration of three great heroes from the Old Testament. When we look at those heroes from the Old Testament we're drawn into this, we're understanding. They saw God's holiness and when they saw God's holiness good things happened in their lives. Let me point it out in verse 6.

It says, *Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel was among those who called on his name; they called on the LORD and he answered them*. They knew about His holiness, they *were among his priests*, and then they *called on him and he answered them*.

The dynamic going on there is pretty powerful. God did amazing things through these three guys that we're going to talk about, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel. I can't help but wonder if God maybe has at least a Moses or an Aaron or a Samuel here among us. Maybe one of the children who attend here or the youth or the adults are so in tune with the voice of God and the call of God that they can call on His name and God answers and directs them, as we'll see further in this psalm. God is doing amazing things here. We want to be sensitive to those things.

Three men who understood the holiness of God – Moses, Aaron, and Samuel.

Moses had a passion, a passion that was probably misdirected early on in his life. He was angry when he saw an Israelite and an Egyptian fighting. The Egyptian was mistreating the Israelite and so he killed him. Passion. He had to run away for his life.

While he was out in the wilderness, having to run away (and he was away for several years), but having been out there for a while, he was curious when he saw a bush burning but not burning up. So he went over to the bush and when he went over to the bush God spoke to him. He took off his sandals because this was a holy place. Wherever God speaks to you it's a holy place.

For him, this guy's out in the wilderness. God spoke to him and He shared with him His personal name and He called him to be the one who would lead the Israelite people out of Egypt.

Well, if we fast forward the story a little bit, God uses Moses to give the law to the Israelite people. The way that happened, holiness was all around it. We see in the story.

It says this: *And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.*

Moses goes up on the mountain and he gets the Ten Commandments and God speaks to him. He comes back down with those commandments and it says next *all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."*

Do you see the immenseness of God? They were afraid because of His holiness, because of the power that He has. Moses knew God and *he called upon the LORD*.

I love studying Moses and we'll do a little bit about that when we study the book of Numbers next. We're going to study a little bit about Moses' leadership style, techniques, and how God worked in his life. So those of us who are leaders will enjoy looking at how God worked in Moses as a leader.

Many times as a leader you say, "I have no idea what to do in this situation." That's what Moses did. He went before the Lord. "God, I don't know what to do about these people. They're arguing again. They're complaining the water's bitter. Lord, would you help us?" So God heals the water. "Lord, we don't have any water," in another situation. God brings them water. "Lord, we don't have any food. Lord, these people are complaining about the menu." And God brings solutions. Moses called out, *called upon the LORD*, as the passage says.

The second person mentioned is Aaron. Aaron knew God's holiness because Aaron was *the* high priest, the very first high priest who had as his task to go into the most holy place. Where a veil was protecting people from God's holiness he would go in.

The tradition was that they would tie a string around the foot of the high priest when he went in just in case he died in there. Because nobody wanted to go in there to get him or they would die.

They would be able to drag him out by the string. Aaron knew what it meant to be in this holy place, to call out before the Lord the forgiveness of God on people. Aaron knew what it meant to call on the Lord.

Samuel is another guy here. He understood God a little bit. He's the one who, as a boy, lived in the home or the temple with Eli the priest in the tabernacle there. When he heard the voice of God he didn't know what to do with it. So when Eli told him, "*Say to God, 'Speak, for your servant is listening,'*" then he did that and God began to speak with him and share with him things that were amazing for a young boy to hear. God spoke through him and used him continually in his life.

All three men called on the Lord. Now there's only one burning bush experience. There's only one first high priest that goes into the Holy of Holies. There's only one boy who hears the name of the Lord in the priests' presence. There's only one. God wants to take each one of us and He wants us to hear the voice of the Lord. He wants to come into our presence. He wants to speak to us in a burning bush experience. He wants to call us. He wants to use us.

I suggest that comes out of our worship. It comes out of our experience of knowing who God is. God wants to grab our attention.

Now he adds another illustration, notice in verse 7. *He spoke to them from the pillar of cloud; they kept his statutes and the decrees he gave them.* The pillar of cloud would lead the people as they were in the wilderness wandering.

This week I'm preparing again for the Numbers study. We have three more weeks in Psalms then we're going into the book of Numbers. The reason we're going to the book of Numbers is because this series in Psalms ties into the book of Numbers. So I'm going to bring that together here and talk about the book of Numbers with you.

I worked with an artist this week to create the banner that we're going to put in our web page. It will turn into a Facebook post and it will be the backdrop for my slides and so on for teaching through the book of Numbers.

