

## **Worship - The Missing Jewel - Psalm 95 - February 18 2018**

I think we've all experienced worship services where we had to fight back a yawn and wondered if God was there at all. Was it the style of the music or the content of the sermon, or was it the condition of our hearts? It's only when our hearts are right that there is exuberance in our worship.

**Different people have different ideas about worship.** Ask a Pentecostal; an Anglican; an Episcopalian; a Catholic; a Wesleyan/Methodist; ask young people; or older believers. Some people like formal, liturgical worship. Some prefer traditional hymns. Some prefer Southern Gospel harmonies. Some prefer contemporary choruses. The spectrum runs from pipe organs to electric guitars.

Some think that you can't worship with a song unless it's at least fifty years old and the Scripture reading is from the KJV. On the other side of the scale some think you can't worship with a song if it's more than five years old. With different generations and cultural mixes in our churches, it's no wonder that our preferences are so widely varied. However, the important factor is not so much **How we worship** but **That we worship**.

As an evangelical, Bible-teaching church, we understand that our purpose for existence is Evangelism and Discipleship. God has left us here to tell unsaved people about the glorious gospel of grace and to help saved people become fully committed followers of Christ.

Nothing should deter us from that biblical purpose. Still, authentic worship, the joyful praise of Almighty God is the impetus that drives us. Unless we learn to stand in awe of God and wonder at His glory, everything else will be an exercise in weariness.

It's no wonder that A.W. Tozer said, "**Worship is the missing jewel of the evangelical church.**" The point is that if we don't understand and practice genuine worship, we will never have

God's passion for evangelism and discipleship. Worship comes first. When our worship grows stale, so does our passion for God.

Today from Psalm 95 we'll examine **the Meaning of worship**, our **Motivation for worship** and our **Methods of worship**.

## **I. The Meaning of Worship. A. What Worship Is Not?**

In verse 6, the psalmist says, **"O Come, let us worship and bow down."** Even the word **"worship"** means many things to many people. Before we learn what worship is, it may help clarify it if we understand what worship is not.

**First, worship is not An Event.** We call this time **the "Worship Service"** but calling it that doesn't ensure that we will worship. You can attend a worship service without worshipping.

**Second, worship is not Music.** There's no more dividing issue in churches today than this. We may have a **"worship leader"** and a **"praise team that is second to none,"** we may sing hymns of worship, we may sing praise and worship choruses, but having beautiful music doesn't guarantee our worship. **Music is but a Vehicle to take us to the place of worship.**

People have different tastes in vehicles. Some like pickups and others SUV's. Some like minivans. Some like luxury cars. Some like sports cars. Some prefer Chevy's and others like Fords. However, the purpose of any vehicle is to get you from point A to point B. That's what music is. Though we may have varied tastes, music that honours God can be a vehicle for worship. **However, the music in itself is not worship.**

**Third, worship is not a Performance.** Our culture conditions us to grade performances. We rate movies... two stars, three stars, etc... We score ball games and keep statistics on our favourite athletes. We can tell you when they performed well and when they failed. If we're not very careful, we'll see worship as a performance to be graded. We may see ourselves as an audience

and the people on the platform as performers. The truth is that we're all here to perform worship for an audience of One and One only. None of us are spectators. All of us are participants in the worship of God.

**Third, worship is not A Feeling.** Some people think that unless they get a tear in their eye, a shiver down their spine, or work themselves up into an emotional turmoil that they have not truly experienced worship. **If ever there was a lie from the pit, this has to be one of the biggest!** Worship is emotional, but being emotional does not guarantee genuine worship.

## **B. What Worship Is**

The infinite concept of worship is very hard to define with finite words. Asking, "**What is worship?**" is a bit like asking, "Who is God?" In its most basic sense worship means "**to declare worth or worthiness.**" Webster defines it in this way, "**reverence offered a divine being or supernatural power; also an act of expressing such reverence.**" While a dictionary definition may be helpful, what we really need is a biblical definition.

