

Hymns of the Faith: “All People That On Earth Do Dwell”

Psalm 100

By [Dr. Bill Wymond](#)

*A Presentation of First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi
with
Dr. J. Ligon Duncan, Dr. Derek Thomas, Dr. Bill Wymond*

Dr. Wymond: Good morning! This is “Hymns of the Faith” brought to you by First Presbyterian Church. The minister of the First Presbyterian Church is Dr. Ligon Duncan. Stay tuned for “Hymns of the Faith.”

Dr. Duncan: Thank you, Bill Wymond! This is Ligon Duncan, with Derek Thomas, and this is “Hymns of the Faith.” I’m delighted to be with you and with Derek Thomas this morning, again talking about hymns. Good morning, Derek.

Dr. Duncan: We have been looking for a number of weeks now at some of the very best hymns in the English language. We’ve listened to *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation* — a great German hymn; we’ve listened to *If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee*; we’ve listened to *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*, one of the absolute favorite hymns of the Protestant church over the last five hundred years. And today we come to another outstanding hymn. This particular hymn is actually a Psalm, and it is actually a paraphrase, or a metrical rendering, of Psalm 100. Psalm 100 is a Psalm that has been a favorite Psalm to set to music by church musicians, I think, ever since there were church musicians! It goes something like this, depending on what your English translation is:

Shout joyfully to the Lord!
Serve the Lord with gladness!
Come before Him with joyful singing!
Know that the Lord, He is God!

It is He who has made us,
and not we ourselves;
We are the people of His pasture,
the sheep under His care.

Enter His gates with thanksgiving....

You get the “feel” for the song. It's a call to worship itself, and no wonder church musicians over the last 1800 years have written countless settings of this Psalm.

And this hymn that we're going to look at this morning actually — probably — was written by a Scot, a Scottish exile to the Continent named William Kethe. We really don't know much about William Kethe. [In our hymnal, his name is spelled Kethe, not like we normally spell *Keith*, but of course back then proper nouns were not so formally spelled the way they are today.] But there are a lot of Kethes in Scotland, and there were a lot of Scottish exiles on the continent of Europe, especially in the area of Frankfurt in the 1550's and 1560's, because those were the “bad ol' days” in Britain. Many, many Protestants had been run out of the country during the reign of Mary Tudor. Not only were three hundred — and some among them great Christians — martyred during those times, but thousands and thousands. I don't know the numbers, but I'm sure upwards of 20,000 people were exiled from England during that period of time. And Kethe was probably among them, and during that time wrote this paraphrase.

I don't know what tune it was originally set to, but very early on, even in Scotland, this Psalm began to be associated with the tune that had been written by the Minister of Music, the lead church musician in Geneva, Louis Bourgeois. And it's the perfect tune for this Psalm, and I think it's probably one reason why this Psalm caught on. Probably of all the Scottish Psalms — Derek, you know the Psalter well — I would guess that this Psalm, Psalm 100, and Psalm 23 set to CRIMOND may be the two best known of all the Scottish Psalms throughout the English speaking world. Can you think of others that might vie for the supremacy of the best known...sort of combination of text and tune?

Dr. Thomas: Hmmm. I was thinking of how in the early church it probably would not have been either Psalm 100 or Psalm 23, but the Christ Psalms...Psalm 110. Certainly there are Scottish Psalms to this day that are associated with very strong, powerful tunes, and the closing verses of Psalm 72 is one of those, and Psalm 24.

Dr. Duncan: “Lift up your heads, O ye gates....” Indeed, that's one of the...for Scots, they're going to immediately recognize the tunes that are associated with it.

Dr. Thomas: In any event of great significance that would have been the closing Psalm that we would have sung, “Lift up, you gates...” and it's an EIN' FESTE BURG kind of a tune.

Dr. Duncan: Yes, that's right. And there was a new tune written for that towards the end of the nineteenth century that caught on in Scotland, and ST GEORGE'S, EDINBURGH is one that they'll start it singing it to — either something like DUNFIRMLAND or something else — and then they'll end up with

the tune of ST GEORGE'S, EDINBURGH, which is almost antiphonal with the men and the women in the congregation singing back and forth to one another. It's a very moving thing to hear. But for Americans, I think probably *All People That on Earth Do Dwell* and the Twenty-third Psalm are the best known to us of the old Scottish Psalter.

