

COME, LET US WORSHIP

Psalm 95

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Note: The following are the pastor's notes used in preaching this message. This is not a complete, word-for-word transcription of what was preached. These notes serve as a companion to the complete message, which is available by listening to the audio version. Bible quotes are primarily from NASB and ESV, respectively.

It's Saturday night, the kids are in bed, the dishes are done, the movie is over, and you're ready for bed. What's on your mind?

- Most think Psalm 95 is written by David
- Quoted from in Hebrews 3:7-8, 15; 4:3, 7
- It is a call to corporate worship, giving us five reasons, and one warning.
- The heartbeat of the Psalm probably being Psalm 95:6, "*Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.*"
- Ten times you will hear first person plural pronouns like us, we, our. You will not hear my, mine, me.
- This is the sound of church bells in a small town so that all would know it is time for church/to worship together. Put down your pick and shovel. Stop working. Come together and worship together.

I. THE CALL TO CORPORATE WORSHIP (Psalm 95:1-2, 6)

Psalm 95:1 – "*O come [imperative], let us sing for joy to the Lord, Let us shout joyfully [not quietly whisper] to the rock of our salvation.*"

Parsing this (*let us sing*) would lead us to more than a simple suggestion to sing but one that provides color. It is not simply "sing" but let us sing and sing for joy.

Same Hebrew word is used in Psalm 98:7-8, "*Let the sea roar and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it. Let the rivers clap their hands; let the mountains sing together for joy.*" Do we imagine mountains singing quietly?

It is also in Psalm 132:16 – "*Her priests also I will clothe with salvation, and her godly ones will sing aloud for joy.*"

1 Chronicles 16:33 – "*Then the trees of the forest will sing for joy before the LORD, for He is coming to judge the earth.*"

Job 38:7 – "*When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*"

Psalm 20:5 – "*We will sing for joy over your victory and in the name of our God we will set up our banners...*"

Psalm 32:11 – "*Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous ones; and shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart.*"

We're talking about a ringing cry of joy and triumph, not quiet sorrow and sadness. You'll note Psalm 95:1 says the same thing twice: "...*let us sing for joy...*" and then, "...*let us shout joyfully...*" - Sounds repetitious and it is. It's a form of synonymous parallelism used in poetry to more effectively make its point . . . not just sing, but shout!

- In the Hebrew, it's a war-cry, or signal of war or triumph (*Braveheart*);
- It's a shout of applause. "The crowd is going wild!" – A Warrior's game – it's electric because we marvel at the greatness of the athletes we are getting to watch. How can you shout at a game like a crazy man, then come here and barely raise your voice?!!!

I think it's because we go to games anticipating seeing and experiencing something amazing. Is that what we do when we come to worship on Sunday morning? Are you like the mountains or the sea roaring? Are we marveling at the greatness of our God, the rock of our salvation?

The passage says to shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation – there are many ways to refer to God (shout to the Lord, shout to God, etc.), but why the rock of our salvation here?

Let's go to 2 Samuel 22, where David recalls the Lord delivering him from all his enemies, namely Saul. Turn with me there:

He says in 2 Samuel 22:5 – *“For the waves of death encompassed me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me; the cords of Sheol surrounded me. In my distress I called upon the Lord, yes, I cried to my God; and from His temple He heard my voice and my cry for help came into His ears. Then the earth shook and quaked . . .”*

And, he goes on to describe the immense victory in 2 Samuel 22:38-43 – *“I pursued my enemies and destroyed them, and I did not turn back until they were consumed. And I have devoured them and shattered them, so that they did not rise; and they fell under my feet. For You have girded me with strength for battle; You have subdued under me those who rose up against me. You have also made my enemies turn their backs to me, and I destroyed those who hate me. Then I pulverized them as the dust of the earth; I crushed and stamped them as the mire of the streets.”*

And so he says as he wraps up his song/story in 2 Samuel 22:47, *“The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock; and exalted be God, the rock of my salvation.”*

Is this who we are singing to when we sing, the rock of our salvation?
David recalls:

- The one who delivers us as he did David?
- The one who rescues and redeems?
- The one who rewards our obedience?
- Where would we be without Him? Who would you be without Him? Have you thought about that lately?

So, let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation and Psalm 95:2

Psalm 95:2 – *“Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving...”*

Here we are given further instruction on what our attitude should be when we come to worship together; that of thanksgiving; thankful for what?

- Homes (big or small)
- Food on the table (blessing of flavor)
- Freedom to worship without fear of persecution
 - His provision and protection
- Fellowship of the family of God
- The job you have, though it may not be the job you want or a job you like (in between jobs)
 - Over 80% of the world lives on less than \$10/day. Nearly half the world's population lives on less than \$2.50/day
- The spouse you have, though it may not be the best spouse ever
- Most important - Our salvation – or as referred to in this Psalm as “rest.”
- How about this from David in Psalm 103?

