



“Preparing Our Hearts for the Holidays”

Psalm 95 Pastor’s Choice

Introduction: What exactly is a holiday?

Psalm 95 – “O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. For the LORD is a great God and a great King above all gods, in whose hand are the depths of the earth, the peaks of the mountains are His also. The sea is His, for it was He who made it, and His hands formed the dry land. 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. Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness, “When your fathers tested Me, they tried Me, though they had seen My work. For forty years I loathed that generation, and said they are a people who err in their heart, and they do not know My ways. Therefore I swore in My anger, truly they shall not enter into My rest.”

I. The Call to Holiday Thanksgiving

Psalm 95:1-2 “O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord. Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving. Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.”

Holiday Practice #1 - “...let us sing for joy to the Lord.” Hebrew = *ranan* = to creak/sing aloud with shrill sounds

Holiday Practice #2 - “Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation.”

shout = Hebrew: *ruwa* = to split the ears with a shrill sound (KJV = “make a joyful noise.”)

Psalm 47:1 “Clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with a voice of triumph.”

Holiday Practice #3 - “Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving.”

Psalm 95:2 “Let US come before His presence with thanksgiving.”

Holiday Practice #4 - “Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.”

cf. Psalm 118:24 “This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” (lit. “Let us stand up and cheer the day the Lord has made.”)

1 Thessalonians 5:18 “...in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Hebrews 13:15 “Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.”

II. The Motivation for Holiday Thanksgiving

Motivation #1 - A Constant Awareness of the Greatness of God

Psalm 95:3 “For the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods...”

What is it that clouds that awareness of the glory of God? Idolatry! An idol is anything in our lives that has more of our attention than God.

Some of Our Idols (cf. Colossians 3)

Immorality • Impurity • Passion • Evil Desire • Greed • Anger • Wrath • Malice • Slander • Abusive Speech • Lying

Psalms 95:3 "For the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods..."

Motivation #2 - A Constant Awareness of the Power of the Creator

Psalms 95:4-5 "In whose hand are the depths of the earth, the peaks of the mountains are His also. The sea is His, for it was He who made it, and His hands formed the dry land."

Divine Observation Points

Observation Point #1 - Look down at the depths of the earth.

Observation Point #2 - Look up at the peaks of the mountains.

cf. Psalm 121:1-2 "I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From where shall my help come? My help *comes* from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth."

Observation Point #3 - Look deeply at the wonders of the sea.

Psalms 95:5 "The sea is His, for it was He who made it."

Observation Point #4 - Look around at the beauty of the earth.

III. The Practice of Holiday Thanksgiving

#1 - Respond to Him as Our Maker

Psalms 95:6 "Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker."

"And what do you do when you are confronted with a God too big? You get as low as you can before a God too awesome to grasp. And in that smallness, you say, "Wow!" Then again you may not say anything. Worship is not so much words as it is an automatic response out of your own utter smallness to a God too big — too big to wrap your mind around, too big to figure out....If you found yourself before a giant, would you stand tall, trying to stretch high in order to feel more comfortable, or would you find yourself hunching your shoulders, feeling pressed down even lower by such immensity? Before a God too big the only place to be is as low as you can get." ("What Do You Do With God Too Big?" by David Needham, Moody Monthly, January, 1984)

#2 - Acknowledge Him as Our Shepherd

Psalms 95:7 "For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand."

#3 - Obey Him as Our Lord

Psalms 95:7 "...Today, if you would hear His voice..." — "Choose today to listen to His voice!"

How do we listen to God's voice?

1. Spending time today in His Word
2. Be led today by His Holy Spirit.
3. Listen today to the godly counsel of others who are hearing His voice and being led by His Holy Spirit.

IV. The Threat to Holiday Thanksgiving

Psalms 95:8-11 — "Do not harden your hearts, as at Mariah, As in the day of Massah in the wilderness, When your fathers tested Me, They tried Me, though they had seen My work. For forty years I loathed that generation, And said they are a people who err in their heart, And they do not know My ways. Therefore I swore in My anger, Truly they shall not enter into My rest."1113

Exodus 17:7 “He [Moses] named the place Massah (meaning “testing”) and Meribah (meaning “rebellion”) because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us, or not?”

Where are your Massah and Meribah experiences? When were those times when you disobeyed God? When were your seasons of rebellion? cf. 1 Cor. 10:6-14

A Timeline of God’s Faithfulness

- Before I was born, God...
- At the time of my birth, God...
- In the years following, God...
- Today, God...

Psalm 118:1 “Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; for His lovingkindness is everlasting.”

Concluding Challenge: Entering His rest...(cf. Hebrews 3-4)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is your favorite holiday song?
2. What part of creation most stirs your awareness of the majesty and greatness of God?
3. How do you most listen to God’s voice?
4. What stifles your thanksgiving?
5. Share a brief testimony of God’s faithfulness in your life
 - Before I was born, God...
 - At the time of my birth, God...
 - In the years following, God...
 - Today, God...