Well, the musician who wrote this tune, which has been titled OLD HUNDREDTH, Bill Wymond, is Louis Bourgeois. And you've done a lot of work on Calvin and Geneva and Louis Bourgeois, so tell us about this man and about the tune.

Dr. Wymond: Louis Bourgeois wrote, I think, about 53 of the tunes for Calvin's Psalter...and I just want to comment about the exiles also before I say more about that.

It was a providential thing that many who were tossed out of Scotland, including John Knox, were in Geneva at this really fruitful time of the compilation of *The Genevan Psalter* that Calvin was directing. And so the Anglican people there, the Anglo's who were having church there in their own English-speaking church, came up with their own Psalter. And they borrowed from what they thought was the best of *The Genevan Psalter*, and later Sternhold and Hopkins did additional Psalter versions, so that those were taken back to Scotland when they could go back into Scotland. So Geneva really influenced the worship of the Church of Scotland and our ancestors.

But anyway, about Louis Bourgeois...he had, as I said, written about 53 of the tunes. The thing that's interesting about *The Genevan Psalter* is it has of course 150 Psalms in it, and there are 110 different tunes used for those. That's a very high number! In our hymnals we repeat a lot of tunes and words so that people will not have to learn too many tunes. The tunes were really original. The research that has gone on has not shown any link to any known tunes of the time. There might have been little fragments here and there, but Calvin was concerned that with *The Genevan Psalter*, that all of the tunes be fresh, that they fit the words that they are accompanying, and that there be as many original connections like that between tune and text so that when people thought of a Psalm, they would think of a particular tune. He thought it would be a memory device for them.

Some of the tunes are simple, some are very long. The originality, though, of that whole idea and of having people sing is really interesting to me.

And some people, not understanding or knowing the history of the Psalter, tend to think that the worship in Geneva was very dour, very somber. But if you look at the Psalter and you look at the tunes, you see that they were very lively tunes. In fact, the Queen of France criticized the tunes as being "Genevan jigs" because they were just not at all like the Gregorian chant that she was used to.

So, anyway, Louis Bourgeois did this tune.

Dr. Duncan: And how does the tune go?

Dr. Wymond: The way we do it now when we do *The Doxology* is we sing it in straight notes [plays example]. That's the latest version. But when we all sing the hymn, *All People That On Earth Do Dwell*, we sing it with elongated first notes and last notes [plays example]. That formula is typical of Genevan Psalters. You stop on the first note, and then you elongate the last notes, and it goes that way all the way through.

Dr. Thomas: Was that a device to help people who hadn't been used to singing to sort of come together?

Dr. Wymond: I've wondered if it wasn't a gathering note. You know, on your continent, Derek, a lot of times there's some gathering that goes on, on the first note of hymns, I've noticed.

Dr. Thomas: Well, because, you know, one of the differences between here and Britain is that you stand up to sing a good line before we start singing. In Britain, they don't stand up until about half a second before you start to sing, so you need that sort of "gathering" time.

Dr. Duncan: Well, you also have the tradition in Scotland, especially in the Gaelic part of the country, of a presenter, because there wouldn't have been Psalters for everyone. And for a long time they wouldn't have had Gaelic Psalters — Psalters written in the Celtic language — so they would have actually lined out the first line, and the people would have sung it, and then they would have lined out the second line. And so you tend to have these long, lingering notes in the Gaelic Psalms on the first note — and then the congregation catches up on that — and then it goes off on the next line, and you listen to what the presenter says, and you say that right behind him and sing it right behind him. And there may be something like that going on in these. But they're still...it is anything but dour! It's a robust, confident kind of tune when you sing it.

Dr. Wymond: It is. It's a simple tune, but very, very strong. And it's just one long line. This tune repeats nothing. It just is one long phrase. It is strong, though. [Plays Psalm.] Here at this point we go...[plays]...but in the old version it went ...[plays]...elongated all the last notes of the tune. I think it's more consistent and better to do it the way we do it.

Dr. Thomas: Well, the tune was written ten years before Kethe's words in English, and presumably the tune was written to the French translation of the 100th Psalm.

Dr. Wymond: Yes, it's used in *The Genevan Psalter*, and it's the best known, I think. In our circles we know a couple of the others pretty well, but absolutely this is universally used.