First, worship is the Reasonable, Heart-Felt Response To God That Values Him Above Everyone And Everything. Worship is declaring worth and value. There are people in this sanctuary that I highly value. They have great worth to me personally. Yet, I don't worship them. We worship God because He is absolutely worthy and supremely valuable.

When asked what was the greatest of all the Old Testament commandments, Jesus said in Mark 12:30, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first [foremost] commandment."

We can put all that together to form this definition, "Worship is the reasonable, heart-felt response of those who have known God's grace that values Him above anyone or anything else."

Therefore, worship is much more than a few songs on Sunday mornings. Worship is a lifestyle. Worship is constantly putting God first in what we say, what we think and what we do. When we gather together to sing songs of worship, we're merely putting music to the song that is already in our hearts.

## **II. The Motivation for Worship.**

Back to our primary text in Psalm 95, I think we can see here our motivation, the why of worship, two reasons why we should worship God.

### **A. We Worship Because of Who God Is.**

We often link the words worship and praise together. We speak of "praise and worship music." **We have a "worship leader" and a "praise team."** They are two different responses. Praise is a response to what God does. Worship is a response to who God is.

In Psalm 95, we have a number of statements that tell us who God is. In verse 1, He is called, "the Lord" and "the Rock of our salvation." In verse 3, He is called, "the great God" and "the great King above all gods." In verses 4-5 He is praised for His work as the Creator of all things.

In verse 6, God is not merely an unknowable Creator, but He's "our maker." In verse 7, He's not just some awe inspiring deity, but He's "our God," He's personal. He's our great and gentle Shepherd. In verses 8-11, He's the God of history who called and delivered the nation of Israel.

As we move to the New Testament, God revealed Himself in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is our Immanuel, "God with us." We worship Jesus because Jesus is the Saviour.

Let's turn for a moment to Revelation 5:8-14. **This is a preview of heaven and describes what is truly the greatest worship scene**

**in all of Scripture!** Everyone falls down before Jesus, "the Lamb" and declares His magnificent worth.

8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.<sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, 10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."<sup>11</sup> Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honour, and glory and blessing!"<sup>13</sup> And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honour and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"<sup>14</sup> Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshipped Him who lives forever and ever.

**How this should thrill the soul of every believer and bring a loud AMEN to our lips!**

**Jesus is the centerpiece of our Worship.** He was born as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev.13:8). Our redemption is tied to His cross. That's why, unlike some churches and some denominations, we don't hesitate to sing about His blood. It was His shed blood that set us free from our sins. We are "the church of God which He purchased with His own blood"

**E.G.** After Stalin came to power in the former Soviet Union, he closed most of the churches and tried to stamp out Christianity completely. As a group of soldiers were boarding up an old Greek

Orthodox Church, they found an old woman, kneeling before a large crucifix that had fallen to the floor.

She was kissing the feet of a carved image of Jesus. One of the surly soldiers said to her, "Babushka, would you kiss the feet of Stalin like that?" She looked up and said, "Yes, I would kiss the feet of Stalin. I would even kiss your feet if you had been crucified for me."

Who else is like God? Who else could we say these things of? Who else created us? Who else blesses us? Who else died for our sins? Who else or what else could we worship? No one! Only God!

## **We Worship Because of Who We Are**

The second motivation for worship can also be seen in Psalm 95. We not only worship God for who He is but because of who we are. Verse 7 says **"We are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand."** He is the Shepherd; we are the sheep. He is the Creator; we are the creatures. He is the King; we are the subjects. He is the Master; we are the servants. He is the Vine; we are the branches. He is the Owner; we are the possessions.

Let me tell you about our Owner, our Shepherd. **He is Almighty God.** He loves us infinitely and cares for our every need. He finds His greatest joy in us. There's not a hair that falls from our head that escapes His attention. Therefore, the most natural response in the world is for us to worship Him.

