

A Call to Worship

Psalm 95:1-11

Introduction:

In many churches our time of worship begins with a "Call to Worship." The substance of what occurs during that time varies. Sometimes the choir will sing, occasionally there will be a special praise song presented, but most of the time, the congregation stands and sings of the wonders and love of God. The Call to Worship signifies to all in attendance that we have come to worship and now is when we start. In the book of Psalm, we find another call to worship, though not necessarily presented as a time to worship but rather as an opportunity to do so. Through the Psalmist, God issues an invitation for us to worship Him.

Who is to worship God? (verses 1-2)

¹ O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. ² Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. Psalm 95:1-2 (NASB95)

The call to worship is simply "come." This is an exhortation (could we be so bold as to say commanded) to assemble or congregate for the purpose of worship. The call goes out to the people of God - to "us." The text states "let us come." The place of worship to which we are invited to come is into the very presence of God. Verse 2 says to come before His presence. The Psalmist is direct and inclusive. This invitation encourages us to begin with singing or rejoicing. Rejoicing is a natural outcome of the joy that is in our inner most being. Not only are we to "sing and make melody in our hearts" (as Paul had encouraged the church at Ephesus to do) but the second part of the couplets of verses one and two shows that such singing and rejoicing is to be expressed aloud. When the religious leaders asked Jesus to silence his followers who lauded Him with praise and adoration at His entrance into Jerusalem, his response was "I tell you if these become silent, the stones will cry out." (Luke 19:40) We, as the living church today, have the privilege of praise and worship and must not be content to allow the rocks to cry out or more accurately, be satisfied to give our opportunity to others. For those of us who know Jesus as our Savior, no one else can or should praise Him in our stead.

Worship format is much discussed and even debated today in religious circles. Abundantly obvious to any reader of this text is that the call is not a forum for discussion but rather an instruction on worship. We are also instructed with regard to whom our song is directed. In the first part of verse one we are told to sing to the LORD (Jehovah). In the second part of the verse He is identified as the Rock of our salvation. The realization that Jehovah is the strength (rock) of our salvation is motivation enough for the joy within us that overflows in expression of singing.

In these verses, the Psalmist mentions at least one other reason for praising the Lord. Not only are we to sing *joyfully*, but we are to sing aloud *thankfully*. Our expressions of praise and rejoicing should be with joy and thanksgiving and they should be done enthusiastically as evidenced by the repeated call to "shout" to the Lord.

Our God is Awesome (verses 3-5)

³For the LORD is a great God And a great King above all gods, ⁴In whose hand are the depths of the earth, The peaks of the mountains are His also. ⁵The sea is His, for it was He who made it, And His hands formed the dry land. Psalm 95:3-5 (NASB95)

As if joy and thanksgiving were not enough, David moves on with an even more compelling reason to sing, praise and shout unto God – He is an awesome God.

First, He is a "Great God." His magnitude as God is awesome. He is extreme, vast, magnificent, and so much more that makes him indescribable. As if being a "Great God" were not enough, He is also a "Great King." This speaks of His rule and reign as King as well as His Kingdom. The Psalmist seems to have no other word to appropriately describe His Godhead and Kingship beyond "Great." (Verse 3)

Second, He is the Owner of everything from the deepest valleys to the highest hills – all the land and all the sea. To say that He holds it in His hand speaks of the greatness of our God. (Verse 4-5a)

Third, He is the Creator of all that is. When my sons were younger they often asks where things come from. Where did that dog come from? Where did this car come from? Where did this fish come from? My response is always the same. God made it. Some may say that an explanation of an automobile, plant, or the reproduction of animals should be given. However, more valuable to this father is that my young sons know God, the Creator. The other explanations of specifics may come later, but the knowledge that all that we have and all that is around us is from a "Great God and King" will have an eternal impact on my sons. (Verse 5b)

Our God is Worthy of Worship (verse 6)

⁶Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. Psalm 95:6 (NASB95)

The overflow of joy and thanksgiving in shouts of song and praise along with the realization of the awesomeness of God must culminate in Worship. To come into His presence and not worship Him is a contradiction of ideas. To the Hebrews the idea of worship was synonymous with bowing down before the object of adoration. Therefore, we are instructed to kneel down before the Lord. Why would we kneel before Him? Because we are overcome with joy, gratitude, and awe and He is greater than we are. Kneeling before Him shows our submissive attitude and spirit before this "Great God" whom we serve. We don't kneel much in the twenty-first century. The spirit of the self-made person is alive and well. Today's philosophy is to get as much power as possible and submit to no authority. The lack of respect for authority is prevalent. Children don't respect their parents, students don't respect their teachers, and employees don't respect their employers. Respect for the things of our God is on the decline. Our God is worthy to be worshiped because He is so much greater than we are.