Dr. Thomas: It was written in 1561, and Calvin died in 1564, and it was certainly being published in Scotland in the Scottish Psalter around this time, just before Calvin died.

Dr. Duncan: When did that Sternhold and Hopkins Psalter come out? Is it in the 1560's, or is it the 1570's when that comes out? I'm sure we've got it...look around here for it. We'll look in our research and see if we can find that. But you've got...it's interesting, though, even with these hymns being written...did you find it?

Dr. Thomas: 1562.

Dr. Duncan: It's before Calvin dies. Calvin wants these tunes to be associated in the people's minds...or these texts to be associated with these tunes. Bourgeois, on at least one occasion, is jailed for changing what? The rhythm, or the melody of some familiar tune? Something like that? Do you remember the story, Bill?

Dr. Wymond: I think there's probably more behind that story...that he didn't just change a tune! *[Laughter]* What I do think is interesting, though, is that Calvin insisted on no harmony.

Dr. Duncan: He wanted everybody singing in unison...

Dr. Wymond: ... just the melody, and it's understandable, because the people didn't just jump in and start singing, anyway. So it was a bit of a test for a while to get the people to sing. But Calvin did permit Bourgeois to publish a version of some of the Psalms, not in Geneva, but for the wider consumption, that had harmony. So he wasn't opposed to harmony, he was just opposed to harmony in Geneva.

But the clever thing that he did in order to get the people to start singing these songs was to get the children together in something like a children's school and teach them the music, so that when they got into church, then they could lead their parents. Their parents, who had never sung before in church and who were a bit reluctant to sing, were led by the children who already knew the tunes.

Dr. Thomas: It's interesting, you know, that this Psalm ends very similarly to the way the previous Psalm, Psalm 46, *A Mighty Fortress*, [ends]. The 100th Psalm ends with "His truth at all times firmly stood, and shall from age to age endure." And the previous one, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*,

Let goods and kindred go,

this mortal life also;
The body they may kill;
God's truth abideth still.
His kingdom is forever!

Dr. Duncan: Yes, strong affirmation of the enduring word of God, kingdom of God, rule of God.

Dr. Thomas: And in a period when the Reformation...because we're in the 1560's now...but there was still severe persecution breaking out in France and in the lower parts of Holland and so on, and the Marion exiles of the 1550's, so that note of confidence that they may kill the body, but God's truth and God's word abides forever. So Luther in the 1520's, Calvin in Geneva, and the Scots in the 1560's...very similar.

Dr. Duncan: Well, and again, you've many a time told your classes about John Calvin sending out missionary after missionary to almost certain death from Geneva, whether it was to Brazil or back into France. He sent young men off, almost consecrating them to martyrdom in some circumstances, because he knew that they were going to die for their faith. And yet there is tremendous confidence that God's kingdom is going to go on.

Dr. Thomas: In the late 1550's, that we're talking about, just a couple of years before the composition of the English version of the 110th Psalm, the number of Protestant churches in France grew from just a handful to well over two thousand in the space of just a few years.

Dr. Wymond: What I think is interesting is how Calvin profited during that time from being in France for a while. Early on after he went to Geneva, there was a big conflict that he had and he was actually ousted, as you know, from Geneva, and he went to Strasbourg. And I think it was really providential, because he appreciated so much the worship that he saw there that he adopted almost in toto the order of worship that they used in France and in Strasbourg, and also the singing. The singing really impressed him. He had made earlier efforts toward a Psalter, but when he was called back to Geneva he went with great resolve, then, to do the Psalter.

Dr. Thomas: We should make a few comments, Bill, Ligon, about the fact that these are both Psalms. We are not exclusive Psalm-singers, but we are inclusive Psalm-singers.

Dr. Duncan: ...which is to say that we think the Psalms ought to be a part of the diet of what the church sings for its praise...

Dr. Thomas: ... and the simple reason for that is that the Psalms have been part of God's praise since the time of David, so you're joining in a tradition that goes

back 3,000 years. And that's a significant issue. But the reintroduction of the Psalter, and the whole Psalter, for Calvin, is important not least because...and I found it again just this week.... Somebody asked me about dealing with the issue of anger. And isn't it so that when you read the Psalms — what did Calvin say about the Psalms? — that they were an anatomy of all the parts of the soul? And the Psalms deal with human and Christian emotions and responses to situations and trials and difficulties that sometimes the hymns do not. And there's a robustness — I was going to say “a masculinity” but I know I'd be misunderstood with that — but there's certainly a robustness to the Psalms; that if you never sing the Psalms, if all you sing are hymns and spiritual songs, then I think you miss out. And I think that in terms of pastoral counseling you don't have ammunition to deal with certain issues.

