



# **THE PSALMS: THE BIBLE'S HYMNBOOK**

## **Psalm 100**

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# Imagination



The beauty of the Psalms is that most of them come down to us with no specific context. Our imagination is utterly free to imagine the situation the Psalmist finds himself in. The Psalms invite us to place ourselves in the shoes of the writer which comes quite easily because the emotions found therein have been faxed through the centuries into our modern hearts and modern problems. The psalms are not only healing but like any good wellness program they work to keep us in a place of wholeness. They do this through enabling our imagination to connect our emotions to God.

Voice + Heart=Praise



The psalms are the hymnbook of the bible; Calvin pressed the singing to come solely from the psalms. Song from the human voice has the unique ability to express and open up the depths of our soul. When coupled with the power of God's word we have a potent combination for connecting to God.

It doesn't matter if our voices are perfect only that we express our hearts with our voice.

One person wrote, "Use the talents you possess, for the world would be very silent if no bird sang but the best."

## Emotions + Psalm=Prayer

- *Peace*
- Anger
- Steadfastness
- Despair
- Forgiveness
- Community
- *Joy*

- Through the psalms we can experience: Peace, anger, steadfastness, despair, forgiveness, community, joy!
- These psalms connect our emotions and our secular lives with living god in such a way that each thought each feeling becomes an expression of prayer to with and through God.

# PEACE



At times our praise to God comes out of a still quiet feeling that soothes more than it shouts. Here Psalm 150 calls us to, “Praise him with the stringed instruments.” Such a time for me happened one evening in the Adirondack mountains of new York. Wendy, Elizabeth, and I sat on our porch and watched an entire sunset without saying a word. The crickets chirped the humming birds hummed and we became for a moment a part of God’s creation. A warm feeling of gladness surrounded us all.

- For many the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm conveys that “peace that passes all understanding,” those green fields; Henry Baker wrote it this way,

*“Where streams of living water flow my ransomed soul he leadeth and where the verdant pastures grow with food celestial feedeth.” (The King of Love My Shepherd is: St Columba)*



