

I. Introduction

- A. This morning we're starting a three-week series in the Psalms. And today, our passage, Psalm 95 gives us the opportunity to dive into the topic of worship; specifically, the kind of worship we do here at church together. **Who** we worship, **Why** we worship, **How** we worship and a **Warning** about worship.
- B. Here's the good news: 100% of Americans are really good at worship, and we're getting even better as the years go by.
 - 1. I was reading an article this week about what people spend their time talking about.
 - 2. A study showed that Americans use at least 60% of their words talking about one thing. Can you guess what it is? "Me."
 - 3. And, not surprisingly, that number jumps to 80% when you're on social media.
 - 4. So I said that the good news is that Americans are incredibly skilled at worship and are getting better at it every day. The bad news is that most of us have no clue that the thing we're worshipping is ourselves.
- C. Now someone in this room just had the thought, "Yes, but I'm a Christian so it's different for me...". And I hope that's true, but here's what I found as I studied Psalm 95 this week: the way that the human heart worships is in two main ways:
 - 1. By verbally valuing and assigning great value
 - 2. By the surrendering of the will
- D. So let me ask you two questions:
 - 1. How much of your time and energy do you spend trying to get people to see that you're good, worthy, capable, intelligent, desirable, respectable, etc?
 - 2. How much effort and energy do you expend trying to have things YOUR way?
- E. The answers to those questions will tell you who you worship.
- F. We need God to speak to us right now, don't we?

Psalm 95:1-11

Oh come, let us [this is the first of two "calls" or "beckonings" to worship] sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise!

[Now the psalmist is going to justify this call to worship, tell us WHY we should come together and praise. He says "for" or "because."]

For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In His hand are the depths of the Earth; the heights of the mountains are His also. The sea is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the dry land.

[Second call to worship]

Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

[And a second justification and reason to praise]

For He is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

[And now a very sober warning that comprises 40% of the words in this Psalm about worship. That should say something to us.]

Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, when your fathers put me to the test and put Me to the proof, though they had seen My work. For forty years I loathed that generation and said, "They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways." Therefore I swore in My wrath, "They shall not enter My rest."

[But all of this starts with "Oh come ,let us sing to THE LORD ..."]

II. We Worship God

- A. This may seem obvious, and some of you just said, "Thanks for stating the obvious, Travis."
 1. But I think the only "obvious" part of that statement is "We worship ..."
 2. Like we established before, we are expert worshipers, and we may ASSUME we are worshipping God, but in all likelihood, our main object of worship is ourselves.
 3. We'd be foolish to believe we don't bring this into church.
- B. WHO or WHAT you worship is **THE** defining factor of your life.
 1. You will be held captive to and controlled by that which you desire most.
 2. You will spend all your money, all your time, all your effort to attain that which is most valuable to you.
 3. Worship services are a priceless opportunity to see the truth of what or who you worship. Because in a worship service, the person you are *aiming to please* is the person being worshipped.
- C. We worship God because of (so MANY reasons, but two clear ones from this passage):
 1. Who He is