Dr. Duncan: I agree. And I'd say two other things. One is Calvin not only emphasized that the Psalms were an anatomy of every part of the soul, but that they were also the guide for the living of the Christian life. And so he didn't look at the Psalms as some sort of shadowy, pre-Christian, sub-Christian expression of spirituality: he saw them as the sum and substance of what the Christian life was all about. And that...I think that helps get to this issue that you raised.

The second thing that I would say is that it's amazing, as strong as the Psalms are and as direct as they are in addressing a whole variety of issues—how do you respond to people that are trying to undermine you? how do you respond to your enemies? how do you respond to your trials and tribulations?—as direct and explicit as the Psalms are in expression of a believer's response to these circumstances, they also have a certain subtlety to them because there's no lecturing. You're not being lectured, ‘Now when you're angry, do this.’ It's just, you know, here's an example — a divinely inspired example — of a believer dealing with this thing, and you're being modeled what to do, rather than...it's not “Derek, sit down and I'm going to tell you the four things that every Christian should do when he's angry.” No, you're just being modeled what a believer does in a situation of frustration. Bill?

Dr. Wymond: Well, I was just thinking, too, the most obvious thing is that if we want to know what to sing, we would say what does God want us to sing? Is there such an answer?

And He put the songbook in the Bible! If you want to know what we ought to start with, it would seem obvious that the Psalms would be the first place that we'd go.

Dr. Duncan: And along those lines, you know there has been a long-running discussion today amongst...and this of course especially happened in the late '60's and early '70's when the choruses and such began to come into English-speaking churches as a part of the diet of what people were singing in terms of praise...you know that people would say, “Well, nobody's given us a divinely inspired hymnbook; it's OK to write things differently; you can't judge a

hymn...no, there's no biblical standard for what a hymn is.”

Oh? Yeah, there is! A Psalm. How do you know what a good hymn is? Well, a good hymn looks like a Psalm. And it's interesting. You can't even argue this. There's no argument against it in the English language.

If you look at the hymns that have endured, period...if you look at the hymns that have endured, they have the textual qualities of the Psalms in terms of the substance. The tunes that have endured over the years are not mantra-like repetitions of four words; they look like Psalms, in terms of the substance of their texts. So we really do have something to help us judge objectively what's going to be a good hymn text and what's not going to be a good hymn text, because they're going to have these kinds of qualities.

Dr. Thomas: What I really like about the 100th Psalm is the way first of all it exhorts one another to come into God's praise —

“O enter then His gates with praise,
Approach with joy His courts unto;
Praise, laud, and bless His name always,
For it is seemly so to do.”

And then it gives you the reason:

“For why? The Lord our God is good,
His mercy is forever sure...”

Dr. Duncan: Yes, this ties in what Bill said. You have this idea of, either in Geneva or in Scotland, somewhere where it's raining and gray outside, and these sort of, as they would say, “dour Scotsmen” in there with their coats pulled around them with frowns on their faces angrily snarling a Psalm to God. And none of this text reads this way! It is a very joyful song.

In fact, I want to say something on behalf of my Scottish brethren. We sing this song, and it's based out of that English rendering in 1560: “Him serve with *fear*, His praise forthtell.” The original Scottish Psalter did not have that line. It was “Him serve with *mirth*, His praise forthtell,”—so don't pick on the poor old dour Scots! They were actually cheerful people! And this is such an upbeat song of confidence in God.

Dr. Wymond: Dr. Duncan, we'll listen now to *All People That on Earth Do Dwell*, sung for us by Clifford McGowan.

All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
Him serve with fear, His praise forthtell,

Come ye before Him and rejoice.

The Lord ye know is God indeed;
Without our aid He did us make;
We are His folk, He doth us feed,
And for His sheep He doth us take.

O enter then His gates with praise,
Approach with joy His courts unto;
Praise, laud, and bless His name always,
For it is seemly so to do.

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.

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