



Psalm 96

How Worship Propels Us Out

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I. Introduction

Let's pray. *Oh God, you are very great. There isn't a song we could sing loud enough to praise you as you deserve. There isn't a gift perfect enough to match your worth. We say these kinds of things often. Your word tells us these things. But help us to know it in our bones! Would you arrest our attention on you as we open up your Word. Holy Spirit, help us to see the glory of Christ today and let it light a fire in us for the glory of your name and for the joy of all the peoples of the earth. Amen.*

Greeting

Well good morning. If you're joining us for the first time or if I just haven't met you yet, my name is Ethan. I'm one of the pastors here at Union. If you haven't yet turned to Psalm 96, I'd love for you to grab a bible and get your eyes on that text. And as you turn there, I want to introduce you to a couple of people who I've recently begun to learn about.

Introduce The Hauschilds

Now, I'm not going to use their names, but this is a real young married couple. They have ties here in MI, but are from the pacific Northwest. They're highly educated. Debt free. They're educators themselves. They're what we call "DINKs" (Doubt Income No Kids), which means they have a level of freedom available to them that people like me burn with jealousy over. (Not that I don't love my kids. I just would love to be able to leave my house in less than five minutes without packing for the Oregon Trail.) But, just like this picture seems to indicate, these are two people with a lot of potential, well set up to launch themselves into the good life. Don't you want to follow them on Instagram as they, like, remodel a school bus and travel the country or something?

Well the reason I've been learning about these people and the reason I'm introducing them to you is not because they're instagram influencers living an idyllic life remodeling a school bus. In fact I'm not sure if they would be flattered or offended by me comparing them to that kind of person. But the reason I want you to know them is that instead of choosing whatever version of the good life of comfort or success or financial stability or notoriety that could be readily at their fingertips, they've chosen a much less comfortable path. For the past few years they've worked as educators in Africa and they've just in the last few weeks moved to another part of the world, where they will spend time in a special training program that will train them in linguistics and church planting so that they can be a part of a team who will be sent to yet another part of the world to live amongst an unreached people

group - people who have little or no access to the gospel, or a local church, or local believers, or scripture in their native language. And this couple will live among these unreached people with the goal of serving the people, translating the scriptures into that language, and planting strong, indigenously led churches in a place where Jesus Christ is neither known nor named right now.

As a church we are working through the process of becoming partners with them and so our hope is that this would be the first introduction of a long relationship of Gospel partnership with them as they are trained and sent. Maybe someday I'll even get to share their names with you. Today I can't because they need to maintain anonymity because of where they might be sent as missionaries. But what I'm trying to do in introducing this man and woman to you this morning is to hold up two people who seem to have every opportunity you have or that you might like to have and ask what is that causes them to set aside the wealth of opportunity available to them and embrace a more difficult road to reach unreached people groups with the gospel? What has the power to propel them out of their corner of the world into this level of sacrifice for the sake of others across the globe?

The argument I'd like to put before you as we look at Psalm 96 is that the fuel for missionaries like this and the fuel for missionaries like you and I here in Livingston County can only be the worship of God almighty. Not obligation. Not ambition. Not morality. Not compassion. The motivation that lies at the heart of spreading the gospel all over the earth is worship. **Worshiping God propels us into the world with a message of God's glory for the joy of all peoples.**

II. Worship Puts a Message in Our Mouth

Psalm 96 begins, **"¹ Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! ² Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. ³ Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!"**

These first three verses model for us a principle that's universally true: if you worship something you will be compelled to tell others about it. Do you see how the psalmist moves from calling us to sing to the Lord, to telling us to declare his glory among the nations? This is because if you worship something you'll be compelled to tell others about it. You see, worship happens in our hearts when we see something glorious and we respond to it with praise. And you do this even if you aren't a religious person. You'll watch your team make an amazing play and stand up on your feet and hug your neighbor and shout for joy. You'll be moved to tears by a piece of art and gush about it to anyone who will listen to you. You'll taste a meal that stands out and post a picture with three drooling emojis. All because when we experience something glorious, our natural response is to celebrate it. And it says something about our wiring as human beings that so often we are compelled to celebrate glorious things by calling others to celebrate it with us.