- a. Verses 3-5: Great God, Great King, Creator Who holds all creation in the palm of His hand.
 - b. The first and most important reason to worship God is Himself.
2. Who we are IN HIM
- a. This is the one that I've noticed some people struggle with.
 - b. I've heard some be critical about songs that talk about who we are, our identity, and what God has done for "me."
 - c. The critique, I think, comes from a good heart and conviction that worship not become "man-centered."
 - d. I strongly affirm that conviction and unquestionably agree that our worship ought to be GOD-centered, not MAN-centered.
 - e. But ... error of reductionism ... in wanting to protect what is most important, we diminish or even eliminate what is less central, but biblical and still important. We throw baby out with the bath water.
 - f. In our desire to keep worship GOD-centered, we must not neglect the biblical invitation to celebrate, "This is who I am in Him! I'm His son, I'm His daughter! I'm one of the sheep of His flock! He has saved me! I am free in Him! I am who He says I am!"
 - 1) Scripture, and especially Scripture's worship book, the Psalms, is FULL of personal testimony and praise for who we are in God.
 - 2) Why?
 - a) Because the clearest view we get of someone's character is through their interaction with others.
 - b) The powerful, merciful, holy, perfect, self-giving love of God is witnessed most clearly in how He has interacted with humanity, namely through sending His Son Jesus to be WITH US.
 - 3) And ultimately the story we're telling isn't about us. When I say, "This is who I am in Jesus and this is what He's done for me!", I'm simply letting my life be a page that the story of God is written on.
 - a) I'm not saying "look at me!" I'm saying look at Him THROUGH me! I'm a window to look through and see a God Who loves and gives Himself away!
 - b) If I praise God because I am His son, the point isn't that I'm a son but that He's a Father! Forgiven/Forgiven, I Surrender/He is the King!
 - 4) God doesn't want to just be explained. He wants to be enjoyed!
3. Impersonal worship is incomplete worship. Illus: bring Char flowers

III. We Worship God TOGETHER, OUT LOUD, GRATEFULLY, WILLFULLY, and HUMBLY

- A. Together: All of the pronouns are plural. Individual worship is very important, but it is not sufficient. We were meant to discover God together and praise Him together.
- B. Out Loud: All of the actions in the first call to worship are vocal. It is taking what you know to be true of God internally and expressing it externally.
 - 1. Because praising God is not just between you and Him. Sharing His worth to you is meant to be done for His public glory and others' benefit as well.
 - 2. You haven't fully enjoyed something until you've expressed the enjoyment.
- C. Gratefully: "with thanksgiving." We aren't just saying this is the way God is ...
- D. Willfully: Come let us. Hebrew verb moods: These verbs are written in something called the "cohortative" mood. All this means is that the action being done is not just being done but is being done with a willfulness, a desire.
- E. Humbly: verse 6 paints a picture of surrender: worship, bow, kneel. Going lower and lower in submission and surrender to the will of the King.

IV. Warning Against a Hardened Heart

Psalm 7b-8 Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness

**refers to Exodus 17... God used Moses to lead Israel out of slavery. Complain about water ... then food, then water again. God provides but Moses renames this place where Israel complained for a third time Meribah and Massah, which means "quarreling" and "testing."

- A. A hardened heart is a self-focused heart
- B. If you want to know how hard your heart is, ask others how much you complain.
 - 1. Complaining and grumbling are the dashboard warning lights of a hard heart.
 - 2. Because, we grumble and complain when others don't recognize us or surrender their will to ours like we feel we deserve.
 - 3. In other words, we grumble when we aren't worshiped and feel we should be.
- C. The remedy for a hard heart is humble, grateful, dying-to-self, "God-is-the-One-Who-should-be-pleased" worship.
 - 1. The good news is that you don't have to START doing something you haven't been doing. We are always worshiping and it's usually ourselves.

This is about TRANSFERRING my worship from ME (or whatever it is) to GOD.

2. You know HOW to worship. It's just a matter of taking all that energy you spend on building YOUR reputation and getting people to do what YOU want and using that energy to express the greatness of GOD and surrendering your will to what HE wants.

V. Challenge

- A. Every morning this week, VERY FIRST THING, say to God, "Father, this day is FOR YOU."
- B. Every Sunday for a month, as you walk over the threshold of these doors, say, "Father, this service is FOR YOU." And then pass every thought, opinion, word, and motive through that filter.
3. You just might be blown away with how deeply you can worship God through a song you hate or a preacher you don't prefer.

VI. Questions for Growth

1. Ask yourself: When I am in worship services, am I more occupied with: "Did I enjoy the worship?" or "Did God enjoy my worship?"
2. Ask your group, "How can we support each other in coming to worship together with the right heart? How should we confront each other when we see the signs of self-worship and grumbling?"
3. Ask a trusted (honest) friend: "How much do I complain?"