

Divine Worship – Psalm 95
James Muldoon - Carey Baptist Church – 9 March 2008

This is the first in a mini-series on worship. Psalm 95 gives us an excellent example of what it means for God's people to worship together.

The Psalm

Psalm 95 divides into three parts. Part One takes up the first ten lines (**v1-5**). The Psalmist wants us to sing passionately to the Lord. Why? Because he is the great God. He is the great king. He holds the depths of the earth. He possesses the mountains. He owns the seas. He made the dry land. He is worthy of wholehearted worship.

Part Two takes up the next five lines of the psalm (**v6-7c**). The Psalmist wants us to get low before the Lord. Genuine worship means worshipping reverently. It's stunning that we can worship him at all, but we can because he has joined himself in a relationship to us.

Part Three takes up the last ten lines of the psalm (**v7d-11**). If God is as great as Part One declared, and if God is in a relationship with us as Part Two declared, what must we do? We must hear his words and obey them. The Psalmist teaches us how important that is by pointing us to the example of some people who did not do that in Exodus 17.

Lessons

Psalm 95 gives us the answers to three questions about corporate worship.

Question 1. Where does true worship start? Answer: true worship always starts with contemplating God, as Psalm 95 illustrates in two ways.

α' The Psalmist contemplates God's greatness. In **v4-5**, he describes some of the most awesome features of the world in which we live. He's opening your mind to the different elements of our planet. But he's doing it so as to show you the even greater greatness of God! He holds it all in his hand. He owns it all. He made it all. If the created order is so phenomenal, how much more phenomenal must God be! And what happens to you when you really get this? There's only one thing you can do: worship with all your heart!

β' The Psalmist contemplates his relationship with God in **v7a-c**. The fact that we Christians are in a relationship with God ought to make our hair stand on end and make our skin go all goosepimple. The Psalmist is capturing the wonder of the fact that God joins himself to men and women and young people like us. What happens to you when you really get this? There's only one thing you can do: worship with the deepest respect!

True worship, then, starts with contemplating God. So before you come to a worship service, just stop for a moment. Consider God's greatness. Consider your relationship with him. If you do, your worship will be far better.

Question 2. How are we to worship? Answer: wholeheartedly and reverently, again as Psalm 95 illustrates in two ways.

α' In **v1-2**, the Psalmist wants you to praise God exuberantly, with unashamed enthusiasm. He wants you to be wholehearted and full-throated in your outbursts of adoration to the Lord. He wants you to enter into it heart and soul! That will look different for people with different personalities. The important thing is that, however it's expressed, our praise to God should be whole-hearted, exuberant, unashamedly enthusiastic. Shouldn't the greatness of God stir you? Shouldn't the fact that this God is in a relationship with you stir you? Of course it should! Has your worship been truly wholehearted this morning?

β' In **v6**, the Psalmist wants you to worship God with reverent awe. When you approach him, it must be with deep reverence. It must be with an attitude of respect, love, awe and esteem. After all, Christianity is all about the glory of God. In all your worship, then, know your place. You are inferior to God. You exist for him, not the other way round. So when you sing or pray or listen to a sermon or preach a sermon or witness or serve or live, you must do it as a man or a woman or a young person who is under God. Has your worship been reverent this morning?

True worship, then, is both exuberant and reverent. The trick is to be both simultaneously! May God help us to get it right!

Question 3. What must follow worship? Answer: obedience.

v7d-11 makes this very clear. You must not hear God's word and then harden your heart against it. You must hear God's word and then go and do it. You must obey.

And this, actually, is the measure of how real your Christian life is. It's not about how you perform on a Sunday morning or on a Sunday evening. It's about how you perform 24 hours a day, seven days a week. **1 Samuel 15:22** teaches that. Daily obedience to God is better than a couple of hours of reverent enthusiasm on a Sunday. All your singing and praying and listening is as attractive to God as an oily rag if you don't follow it up with obedience.

What we're starting to learn here is that worship is not something which Christians just do on a Sunday. Worship is a life-long, everyday matter. The whole of your life, Christian, ought to be an act of worship.

Do you live a life of obedience to God? If you don't, you need to repent. Perhaps you're a Christian who's slipped back into bad habits. Repent. Realise your mistake and turn from it to Jesus Christ your Saviour. He will welcome you back. His Spirit will give you the strength to do better.

And if you're not a Christian, you need to repent too, for the very first time. You need to pray and to confess your sin to God. You need to trust in Jesus who died and rose for sinners. You need to start to live for him. And if you do, God will save you. He will change you. And then church services will become a whole lot more significant to you than they have ever been before!