The bible would say that we respond to glorious things that way because we were made to function as worshipers of God who carry a message about God's glory into all the world. And when I say, "we were made to function" this way, I'm not just talking to Christians. I'm telling you that the Bible teaches that this is why every human being was created. All the way back at the beginning of the Bible! In Genesis 1, God creates men and women and the text says, **"²⁶ Then God said, 'Let us make man in**

our image, after our likeness...²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Now being made in the image of God has many profound implications, and one of them is that we as human beings have a unique capacity among all of creation to relate to God. God is a communal being - eternally existing as one God in three persons, each person of the trinity communing with and overflowing in love toward the other. And we, as people made in his likeness, are made to be in relationship with God. And as we commune with God, we behold his glory and we respond the only way we can, we celebrate it and we spread the news about it! And this is also wired into us. It's part of the mission God has given all humanity. Right after God creates humans in his image it says in Genesis 1 that, "...God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion..." (Gen 1:26-28).

Now we read that God made people in his image and we get philosophical real quick. We don't have an immediate tangible hook in our minds for what that might mean, but the ancient world would be immediately hyperlinked to something common in their own experience because their world was filled with all kinds of images. If you worshiped any of the gods of nations odds are you would have an image of that false god - a small statue of it - in your home to remind you of the presence and power of that deity; to say this house and the people here belong to this deity. And so part of what God is saying in making men and women "in his image" is that human beings are made to respond to God's glory in relationship with him *and* celebrate his glory by spreading his image across the whole world.

And so from the beginning, God's blessing to humanity to be fruitful and multiply has a spiritual weight to it. God has created people with a purpose to spread the stamp of his presence and power and ownership out from the garden of eden to fill the whole earth! From the beginning worshiping God has been the fuel for carrying out the mission of God to every tribe and tongue and nation, so that the knowledge of the glory of God might fill the earth like the water fills the seas. (Hab 2:14).

And I want you to see that when we come to a more familiar passage about the mission of God's church at the end of Matthew, when Jesus says "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (28:19) this mission that Jesus is giving his church is a repackaging of the purpose God has given us since the beginning, to multiply and fill the earth with the knowledge of his glory. And all of it from Genesis to Matthew to the church being born in the book of Acts to us in church today, all of our mission is fueled at the root by beholding the glory of God and calling others to celebrate it with us.

We might reach out to the people around us for a moment fueled by the glory of created things, but only the infinite glory of our God can fuel a mission to the ends of the earth! What propels this young couple to leave behind family and community and electricity and healthcare and starbucks and target to do like the psalm says and declare among the unreached nations the marvelous works of God? It can only be worshiping the glory of God! And what will propel you and I to declare among our neighbors and coworkers and family the good news? Only the glory of God.

And so for the rest of our time, I want to walk through Psalm 96 and see how the psalmist calls us to be fueled by the glory of God. I want behold the glory of God together with the hope that in worshipping God through the Psalm, we would be propelled into the world with a message of God's glory for the joy of all peoples.

Psalm 96 shows us that...

III. God is Glorious Creator

After the psalmist commands us to declare God's glory among the nations, he backs up his command with a reason in verse 4: **"⁴ For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods."** And why is God great and greatly to be praised? Verse 5: **"⁵ For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens."**

We declare his glory among the nations because God is before all things and God made all things! This is a philosophical question you need to deal with if you're attracted in any way to atheism: the reality that the whole universe as we experience it exists as an interconnected web of cause and effect, so that if I observe a flower growing in my yard, I could ask "how did this flower come to be?" and I could logically conclude that some natural process of pollination and photosynthesis happened to cause this flower, and I could then ask, well what happened to cause that pollination process... and we could trace the causes back and back and back, but eventually would be need to come to a first cause! You have to answer for yourself: do you believe that the universe and all the matter here has existed eternally, or was there an uncaused first cause who started it all? The Psalm is telling us that the God of the bible is the one who made all things and for that reason, he is greatly to be praised.

