

Mitch Myer  
Psalm Sunday – Worship/Praise  
March 19, 2023

Good morning TCC! I want to thank you for being here to worship with us and if you are watching online, please drop us a comment or message so we can connect with you. We decided to do these Psalm Sundays in between different sermon series this year. We wanted to break off from a normal Sunday service to something a little different and experiential with the book of Psalms. Throughout this year, we will have several of these Sundays to focus on specific types of Psalms and pair it with a spiritual discipline. For our purposes today, we will be focusing on the Psalms of praise and the spiritual discipline of worship.

Within the Psalms, there are many different genres and types including: laments, hymns of thanksgiving, hymns celebrating God's word, Wisdom psalms, Songs of confidence, Royal psalms, Historical psalms, prophetic hymns. There are even more, but those cover the majority of the psalms. There are also many kinds of spiritual disciplines: study, prayer, confession, fasting, silence/solitude, secrecy, celebration, fellowship, and frugality.

I want to define terms a little bit before we get into the meat of the sermon. The Psalms are a collection of songs for the people of God in their gathered worship. The word psalms means "praises." The book of Psalms takes many basic themes of the Old Testament and turns them into song. The thing I love about the Psalms is that they cover a wide range of experiences and emotions that give us the words to express our own emotions and experiences before God. Most importantly, the Psalms provide us guidance in our approach to the worship of God.

Dallas Willard says, "A discipline for the spiritual life is an activity undertaken to bring us into more effective cooperation with Christ and his Kingdom." These activities, through the power of the Holy Spirit, make us more capable of spiritual transformation. The activities in and of themselves are not the end means of the spiritual life but serve as an avenue for spiritual transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **BODY 1**

Here is what we know – the Psalms were used as the worship of God for the Jewish people and for the early Christians. At its base, worship consists of adoration and thanksgiving to God. David authored the most psalms of anyone (75 of them) and he was considered the "great psalmist of Israel" in 2 Samuel 23:1. David played an important role in the shaping of Israel's worship by assigning roles for temple worship, prescribing what the worship of God should look like, and writing his own psalms.

Beginning with Psalm 1, we see that there is a covenantal aspect to the worship between God and his people – "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night." This first psalm gives us an understanding for the rest of the psalms that those

who worship God with a sincere heart must embrace his Law or Torah. The Law was the covenant that God made between himself and the nation of Israel.

In the New Testament we see similar ideas being transmitted about worship in the early church. Ephesians 5:18-21 says, “But be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence.”

Being filled with the Spirit brings a greater joy into worship than without it. It is God working in us, the Spirit acts a seal for our life in God. And we see a few important things here: singing and making melody to the Lord with our hearts, giving thanks always and for everything to God.

Also, Colossians 3:16-17 says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Again, we have another idea of covenant – let the word of Christ dwell richly in us. More thankfulness in our hearts to God. Both of these passages, Ephesians and Colossians, include how worship affects one another in a congregation: we address one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and we teach and admonish one another with all wisdom.

### **Worship has an integral connection with covenant.**

Worship expresses the covenant, interprets the covenant, maintains the covenant, and extends the covenant. Anytime that we have genuine worship of God, a statement is being made that the Lord is our God and we are his people.

### **BODY 2**

*Psalm 29 says, “Ascribe to the Lord, O Heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness. The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf, the Sirion like a young wild ox. The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord makes the deer give birth and strips the forests bare, and in his temple all cry, “Glory!” The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forever. May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!”*

I love this Psalm of praise because it truly reveals a great truth about worship. When we worship God, we ascribe to him that he is worthy of our praise and worship, so we ascribe to him great worth. In this psalm, we are attributing to God that he is full of strength and that he is due glory for his holiness. Not only that, but we begin to see one of the main reasons why God is worshipped at all, due to his kingship

over creation. This psalm is about the awesome power of God. He is so powerful and so majestic that his voice is like the thunder in the sky.

*Psalm 8 says, "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and fish of the seas, whatever passes along the paths of the sea. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"*

Again, another psalm that points to the power of God in creation. David here is recounting the glorious wonder of creation and that God would even be mindful of man. That God would give man a place, a role, a purpose in His great creation. There is a sense of humility and unworthiness from the part of David, which is all about the wonder and beauty and majesty of God. This is not like a bad self-esteem issue or self-loathing issue with David, it is a man who understands the GREATNESS of God and the lowliness of man in comparison.

**Worship is the human response to the goodness, beauty, and glory of God.**

The psalms speak to the worship of God in three main areas: the attributes/working of God, God's kingship over creation, and his work of creation. These are the things that should get us moving into worship.

### **BODY 3**

Worship is something that must be prepared for and not only done corporately, but also personally and daily. Sunday is not the only day of worship, but it is an important day of worship because everyone is gathered here. What about the rest of the week? What does your worship look like then?

