



¹ Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. ² Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. ³ Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. ⁴ Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. ⁵ For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations. (Psalm 100:1-5)

Today's hymn is essentially an expansion of the Doxology (Hymn 139). The lyrics were written by William Kethe in 1561, and the tune is by Louis (Loys) Bourgeois in 1551. The tune is called Old One-Hundredth. The tune name derives from the Psalm upon which the words are based (Psalm 100). Bourgeois wrote the tune for the Genevan Psalter - *Pseaumes Octante Trois de David*. As you can see, the tune is ancient, but the lyrics are even of greater antiquity – even parts dating back to King David. The hymn places the great Trinitarian Doctrine of the church in metered lyrics for easy of memorization. Even children can quote this great doctrine from singing the Doxology at every service of the church.

All People that on Earth do Dwell

All people that on earth do dwell,
sing to the Lord with cheerful voice:
him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell,
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 for ever sure;

his truth at all times firmly stood,
and shall from age to age endure.

To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
the God whom heaven and earth adore,
from men and from the angel host
be praise and glory evermore.

"All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice: him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell, come ye before him and rejoice." This line is directed to all people who on earth do dwell. There is no exception to the obligation and privilege of praising God. If the trees of the forest can clap their hands, I am sure that all of the people on earth could, if they were righteous, sing praises to our God. *"For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."* (Isaiah 55:12) There is more than one spiritual lesson in this first stanza: 1) we are to SING with cheerful voice to the Lord; 2) we are to serve the Lord, not with a heavy, but a light heart; 3) we are to publicly proclaim His praises; and 4) we are to come before the Lord and rejoice there. We cannot approach the Lord with hate-laddened hearts. We must be forgiven of the trespasses of others if we would be forgiven as well. The strength and purpose of the classics hymns is exemplified in this old standard. Instead of the 'warm and fuzzy' kindergarten songs of the modern church, these old classic hymns have meat on their bones.

"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." If you know the Lord at all, you know that He is God indeed. Jesus Christ is our Lord and He is God. He is the central figure of the Trinity. We, as clay to the potter, were turned and molded in the Hand of God oblivious to what we would become through His craftsmanship. Last week, on our morning walk, the day was cold and rainy. We happened upon two abandoned kittens on the side of the road. One was too weak and small to climb on the curb and escape. They were both fearful of this giant being that hovered over them. They had never come into close contact with a human before. Their mother either left them to forage for themselves, or could not return to feed them. The kitten by the curb was terrified to see this giant hand come down and pick him up. But he was just a baby so he could not struggle. I took him home and placed him on our walled-in patio. Returning for the second, I found him peeking out of the honeysuckle growth along the road. I could not coax him out. So my wife retrieved his brother and that enticed him to come out for a better look. I was able to take both to warm, dry shelter. Just as Jesus came in the body of man so that we could know God, so did the familial appearance of the other kitten draw the lonely holdout from the brush. Every morning, noon, and night, a large hand pours warm milk and cat food into a bowl before them. I doubt that these kittens ever wonder where the hand comes from, or how the food was obtained. They simply devour it. They have grown strong and healthy and have become a blessing to my wife and me.

I believe we are much like those kittens – terrified of God because of His greatness, and unknowing of His love and grace toward us – until we stop resisting and allow His giant Hand to pick us up, wash away our dirt and grime, feed us with His Manna, and place our feet on dry ground. We never wonder what the Manna costs until we learn that His only Begotten Son paid the price for that Manna. Then, we become a blessing to God; and He loves to watch us as we frolic and play mirthfully before Him. He has specially chosen us as His *"people and the sheep of His pasture."* (Psalm 79:13)

“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.” I had the singular privilege to live for many years near the summer palace at Persepolis near Shiraz, in Iran. This was the frequent abode of Darius the Great, Xerxes, Artaxerxes, and others who have their tombs cut out of stone in the Mountain of Mercy overlooking the ruins of the city. There have been discovered well-preserved clay tablets recording momentous, as well as daily, events that occurred in the walls of that great city. At the main entrance, is the Gate of the Nations, marked on either side by giant fifty foot lions carved from stone, through which the conquered kings came to pay their respects to the Persian Sovereign of the day. It is recorded that they bore gifts of fine art and other treasures through that mighty gate to the stairway of the Apadana to the King. As they entered and approached the Apadana, they sang praises to Darius, or whatever king ruled at the time. If men so honor an earthly king, how much more should the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, be honored? There is one particular practice in which the muslims show greater respect for their false god than we show for the Almighty God: Each time the muslim refers to his little god, he adds, “May his holy name be blessed.” They also have such high regard for the Quran that they wash their hands before touching it. Do we have as much respect for the Holiness of God and for His word as these have for their lesser god? (I use the term ‘god’ in the same sense that the Old Testament refers to those false gods of wood and stone.)

“For why? the Lord our God is good, his mercy is for ever sure; his truth at all times firmly stood, and shall from age to age endure.” It is true that God is good, but God is also just. His justice must be satisfied for us in the blood of His Son who redeemed us. Mercy from God must be sought after. He will never deny mercy to those who seek it in contrition and repentance. His Word is His Truth. It has stood longer than any words penned by frail man. It has never been proven to have failed of truth. It stands as the Ancient Landmark upon the earth from which all other morals are measured. God has preserved His Word even though men are attempting to corrupt it with a proliferation of modern (per) versions. When all of those newly contrived and politically corrupt versions are covered with the dust of the ages, the Holy Bible will burst forth in even greater brilliance.

The doxology of this hymn is so very close to the great Doxology which it expounds upon. “To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the God whom heaven and earth adore, from men and from the angel host be praise and glory evermore.” This last stanza reinforces our faith in the great Trinity of God. We adore the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost upon this planetary sphere; but heaven also praises and adores the Triune God who is their Maker. The angels praise and adore the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They even would desire to have the privilege to look into those great mysteries of the Godhead that have been revealed, and experienced, by lowly man. These mysteries, revealed through the prophets to us, are cause for the great curiosity of the angelic host: *“Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.”* (1 Peter 1:12)

Consider the great privilege we have to know that Great Hand that reached down from Heaven and took us up while we were cold and abandoned in a world of no mercy; the Hand that feeds and caresses – that loves and grants mercy to a people who merit no mercy at all. As Thomas Ken added as a doxology to the works of God in 1674, let us sing together the summary of that praise we owe:

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise him, all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heavenly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. AMEN