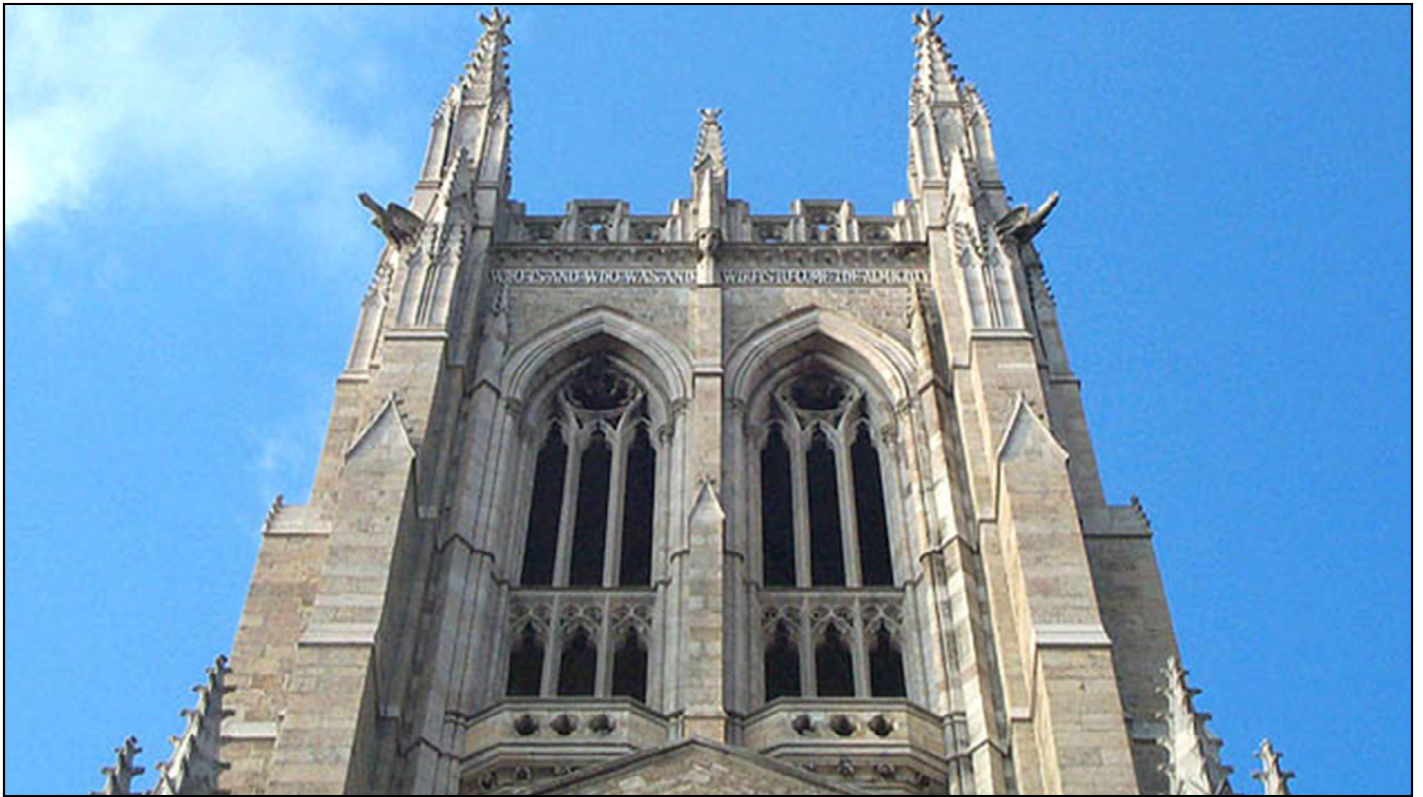
# A n g e r



People are often shocked to discover that those who wrote the Bible were sometimes doubtful and even angry at God. It can be tremendously healing to vent our anger toward God and realizing the great faithful of history have done so keeps us from feeling guilty.

Often the psalmist would complain that God had abandoned them, “Why, O LORD, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? “ [Psalm 10] or Psalm 22 “Why have you forsaken me God...”

Interestingly I could not find a hymn that expressed this anger or frustration...



- At times we feel like sinking sand, or a feather in a hurricane.
- As a castle's battlements and a cathedral's girded walls form a bulwark against foes so does God's word gird our strength when life's challenges beset us.
- When trials threaten to break down our spirit we can turn to Psalm 46 especially Martin Luther's interpretation
  - "A mighty fortress is our god, a bulwark never failing our helper he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.*
  - For still our Ancient foe, doth seek to work us woe. His craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal.*
- The power of the tune and words resonate to our toes giving a palpable sense of God's permanence and steadfastness.
- The final words of this hymn fix our confidence in the power of God to triumph in the end;
  - Let good and kindred go, this mortal life also*
  - The body they may kill*
  - God's truth abideth still*
  - "His kingdom is forever."*

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Horatio G. Spafford's son died of scarlet fever at four years of age in Chicago..

He decided to take his family to England to get away from that tragedy, business losses, but at the last minute he was detained and his wife and four daughters went ahead. Only his wife survived a tragic shipwreck so

“Horatio Spafford boarded the next ship out of New York to join his bereaved wife. The captain of the ship had called Horatio to the bridge and said, “A careful reckoning has been made and I believe we are now passing the place where the ‘de Havre’ was wrecked. The water is three miles deep.”

Horatio then returned to his cabin, buffed by the seas and his grief, and penned the lyrics of his great hymn. <https://lorenlung.wordpress.com/2013/03/19/it-is-well-with-my-soul-psalm-461-3/>

It is well with my soul..

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.  
It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Sometimes singing of God's power and love even when we don't feel it gives us strength.



# *Forgiveness*



When we feel burdened by the guilt of our sin, by the heavy load of our greed, sloth, and selfishness we can read the psalms to experience God's forgiveness and when we read it, we feel it , we know:

--"Purge me and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow."