Psalm 103:1-11 – *“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; who pardons all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; who satisfies your years with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle. The Lord performs righteous deeds and judgments for all who are oppressed. He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the sons of Israel. The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.*

Even as we read those now, we are reminded, but if you are not celebrating those, both the practical and spiritual

goodness you are seeing daily, then it is difficult to celebrate the goodness you will soon see and so, if you're not celebrating these during the week, it is difficult to draw it out of your heart on Sunday morning.

So, come with thanksgiving in your heart and . . . the second part of Psalm 95:2 says, "*...let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.*"

It's Saturday night . . . what are you thinking about?

"Let us shout joyfully (repeated from v. 1) to Him with psalms." Again with the synonymous parallelism heightening, broadening, deepening the point. Sing, yet even shout, with psalms/songs.

This is clear instruction for us to sing together in songs of praise, not the cheesy songs from the 70s and 80s

- "I'm so happy in Jesus, every day..."
- "I'll fly away Lord Jesus..."
- "If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands..."

I hate to conjure up anymore out of fear that I will step on more toes. Teach those to your kids. Fine. You get what I mean, I hope. But, when we come together as adults, we will sing songs that pack a punch, like:

- "Behold Our God," - seated on His throne, come let us adore Him
- "Amazing Grace," - how sweet the sound
- "In Christ Alone," - my hope is found
- "Great Are You Lord," - I lift up my voice
- "How Great Thou Art," - then sings my soul, How great thou art,
- "Holy, Holy, Holy," - Lord God Almighty. Early in the morning, my song shall rise to thee
- "Jesus Paid It All," - all to Him I owe
- "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," - morning by morning new mercies I see
- "Indescribable," - uncontainable, You are amazing God
- "It Is Well," - my sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to the cross, I shall bear it no more. It is well; it is well with my soul.

These are songs to be sung with joy, even shouting.

Is there ever a time for reverent/quiet singing? I suppose, but the Bible is not encouraging that here. And, why does it have to be one or the other? And, yes it may be difficult to package

- Enthusiasm and reverence
- Joy with gravitas
- Exultation with humility

But, it is less difficult if the position of your heart on a daily basis is

- Enthusiastic and reverent
- Full of joy along with the gravity of life
- Exulting, yet humble

Your worship on Sunday will mirror your life during the week. If you're having trouble worshipping, really worshipping, on Sunday morning, I suggest your worship is elsewhere on both fronts, not just Sunday morning.

Perhaps, you just need a priority adjustment. As Dr. MacArthur points out that in Hebrews 11, great examples of our faith, the first three listed are:¹

1. Abel was known for his worship
2. Enoch was known for his walk
3. Noah was known for his work

“It is not an overstatement that our pleasure-centered culture has produced many who work at their play and play at their worship.”²

The Psalmist helps *us* put things in perspective.

And, I can’t say this enough, it says ten times *us, we, our*. This is a call to corporately come to worship together one day a week. This is not about private worship. There is little that is private about it.

There are some out there that want to believe that church is wherever they are at (in their car or in front of the TV). They can *do* church anywhere.

Understand, the church is a plural term, not a singular term.

- *We* are the temple of God
- *We come* together to stimulate *one another* to love and good deeds, not stimulate ourselves to love and good deeds.
- Our spiritual gifts are used to be of benefit to the *whole body*, not for ourselves
- In Ephesians 2:19-22, Paul referred to us, the church, as a building, founded by the apostles and prophets, with Jesus being the cornerstone with all the other stones being fitted together and being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”
- Stones left to themselves would not form a building, only a place to sit and watch others.
- So, yes, we are the temple. We don’t go to a temple in the same way as the Jews for the exact same reasons of sacrifice and ritual, but we do go for the same reasons of stimulation to live a godly life.

So, come, sing, and shout, songs with thanksgiving in your hearts

The Psalmist gives us five reasons to sing like this. One we’ve already covered.

II. FIVE REASONS TO WORSHIP GOD

A. He is the rock of our salvation – already mentioned

The second is found in Psalm 95:3 – “*For the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods*”

B. He is great

Surely the nations around them had other gods and they probably looked down on the Jews for having only one God to call on. What’s so great about your God?!

- Baal – god of the Canaanites
- Ashteroth – goddess of the Canaanites – fertility and maternity
- Molech
- Chemosh – god of the Moabites and Ammonites
- Dagon – the god of the Philistines for water and grain

¹ *Worship: The Ultimate Priority*, John MacArthur (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Publishers, 2012)

² *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, R. Kent Hughes (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2006) p. 106

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- Marduk – god of the Babylonians, Assyrians, and Persians
 - Milcom – also by the Ammonites
 - Egypt had 40 gods – Re, the sun god, Isis, goddess of magic, Osiris, the god of the afterlife, etc.