Our God is Personal (verse 7a)

⁷For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Psalm 95:7a (NASB95)

Finally, He is worthy to be worshipped because He is a personal God. Though He is the God of many, He is able to be the God of one, mine. That means He knows us, each one, and we know Him. Such a relationship has been His intent and plan from the beginning. His desire for man is

evident through the entire Old Testament, revealed in the Gospels, refined in the Epistles, and rejoiced over in the Revelation. God desires to be our God and we are to be His people. This theme sewn into the fabric of Holy Scripture will come to pass according to Revelation 21:3.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them (NAS)

The redeemed worship because they understand that they are already the people of His pasture and He is their God. True worshipers are also eagerly looking forward to that time when we are gathered to Him to dwell in His presence forever. Our Lord is to be worshiped for He alone is Worthy.

In much of our conversations regarding what happens on Sunday mornings in many church we may refer to the overall event as the "worship service." We really (either consciously or subconsciously) divide it into two parts. Some may even have someone called the "worship leader" who provides direction to all the events leading up to the message which is brought by someone called the "preacher." Verse 7 gives us just such a transition. The process of coming together, giving expression to our joy and thanksgiving, seeing God's awesomeness and realizing His great love for us ultimately leads us to being receptive to "hear His voice." Hearing His voice, which comes from the proclamation of the word, is an essential part of the worship experience. Without hearing the word proclaimed then we may become like the Children of Israel in the wilderness who demonstrated faithlessness. We know that "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." The consequence of unbelief would be that we would not heed the call to worship.

Warning against not Worshipping God (v. 7b-11)

Today, if you would hear His voice, ⁸Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, As in the day of Massah in the wilderness, ⁹"When your fathers tested Me, They tried Me, though they had seen My work. ¹⁰"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. ¹¹"Therefore I swore in My anger, Truly they shall not enter into My rest." Psalm 95:7b-11 (NASB95)

Looking over the Psalmist's shoulder into the past, he remembered that the children of Israel had unacceptable behavior in the sight of the Lord. Notice that the worshipper in this text is admonished not to harden their heart. The examples of "Meribah" and "Massah" are cited. These were two places that the children of Israel hardened their hearts against the Lord. They tested and tried Him. Interestingly, the text states that they did so even "though they had seen my work." Their lack of trust and challenge of His ability and power were offered even after seeing His miraculous works. One could hardly fathom questioning the God who brought His children through the Red Sea on dry ground. Viewing that event from the twenty-first century seems unbelievable. One could hardly fathom questioning and rebelling against the God who brought His children through the Red Sea on dry ground. Viewing that event from the twenty-first century seems unbelievable. How would anyone question and doubt a God with that much power? However, how many "Red Seas" has that same God parted in your life? How quickly we forget the cure of disease, the love of family and friends, the salvation so graciously imparted to us.

Failing to worship Him and choosing rather to question and rebel against Him is not acceptable and is the very thing the Psalmist warns against. The consequence of failing to worship this Great God is twofold.

- First, there is a lack of knowledge concerning the ways of God. Failing to recognize and follow His ways are sure recipes for sin. In order to follow His ways we must spend time getting to know Him. A rebellious spirit will hinder that endeavor.
- Second, there is no rest. The children of Israel who were rebellious in Spirit were not allowed to enter the rest of the Promise Land.

How many times do we miss the opportunities of rest in Jesus because we are rebellious in Spirit? A true worshiper of God is more concerned with worshipping Holy God than promoting their personal agenda. A true worshiper understands that God indeed knows the thoughts of man. Worship is not merely a given action to be performed. Worship is heartfelt and genuinely offered to a Holy and omniscient God.

Conclusion

True worship is not birthed out of compulsion rather out of privilege. Worshiping God should be from the joy in our hearts because of His salvation. He has done great and mighty things for us and our worship of Him should be from a heart of thanksgiving for all that He has done.

Worshiping Him with joy and thanksgiving is how we are to worship. The text does not mention worshiping with hymns or praise choruses. The debate over such issues has become greater than the worship of a Holy God. Many churches are so concerned with how to worship Him that they have often forfeited their opportunity to worship. Selfish and personal preferences have infiltrated the time of worship and the people of God have involved themselves in debates over the style of worship and missed the opportunity to worship. God is not concerned with whether we use hymns, praise choruses, or instruments to praise Him. The call is simply to worship Him.

A call to worship includes laying aside our personal desires, preferences, and plans and picking up the attitude of praise. So, come, let us worship Holy God and sing joyfully to Him. He alone is worthy!