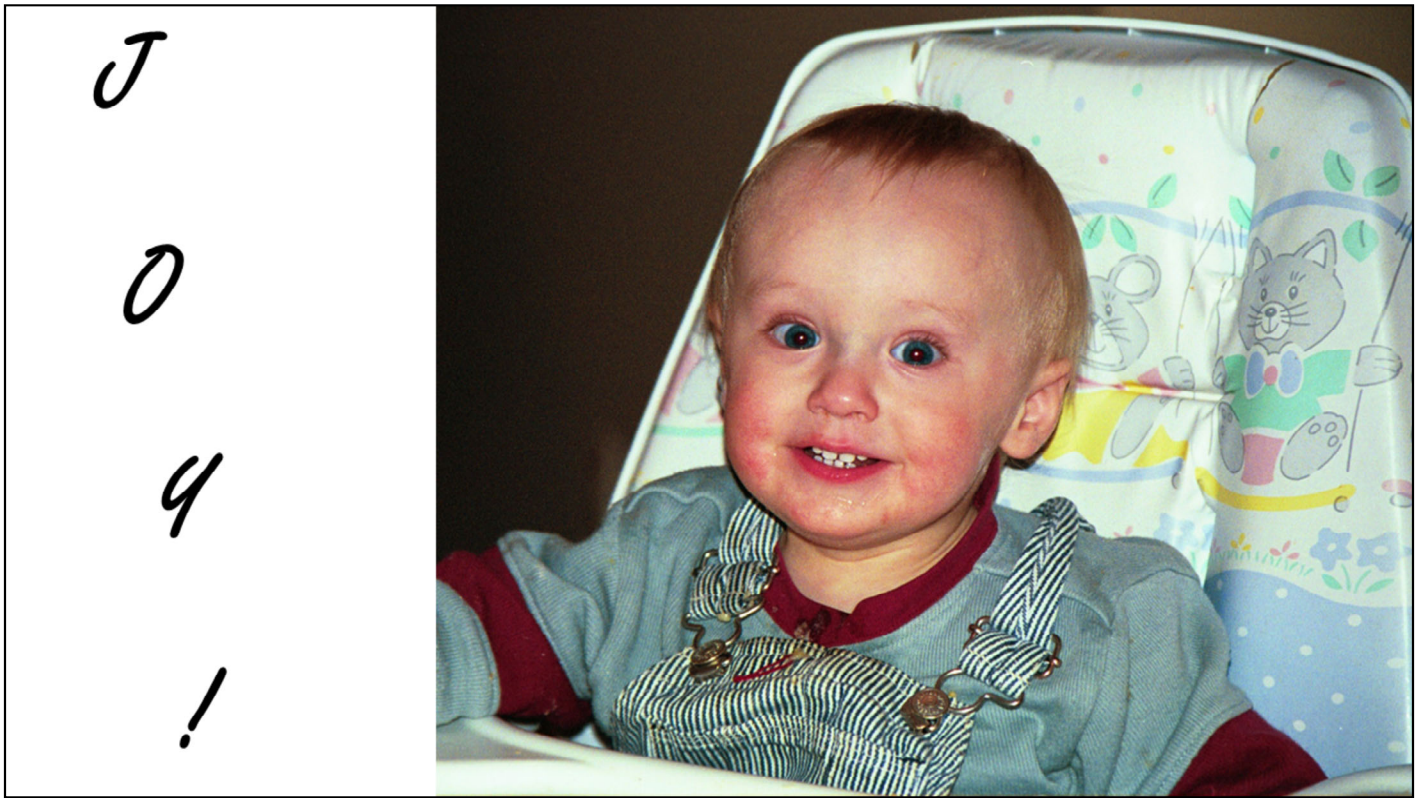
And Psalm 103 assures us of God's forgiving nature;

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plentiful in mercy he has not dealt with us according to our sins nor rewarding us according to our iniquities as far as the east is from the west so far has he removed our transgressions from us, as high as the heavens are above the earth so great is god's love toward them that fear him."



- For me community is its very own emotion
- I experienced this acutely on the last summer Sizzle
- We had widowed seniors, stay at home moms, engineers, teenagers, cooks, choir members, people from all sections of the church working playing laughing celebrating a togetherness which by some mysterious power of the spirit had welled within me a mixture of awe delight and joy for my brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Psalm 133,, expresses this community
- *“Behold the goodness of the lord, how blest it is to be a company of God’s beloved in holy unity.” (Behold the Goodness of the Lord: Psalm 133: Crimond)*





-There are times in life when God has been so good to us and the Holy Spirit is so strongly with us that we cannot help but break forth in praise to God. It just comes bursting out.