They had gods for everything: food, water, sun, moon, childbirth, sea, power, wisdom, earth, home, wine, and hunting. The thing is none of them were real.

The thing is our God is the only true God in three persons. All the others are manufactured by Satan who opposed and opposes God. The others were made up by some guy who didn't believe in God who got others who didn't believe in God to believe in them.

He is the only one you can count on for the things that these people were counting on getting from their gods. Jehovah God, Elohim, Yahweh, Adonai

- Opens and closes the womb
- Provides sun and shade
- Water and grain
- Controls the afterlife

Some people are great athletes (Tom Brady, Stephen Curry—in the zone).

Some are great musicians, great doctors, great speakers, writers, really creative and inventive, wise, super smart, super strong and powerful, role models, very influential, leaders, friends

I'm pretty sure the best writer ever who wrote the best book ever is God

The best doctor is the great healer Himself

The best speaker is the voice of God

The best role model, most influential, leader, and friend ever is Jesus

No one is more powerful than God

Lots of smart people, but no one is omniscient except God

What's so great about our God?

Love

Mercy

Faithfulness

Patience

Grace

Good

Power

Knowledge

God is great at all of these and in every way imaginable.

Psalm 86:9-10, "All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and they shall glorify Your name. For You are great and do wondrous deeds; You alone are God." There is none like God!

Our God is a great God and only He reigns

Psalm 95:4 gives us that third reason to worship:

C. He is sovereign

Psalm 95:4 – *"In whose hand are the depths of the earth, the peaks of the mountains are His also."*

I looked at this and wondered how deep the earth is. The earth, from its center to the surface is about 4,000 miles. The deepest anyone has gone towards the center is in Russia, called the Kola Deep. It has dug about seven miles down, less than half of 1%. Any further and either the heat or pressure would break it apart.

The tallest mountain from sea level is Mt. Everest, which is 29k feet, which is about 5.5 miles high. Mauna Kea, measured from the bottom of the ocean, is nearly a mile taller.

Yet, these are in His hand. He does with them what He pleases. He is in control of these. We marvel at them. But, to God:

- They are *tinker toys* (remember those?).
- They are *Pick up Styx*. Remember those?
- Remember *Atari*? We thought that was amazing when it first came out.
- Now, it's virtual reality play stations, fit bits, wireless headphones.

But, what does it matter that he controls the depths of the seas and heights of the mountains? Well, if He is in control of that then He is in control of the depths and heights of your life. He has it all in control. Nothing is too high and nothing is too low or too hard.

We are too caught up in the depths of the difficulties of our lives. To borrow from Ed Welch, our life has become big and our God has become small. We come Sunday morning and our perspective is re-centered. The Psalms and worshipping together on a Sunday morning bring God back to His rightful place of majesty.

Chris Tomlin wrote in *Indescribable*: “From the highest of heights to the depths of the sea, Creation’s revealing Your majesty.”

And, from Jack Hayford, the song by that title, “Majesty”

“Majesty, worship His majesty;
Unto Jesus be all glory, honor, and praise.
Majesty, kingdom authority,
Flow from His throne unto His own, His anthem raise.
So exalt, lift up on high the name of Jesus.
Magnify, come glorify Christ Jesus, the King.
Majesty, worship His majesty,
Jesus who died, now glorified, King of all kings.”

Majesty, Jack Hayford, 1980

He is Sovereign, the King of kings

Anyone wish I'd just stop talking and we could start singing?

And, fourth

D. He is in control because He is the creator and therefore to be worshiped.

Psalm 95:5 – “*The sea is His, for it was He who made it, and His hands formed the dry land.*”

Contrary to popular opinion, these did not form themselves. Anyone else who claims to be in control of nature is dreaming.

- So, earthlings, you've built a dam. God can destroy it in a heartbeat.
- He can give the earth a tiny shimmy and whole towns crumble by an earthquake or a tsunami.
- With one stoke of lightning, He can take down our entire communications towers.

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- He can simply pluck the satellites out of space like we would swat a mosquito in its last days.

Have you stood before the Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls (3,160 tons of water flow every . . . second) I think that's 3,160,000 cups of water/second

- Niagara Falls is like pouring a pitcher of water into a glass
- The Grand Canyon is like a small hole in the dirt that you dug with your hand
 - From here to Lompoc, past San Luis Obispo
- The placing of the stars into the sky is like throwing glitter from your hands
- A beautiful snowstorm (like we might have in Walnut Creek this week) is like this: snow globe in the palm of His hand.

To us, these are amazing. To Him, it is nothing.

And, so He controls every living thing, but He does so with His love of us in mind.