Now, we Christians talk about God being Creator all the time. So much so that it maybe doesn't move us to wonder and awe as it should. But think about this for a moment. Imagine that I sent you out into the parking lot with an assignment to bring back something small and simple from nature. And some of you might come back with a blade of grass or a pebble or a feather. And we could study those things, and pull them apart, and put them under a microscope and learn what elements they made out of. We could learn so much about these small, simple pieces of creation that we might feel like we've mastered them, but if we took them away and I said to you with all your knowledge and insight, "Make the blade of grass. Speak the feather into being." No matter how hard we tried, nothing we could do would allow us to create even the simplest of things out of nothing! Even with the smallest of things, we reach the end of our strength so quickly. "...but the LORD made the heavens!" (v 5). By the power of his word he spoke it all into being!

Oh that we would declare among the nations, "you worship God's that you've thought up in your minds or crafted with your hands. You worship your money or your marriage or job or your home. You worship your comforts.... All of these contingent things that rest on the strength of people. **"...but the LORD made the heavens!"** So cast aside all these piddly idols and worship him with us!

We make our idols, but God made us. And like a potter who gets to decide the use for the clay he's molding, the God of Psalm 96 has authority over us. God is not only our glorious creator...

IV. God is Glorious Ruler & Judge

Look at verse 10 with me: "Say among the nations, 'The Lord reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.'"

This verse comes after verses 7-9 where the psalmist is again calling all the peoples of the earth to recognize the glory and strength and holiness of God and to tremble before him. After he calls us to worship he again uses that vision of God's glory as our fuel for saying among the nations that God is king and he will judge the earth!

Now, the air we breathe in our culture conditions us to react against authority, to be suspicious of anybody reigning over us. And if you don't think that's you, just think about the posture of your heart whenever you've been told you can't do what you want to do or be who you want to be. "How dare you tell me I can't marry this person... or how dare you tell me to wear a mask." It's like we're all on different parts of the ideological spectrum, but we have the same sinful hearts, huh? Sin twists our hearts to believe that we are the best ruler over our lives, but the Psalm is reminding us that the message we are called to proclaim to the nations is not only about a God who created us, but a God who reigns over the world, who reigns over human beings, who has the right to judge us as our king. And Psalm 96 tells us this is good news!

Look at verses 11-13: "¹¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; ¹² let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy ¹³ before the Lord, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness."

The Psalm is inviting the whole earth to rejoice at God's rule because God's reign is good news. It is good news that there is a king who establishes the world and keeps it a stable and reliable place to live by setting an order to creation and an order to morality. Without God's kingship everyone does what is right in his own eyes, which sounds so tempting, but leads to chaos. When we make ourselves king over what is good, my good may not be the same as your good, which means there's no such thing as injustice or justice. Everything is subjective, nothing is stable, our world totters on the edge of insanity. But when God is king, the world shall never be moved. This is good news to rejoice at!

It's also a difficult truth to wrestle with because if God is the glorious creator who made us, if God is the glorious ruler who has the right to reign over us and judge us, and if the psalm's promise is true that he will judge the world in righteousness and faithfulness.. That means that I am not the one who gets to establish the standard by which I am right before him. That means he determines the standard by which I deserve his welcome or his wrath. And friends that standard is too high for me!

God is holy. He is perfect and pure. We were made to worship him and him alone. But we have worshiped other things. The worship of our Creator that would propel us out into the world with a message of God's glory has been exchanged for worship of created things that spirals us inward to ourselves and our own destruction. Romans 3 says it clearly, "None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside... ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (3:10b-12, 23). So we have no excuse before God. God's judgment for sin is just and we store up his wrath by hardening our hearts to his reign over us. Sinful, hard-hearted, foolish, self-trusting, God-rejecting people that we are; who will save us from the wrath and destruction that we have rightly earned for ourselves?

Thanks be to God, this is not where the Psalm leaves us - condemned before the righteous judge.