- Psalm 150 calls us to praise the lord with the trumpet and loud clashing instruments, a vibrant energetic praise born of the glory of life

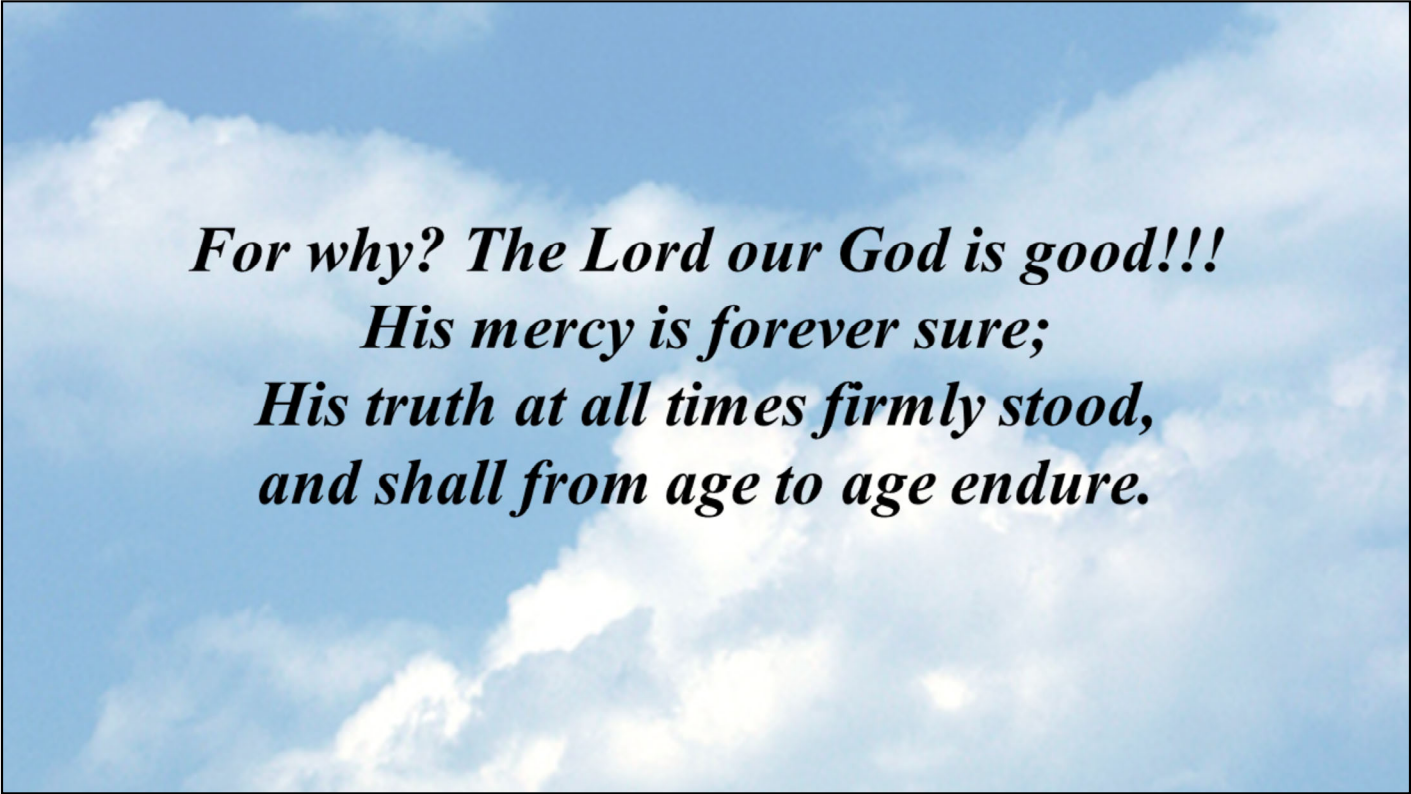
- A children's song captures the simple purity of such praise from Psalm 118,

- This is the day [this is the day], that the lord has made, [that the lord has made], we will rejoice [we will rejoice] and be glad in it, [and be glad in it]. This is the day that the lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. This is the day [this is the day] that the lord has made.*



And finally we have what I believe to be the quintessential psalm and the quintessential hymn. Psalm 100 called the Old Hundredth in our hymnal. It gives us the tune for the doxology and proclaims in these words,

- *“All people that on earth do dwell sing to the lord with cheerful voice him serve with mirth his praise foretell come ye before him and rejoice...(All People that on Earth Do Dwell; Psalm 100: Old Hundredth)*
- This joy is not a light feeling on a sunny day when things happen to go our way that dissolves when the storm clouds roll in; no it is born of a central affirmation about the nature of the universe and the primary attribute of our glorious God, the Old Hundredth tells us what it is...



***For why? The Lord our God is good!!!  
His mercy is forever sure;  
His truth at all times firmly stood,  
and shall from age to age endure.***

The Psalms— The Bible's guide to connect our lives to God. Read them; Sing them; *Live* them.

Amen!