**Personal worship overflows into corporate worship.**

If your personal worship is rare or nonexistent then corporate worship will feel like a chore and not fun. If your personal worship is vibrant and often then corporate worship will feel joyful and life-giving. Our personal worship, the state of our heart in regard to God throughout our days, has everything to say about what our corporate worship experience will be like. If our days are always led by our own human strength and wisdom, then that will translate into our worship being led by our own human strength and wisdom. However, if our days are divinely led by God, in that every moment is a possible moment of worship and obedience, then our corporate worship will follow suit.

*Psalm 40:6-8 says, "In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book of life it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.'"*

Listen closely to this passage. God does not find delight in heartless sacrifices and offerings, things we do simply out of routine without the heart. Those things are not required because they do not fit into the system of how God wants to do relationship with us anymore. Listen to the second part of verse six, "but you have given me an open ear." An open ear is a listening ear, someone who is open to hearing God and what he has to say. Notice what David is saying here, it is not about the external stuff, the outside stuff. It's about the heart. God wants us to DELIGHT to do his will, not to do it out of compulsion or being forced to for some reason. It must be from the heart, that is where true worship comes from.

Richard Foster writes, "We are to live in perpetual, inward, listening silence so that God is the source of our words and actions."

We are so distracted today that we can ever hardly sit still or be silent even for just a few moments. We distract ourselves into oblivion with all our devices and access to anything and everything, and its killing our ability to be still and listen for God.

*Psalm 51:15-17 says, "O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."*

Again, some very similar stuff here in Psalm 51. Now, this is in response to David's sin so it has a bleaker tone to it. However, it is about our worship not being simply sacrifices or offerings, especially ones that are not genuine or forced. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart." David here is talking about real repentance, a genuine heart of worship. David here in both of these Psalms is not saying sacrifice is wrong or bad, but that heartfelt sacrifice is what God desires.

*Romans 12:1 says, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."*

*Hebrews 13:15-16 says, "Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God."*

These two New Testament verses give us a further understanding of worship being heartfelt and sacrificial. What does your personal worship look like?

#### **BODY 4**

I think one of the most illuminating passages about true worship comes from John 4. In this chapter, Jesus is talking to the Samaritan woman at the well. They start talking about worship in Jerusalem or Samaria, but then Jesus says this in John 4:23-24, "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth."

What Jesus is talking about here in regard to worship in spirit, it means that our worship should be from the heart and it must be sincere. Wholly motivated by our love for God and the gratitude we have for all He

has done for us. To worship God in truth is that we are grounded in the truth and reality of who God is as expressed through biblical revelation.

### **The Psalms help us to worship God in Spirit and Truth.**

As we have looked over the Psalms this morning, we can see that God is worshiped for his attributes/work, his kingship over creation, and his work on creation. Listen to N.T. Wright's view on the Psalms.

"The Psalms are inexhaustible, and deserve to be read, said, sung, chanted, whispered, learned by heart, and even shouted from the rooftops. They express all the emotions we are ever likely to feel (including some we hope we may not), and they lay them, raw and open, in the presence of God." – N.T. Wright

The Psalms bring together the truth of God and the spirit of true worship from humans into one book. Let's look at Psalm 100 as an example.

Psalm 100 says, *"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations."*

Verses 1-2, spirit – this is how we respond to God genuinely and honestly. Verse 3, truth - God is God and we are his people that he made. Verse 4, spirit again – have gratitude and thankfulness to God for what he has done. Verse 5, truth again – God is good and loving and faithful.

### **BODY 5**

All this to say about the Psalms and true worship brought me to this conclusion...

### **Do not let your preferences and circumstances dictate your worship.**

Sadly, we can be pretty selfish and possessive about our worship. Worship can only be this way or that way or I can only worship at a certain church or with certain people. First of all, let's remember whose worship it is, it's God's worship not ours. We can get stuck in our ways or be stubborn at times, I get that.

Philippians 2:3-4 says, *"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."*

Hebrews 10:24-25 says, *"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."*

I remember reading through the Psalms in college when I was in a rut with worship, especially in my last two years of college. Sunday mornings at my church I felt alone and isolated, so the praise felt flat. Other Sunday mornings when I preached at small churches, I didn't always like the style of music so the worship fell flat again. Thursday nights at Christian Challenge were always pretty good though because of the good community and contemporary style.

You see, this was a very immature state of faith for myself. My worship and praise of God was dependent upon my circumstances and preferences, not my heart for the Lord. How foolish I was to think that worship is only good if I like or enjoy it personally. God has led me on a path where I feel like I can worship him anywhere, anytime, anyhow. Thank you, God for teaching me. Let's have genuine hearts of worship for God and let's use the Psalms as a guidebook for a life of worship and praise.