V. God is Glorious Redeemer

There's a line in this psalm that stood out to me as I began studying this week. It's actually the very first line of the Psalm: "Oh sing to the Lord a new song..." Now I've spent a lot of time in my life leading songs in church, and thinking about the worship of the church and so I've heard this type of language a lot; usually used to vaguely justify some church's new worship album. "The Bible says 'sing to the Lord a new song' so we wrote twelve! Here they are." And honestly I've just never bought it. I'm all for writing new songs for worship, but that use of this verse just seems flimsy. So when I began studying this week, I wanted to get my head around what the bible means when it tells us to sing a new song. So I took a look at all the places in the scripture that use those two words "new song." Here are a few...

- Psalm 40:2-3 - "He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God."
- Psalm 98:1 - "Oh sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation"
- Isaiah 42:10 & 13 - "Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the end of the earth... The Lord goes out like a mighty man, like a man of war he stirs up his zeal; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes."

In all these cases, the new song rises out of God not just giving us new words to sing, but changing the tune of our lives by rescuing his people, fighting on behalf of his people, conquering his enemies. They call us to a new sing because God has put us in a new place; because God is a glorious redeemer!

Listen to this last instance of "new song" from the book of Revelation 5:

⁶ And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four

elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.” ¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” ¹³ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” ¹⁴ And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

This is the new song that God puts in our mouth! The song of God’s global redemption through the Lamb to every tribe and language and people and nation, making us a kingdom of priests to our God who offer praise of his glory together, singing, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain!”

Psalms 96 calls us to worship God and propels us out into every tribe tongue and nation with a message about his glory because he is a glorious Creator, he is a Glorious King, He is a Glorious Judge, but it begins - the whole psalm begins - with the assumption that we can do these things because God is a glorious redeemer who brings salvation to his people! This is the only way that we can worship God - because God in his mercy has sent his son to become sin - even though he knew no sin - so we might be rescued from the pit of destruction and have the righteousness of God applied to us. This is what Jesus does for you!

And when he redeems your life from the pit of destruction he places a new song in your mouth. A song of worship that propels you into the world with a message of his glory so that all people might hear and every heart might know that the God who created, the God who reigns over creation is also the God who was slain, whose blood was shed so that people might be ransomed from every tribe and language and people and nation, so that his glory might be declared among the nations and his kingship might be celebrated among all the people, and the whole earth might rejoice at his glorious righteousness and faithfulness.

VI. Conclusion

Oh that the glory of our redeeming God might propel us out! To take our gaze off of our ourselves and invite others to see his glory and worship him with us! I want us to be a people so arrested by God’s glorious redemption that we would not only see people sent from our midst to the unreached peoples of the earth, but that we would be a people propelled out into our homes and neighborhoods,

into our workplaces, into our third spaces to live missionally - to spread the news of God's glorious redemption to more and more people.

If your heart is moved in that direction, I just want to put on your radar that this year we are going to be hosting a Go Group class called the "The Missional Life Course." We talked at the beginning about the couple who is taking significant time to be trained to reach unreached people groups before they are sent to another culture to share the gospel and we want you to embrace the same kind of intentionality as you think about obeying the commands of Psalm 96 and spreading the message of God's glory. This Missional Life Course is not going to be a small group, so much as it will be a class that meets once a month starting in October. It's not going to be training on clunky evangelism tactics that you may never use, It will meet to have thoughtful instruction, discussion, and application around how to live missionally in light of the culture God has placed us in so that God's purpose of blessing the world through the gospel spread by his people would become a reality in us here in Livingston County and to the ends of the earth.

We want to think intentionally, with cultural sensitivity about these things and I hope you'll join me in it this fall. If you're interested, you can meet Drake in the back and fill out an interest form so we can send you more information. But if we are to faithfully enter in to the kind of proclaiming of the gospel to the ends of the earth that Psalm 96 calls us into it has to be fueled by our attention being arrested on our glorious God so that our mouths might be filled with the message of his glorious redemption for the joy of all peoples.

Let's pray.