Lamentations 3:25 – *“The Lord is good and He is good to those whose hope is in Him, to the one who seeks Him.”* (NIV)

So, the heart of the passage, Psalm 95:6, 7 – *“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.”*

Sunday morning is not the time for Eeyore worship. The kind of worship the psalmist is talking about is worship that so affects our hearts that it affects our bodies and souls together. Have you ever worshiped so deeply that you bowed down and/or knelt on your own without being prompted by the worship pastor? I have. Overcome with a sense of His goodness, love, faithfulness, worthy of praise, I dropped to my knees like a slave to His master or servant before His king, dropped as the creature before His Creator. It was a physical reaction reflecting a spiritual posture.

Revelation 4:8-11 – *“And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.’ And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ‘Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.’”*

I think I was overwhelmed with Psalm 95:7, that *“...He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand”* and all that means.

Turn with me to Psalm 23 – *“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod [correction] and Your staff [direction], they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”*

E. He is ours and we are His

After five reasons to worship God:

1. Rock of our salvation
2. He is great
3. He is sovereign

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4. He is creator
 5. He is ours and we are His

III. THE PSALMIST FINISHES WITH A WARNING

Psalm 95:7b-11 – *“Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah [to strive], 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.’”*

Now, what’s this about? This goes back to Numbers 20, where the people were thirsty for water and they had none so they complained to Moses and Aaron, who went then to the Lord.

The Lord said to take the staff, which he used to perform miracles before Pharaoh and go and speak to the rock and water will come out. Instead of speaking to the rock, Moses struck the rock twice, which drew attention to himself and revealed that he didn’t really believe that just speaking to the rock would be enough.

As a result of his disbelief, Moses was not be allowed to bring the people into the Promised Land.

This last section serves as a warning to unbelievers and a reminder to believers.

The warning is the simple. There is only one way to be at rest/peace with God. That is through a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. That He was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, died in your place for your sins, and rose again on the third day that you might have life. The gospel is simple. You were born a sinner in need of a savior and Jesus is that savior. Once you truly believe that, your whole life is different. You will like, desire and value different things that you never did before.

As believers, we are at peace with God. We no longer have to wonder about our eternal destiny. We don’t wonder if our works are enough to merit eternal life. Sanctification has begun. Glorification is ahead and a guarantee. Sunday is truly a day where we celebrate that rest together. It reminds us that Blessed Assurance, *Jesus is mine, I in my savior, all is at rest.*

Folks, I am pushing for Sunday morning worship to be regular, emotional, and passionate.

Beyond celebrating daily, may I offer some practical tips?

- **Be in the Word** - Follow Jon’s advice this year, even if that means listening along via the church app. Worshiping God without being in the Bible regularly will not last, and worshiping the world will take over your worship of the Lord.
- **Make some changes in your priorities during the week** so that worship is not foreign to you on Sunday.
- **Set out your clothes** the night before.
- **Go to bed early** so that the day of Sunday worship, you will be ready early.
- **Do those last minute things on Saturday night** so that you’re mind is free to worship Sunday morning.
- **Move up to the front section** - Those of you who have seen the play, Les Miserable, did you like it? I sat in one of the last four rows and fell asleep. I couldn’t have been more disinterested. I wasn’t anticipating something I was interested in anyway. I wasn’t thinking about it during the week. So, I fell asleep. How could you not love Les Miserable? It’s a story about forgiveness and reconciliation. I didn’t go anticipating something great. If that is you on Sunday morning, move up to the front section.
- **Come early**

This morning, what is in my heart is that we come to church every Sunday morning, anticipating something great; ready to **give**, and not looking to **get**.

Brothers and sisters, to be a Christian and not be in church on Sunday is like calling yourself a football player and not even going to the game. Or like saying you're a Giants fan, but wearing green and gold instead of orange and black.

Sunday morning is a time for:

- Worship
- Praise
- Thanksgiving
- Rejoicing
- Proper perspective
- Loving others
- Encouraging others

Church is a place:

- To be known and to know others
- To be reminded
- To be taught something new or deepen our knowledge
- For expressing emotion together.

Listen intently to the sermon. Look for others to connect with, and then as you head out of the church building and into the world, you will be armed again for the battle that awaits.

As I said, if your worship on Sunday mornings has become stale, then it is likely that your worship during the week is also stale. You should be leaving here with a better sense of well being than if you didn't come at all. But, that can't happen for long without true worship during the week.

It is my great hope that, this year, we will not come to worship with lip service only, lacking in reverence and exultation, singing only out of tradition (literally lip-syncing our way through songs), but that we will throw off the shackles of the worries of the world, or concerns over the weakness of our voices, and throw ourselves into worship, stimulating each other to love and good deeds.

Dan is going to lead us in "Behold Our God" as we finish this morning.

Lord, forgive us for our weak worship and change us this year.