Worship is for God and God alone. Worship is for Him, not for us. We may be blessed, comforted, encouraged and edified as we worship, but all that is secondary. God is primary.

When we leave this place we should never think, "How did the worship leader or praise team or the preacher do today?" We should never ask, "Was I satisfied with the selection of songs or the theme of the message?" What we should always ask is, "God,

how did I do today? Did I honour you? Did I value You above all things? Did I put my heart into worship today?"

### **III. The Methods of Worship.**

There are many ways, many methods, many modes of worshipping God, but Psalm 95 gives us four of them to examine.

#### **1. We are to Worship as a Church Body.**

It says **"Let us."** In fact, it uses that phrase six times. It says, **"Let us sing;" "Let us shout;" "Let us come before His presence;" "Let us worship and bow down" and "Let us kneel."**

Though we can worship anytime and anyplace, there's a special dynamic of God's presence in corporate worship. Though Jesus is always with us, He said in Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." That's why Hebrews 10:25 commands us not to "...forsake the assembling of ourselves together."

Every now and again I meet someone who says he worships God by himself in the outdoors and rarely darkens a church doorway. Certainly you can worship God alone in nature. I've done it many times. However, that's no excuse for ignoring the biblical mandate to gather with the assembled church in corporate worship.

Worship and the Worship assembly is to our spiritual lives what air is to our physical being. Without it we'll die. When Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6, He didn't say **"My Father..."** but **"Our Father."**

#### **2. We are to Worship Verbally.**

Verse 1 tells us to **"sing" and to "shout" to the Lord.** You can't sing or shout without opening your mouth! Hebrews 13:15 reads, "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name."

There is an old hymn which says, **"Come we that love the Lord and let our joys be known,** Join in a song with sweet accord and thus surround the throne. Let those refuse to sing who never knew our God. But children of the heavenly king may speak their joys abroad." There is something terribly wrong with a believer who will not sing to the Lord.

Notice verse 1 reads that we are to sing and shout **"joyfully."** It doesn't say perfectly; it says **"joyfully."** In any church at least fifty-percent of the people will say they don't sing well. God said to Moses, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD?" (Ex.4:11). God knows how you sing. He made you that way.

We should never have to be reminded to sing because we have something to sing for! The Psalmist wrote, God had put a new song in his mouth, even praise unto our God. Psalm 40:3

When we know who we are and we know who the Lord is, when in our hearts we value God above any and everything, the music makes little difference. We can sing with pipe organs or electric guitars. We can sing with grand old hymns or contemporary praise songs. When our goal is to draw close to the Lord, the vehicle that gets us there is not very important!

### **3. We are to Worship Physically**

In verse 6 we are told to **"bow down"** and to **"kneel"** before the Lord. Psalm 47:1 says, "Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph!" Psalm 63:4 says, "Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name." Psalm 134:2 says, "Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD." **All of these are legitimate postures for worship.**

The point is the freedom to express our worship with our voices and with our posture. You can bow. **You can kneel. You can stand. You can sit. You can clap. You can lift your hands.**



Because we seek to be a biblical church and these are biblical forms of worship, we're free to use them here!

If you just can't sing a particular song, then put a smile on your face and worship through prayer. Don't ever try to stifle the joy of the Lord in others by your posture and expression.

**E.G.** In the winter when the air is crisp and cold, one of my favourite treats is a big steaming bowl of soup or stew. My wife makes great soup. She gathers meat and all kinds of vegetables and slowly cooks them all day long.

Her soup is really not too good until it has simmered on the heat for hours and hours. Then when you finally take the lid off, mmmm - it's so good!

I think worship and soup have something in common. God puts us all in this big pot called the church. Some of us are meat, some potatoes, some are definitely the corn!

**We're all diverse and different.** He simmers us all week in the circumstances of life. When we gather here on Sunday morning, He takes the lid off and smells the aroma of our sacrifice of praise.

**Take a listen again!**

Oh come, let us worship and bow down;

Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

For He is our God,

And we are the people of His pasture,

And the sheep of His hand.