It took me a while to communicate to the artist what I wanted. I wanted a cloud. A cloud that's going to be leading the people through the wilderness. So we ended up with this. I'm very pleased with it now. It gives you the impression that the cloud is leading. It has some divine presence. I don't know what the cloud looked like, but there's some sense in which there's a pillar of cloud that the people paid attention to and moved them through the process and God taught them in the journey. We're going to learn how faith is learned in the journey, not just in the destination.

Verse 8: *LORD our God, you answered them; you were to Israel a forgiving God, though you punished their misdeeds.* Now that's a very important biblical truth there. I want you to see it. *You were to Israel a forgiving God, though you punished their misdeeds.*

Does forgiveness mean that there are no consequences? Sometimes we think that. But I think we have to follow the model of God here, that God does forgive, but even then there are sometimes consequences. Sometimes we do set limits on people even though we forgive them.

I think this is a great parenting principle. Sometimes our children do the wrong thing. They need consequences, but we must be forgiving people, forgiving parents. Because forgiveness removes the anger out of this as we're trying to bring the consequence into the picture. Great theological truth there. *You were to Israel a forgiving God, though you punished their misdeeds.* Both are present at the same time.

Verse 9: *Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his holy mountain, for the LORD our God is holy.*

The word *holy* is used four times in this psalm. It's a psalm of worship, drawing our attention to the Lord in a way that motivates us to action. So I would suggest that what we see here is a beautiful picture of worship. Worship is recognizing the holiness of God, exalting the Lord and then putting that into practice in our lives, calling on the Lord, allowing God to speak to us, and then relying on Him as we move forward.

Let's go to Psalm 100. This is a short psalm. Basically verses 1-2 tell us what, verse 3 tells us why, verse 4 tells us what, verse 5 tells us why. So that's it. But I'll explain it a little bit more.

Start with verse 1. *Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness.*

Now look at your Bible for a moment in verse 2. *Worship the Lord with gladness.* Some of your Bibles say a different word besides worship. What does it say? *Serve.* I like that better. The King James Version uses the word *serve* there and I prefer that here.

Let me explain to you why it could be worship or serve. In the Hebrew there are a number of different words for worship. Some mean to bow the knee, some mean to exalt the Lord (like *baruch*), to bless the Lord. There are lots of words for worship. This is the word for worship that means to serve the Lord. So it is a worship word, but if we just say worship we lose the part about service. Because this is the idea of using your service in worship to the Lord. So I prefer the idea of service. If we can't say serve and worship to the Lord, I like the idea of serve.

But notice it says, *Serve the LORD with gladness.* That can be anywhere. We can serve the Lord here in doing things, but you can serve the Lord with gladness in your home, in your work. That whatever you do, you are a servant of the Lord. So all of that becomes your service to the Lord. You're serving the Lord with gladness.

Every week we set up here and there are sometimes when people say something to us like, "Wouldn't it be great when we have a building?" It will be great when we have a building. I look forward to the day we have a building. It will be great because we'll use the building for God's glory in some powerful ways. It's going to be great. But in the meantime I'm grateful for what we have here. We set up.

Tim Brown and I were talking last week and Tim said, “You know, sometimes people talk about us having a building, but I’ll miss these times of serving the Lord together.” There’s a community we have from 8:15 in the morning till ten o’clock, where we serve, we bring all this stuff together, put it together as a team, and we pray together before worship starts. There’s something that happens there as we’re serving the Lord with gladness. I welcome you to join us if you’d like to come and service the Lord with gladness.

There are lots of ways you can serve the Lord. I know some of you help in the nursery or help with the children’s ministry or do other things to serve the Lord. *Serve the LORD with gladness.*

Each person has a spiritual gift. If you’ve trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have Jesus Christ living in your life, God has given you a spiritual gift. That spiritual gift is really important. It’s not just for adults. It’s for children. That’s why I’m trying to empower children to understand their spiritual gift and be able to have that personal walk with the Lord.

Here’s why: When you come to church and you use that spiritual gift or you use it during the week (you don’t have to be at church to use your gift), but when you’re using that spiritual gift that God has given to you, it produces something in you. It’s meaningful. That’s what we want for our children. We don’t want them growing out of their faith. We want them using their spiritual gifts so they’re growing into their faith. It’s something that God designed for them. *Serve the LORD with gladness.* I love that.

The next part of the verse says *come before him with joyful songs*. It’s a choice that we make.

I don’t think we can come with this sense of thankfulness, I don’t think we can come with this sense of joy unless we have a clear identity, and that’s what verses 3 and following give to us, an identity of who we are. So catch this with me because we are going to understand more of what an identity we have. When you have the identity, then shouting for joy, worshiping the Lord, or serving the Lord with gladness are the outcome of that.

Verse 3: *Know that the LORD is God.* That’s number one. We need to know that Yahweh is God. When we know Him as God then out of that flow, this joy, this gratefulness, this shouting for the Lord, it’s part of our identity of who we are. *Knowing that the LORD is God.*

You see, there are bad things that happen to us in our lives. I was looking at what James McDonald was writing. This week my mom actually sent me a sermon that he preached and she said, “You ought to listen to this sermon.” So I read the manuscript of the sermon and I appreciated what he said.

We all experience troubles in our lives and people usually resort to four things. They complain, they lash out, they bail out, or they despair. That’s true. That’s pretty true. Four things that we tend to do. But we can do something different.

Here’s a quote from his sermon. He said, “You can’t make it through trials without a deep, growing, abiding sense of your partnership with the God of the universe who’s working out purposes beyond what we could think or imagine.” If you want to make sense of life, then your

identity before God is going to be strategic because it's in the identity that we get to know God and we know ourselves.

Here's another quote. John Calvin, the great reformer, made this comment. "This, of course, is why Christians believe that coming to faith in Jesus Christ matters so much. Not because it's like handing out a get-in-heaven-free card, but it's like offering an invitation to know yourself through the love of God in Jesus Christ, a gift that will change how you understand your identity, and therefore how you live both now and in eternity. Knowing God and knowing ourselves are inseparable."

Identity becomes very important. That's why in verse 3 it says, *Know that the LORD is God. He puts that right in this passage after shout for joy to the LORD and serve the LORD with gladness, come before him with joyful songs. Now know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.* We know God and we know our relationship with God and it frees us up to have joy, to shout to the Lord, and so on.

Verse 4: *Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.*

The temple area had gates and courts and so it's really about corporate worship. When you come in there's a sense of thankfulness that you have. This is a great psalm to read every Sunday morning before you come to church. Notice it's not about what we get from church; it's about the attitude of our hearts and giving to the Lord.

Verse 5 gives us the reason again, the why. *For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

Let me tie both psalms together for you for a moment. The first psalm we looked at, Psalm 99, talks about how these three guys, Aaron, Moses, and Samuel had a calling on their lives. They were called and they wanted to call on the Lord. This psalm talks about our identity as we come in and thank the Lord.

I was reading this book this week called *Called*. This is written by Mark Labberton, the president of Fuller Theological Seminary. It says, "The Bible includes some dramatic moments in the Old and New Testament that involve God giving individuals a clear and personal call to a very distinctive mission. Adam and Eve, Abraham, Moses, David, Mary, Joseph, all and so many more. The question is what to make of these examples? The revelation of God's character and action must be lived out by God's people in light of God's purposes to bless them and pass blessings through them to the nations. This is the big arc – the calling God gave to Israel and that continues through the birth of the church of Pentecost and beyond. As members of the whole community of God, our primary call is to respond through discipleship to Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit."

I would suggest that even though this is a New Testament concept, the ideas that are taught in the Old Testament are part of God's call for us. God's calling us to something special, something

beautiful, something powerful. I encourage you to accept that call and to call upon the Lord yourself.

As a young person you don't have to be like everyone else. You can be different. Your life can count for something. You can make a difference in this world, but it's going to happen not because you make a lot of money, it's going to happen because you are committed to Jesus Christ and you take a stand for who He is and allow Him to change you and grow you in a powerful way.

So today, again, let me say this: If you're here today and you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you want to do that. That is the most important decision you'll make. It's a decision that says, "I have holes in my heart and I need something outside of myself. I need a Savior to rescue me, and I want to serve the Lord in my life." When you come to that conclusion then you're ready for some big stuff that God wants to do through you.

So if you've never trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I want to invite you to do that today. As we sing this next song there will be prayer counselors on the side. I encourage you to go to them and they'll pray with you and help you come to know Jesus Christ in a very personal way.

Let's stand together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we thank you for who you are and what you've done for us. This psalm, Psalm 100 in particular, about coming to your gates and singing and shouting for joy and your love endures forever, just the way you've made us as the sheep of your pasture – all of those things speak to our hearts and we need that. We ask, Lord, that you'd fire us to rise to that level of worship that you've called us to live every day of our lives. And now we are going to worship you through song. We pray that that song would be a reflection of our hearts as we come before you and sing together. In Jesus' name, amen.