

Psalm 95

A guide to worship

? First reading familiar ??

Venite !! - used to be sung every Sunday, matins

Good idea: especially when words may be familiar:

STUDY - sometimes wash over

?? First thing we are invited to notice

Concerns: CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP

- Let us worship v6
- Let us come before him v2
- Let us sing for joy v1
- Let us kneel, bow down: v6
- Describes - what we do - when attend service ?

*Psalm - probably used by Jewish people as walked to temple: as
call and guide to worship*

Xtians adopted it over centuries: valuable - explains worship

Relevant this am -

- explains what we do,
- reasons for doing it

Hymns based on it - at least three in MP

long pedigree as guide to congregational worship

Why do we worship ?

? Why are we here ?

? What is worship FOR ??

Very obvious point

The object of our worship this am and all other times is God himself - as psalm points out:

- *Sing for joy to the Lord v1*
- *Shout aloud to the **Rock of our salvation** v1*
- *Come before **him** with thanksgiving v2*
- *We extol **him** with music and song v2*
- *Worship, kneel, and bow down before the **LORD**, our maker v6*

Aim of worship

That's why we're here

Everything we say or sing, everything we do,

to honour and please **GOD**

Obvious point

Need to state the obvious ??

Wherever we look, contemporary culture directs our worship to inappropriate places

look at way we treat celebrity!

Almost religious devotion - see in celebrity culture some of language and behaviour - of worship ??

Language of religion

- *Clapton is a guitar God female singers as DIVAs (lit. female Gods) pop idol*
- *Habit of bowing down at rock concerts/in front of sports stars*
- *"we are not worthy"*
- *think of death of Diana or Michael Jackson: home becomes shrine; to which make pilgrimages, where behaviour of worship takes place----- light candles, and sing songs, bring offerings of flowers*

- *sacred writings of celebrity - Hello OK Closer Grazia - inside pictures of celebrities in different outfits and award ceremonies*
- *YOU decide whether look divine or not: by rating - marks out of 10 - YOU, reader, are the judge,*

doesn't that - tell us something else about culture

- o *so often invited to place ourselves in position of judgement, power and authority -*
- o *plenty of temptation - to make Gods out of ourselves ?*
- o *to think that we are at centre of our universe, and everything revolves around our wants and desires*
- o *to indulge selves (me-time, me-therapy, pamper weekend - isn't this language of self-worship*
- o *"To bow down at altar of our five sacred senses" (Xtian pet Steve Turner put it ??)*
- *Because we're worth it*

Which is why, in shops and supermarkets, : SO MUCH choice, YOU, the consumer

- *are in control,*
- *what you want and what you desire all- important*
- *(!! all right, bit tongue in cheek !!)*

If - approach church worship with consumer attitude
 thinking primarily of myself, my likes and dislikes,
 whether service is going to be good experience for me - ----
 ----- miss point of worship
(obvious, but how often I do this !!)
 Often think: good hymns ? who's doing the talk ? am I going to get anything out of it ??
 If 1st and foremost: *what can I get out of this service*
 I really am going to miss whole point of coming

Everything we say or sing, everything we do - not for our benefit, but for God's benefit

Not to please ourselves - please God

One time of week above all other times:

attention away from us to God:

Therefore: what goes into church service should be determined
 ⇒ not by what I desire,
 ⇒ *but by what he deserves*

Before a service: not, *"what can I get out of it ?"* but *"what is properly due to God in it ?"*

So - after a service: important question not whether liked service or found it uplifting, but *"was God honoured this morning ?"*

We can all help in this: encourage one another, especially those who take part in services, make sure that services honour God with best we can give him

Why do we worship ??

If I said, "Isn't Chris Ashton ?"
Why ?? who is he ?? What has he done ???

Cannot worship from cold: we need reasons for worshipping God
 Need not worry: God revealed himself: told us:

So: in worship, reminded who he is what he has done
 Affects structure of service:
WORD ---- RESPONSE in Anglican liturgy

This psalm: gives 2 reasons: 2 pinnacles of revelation
Come let us sing for joy READ vv 1, 2
WHY ??

For he is a great God vv 3 - 5

He alone - creator and sustainer of the universe:

Wonderful reason to praise and thank God ??

Good news for Jew; pagan world, thought - many Gods

- Depths - controlled by Molech
- Heights - Baal
- Sea - Tiamat,
- all in competition;

But: we praise God this am: for he is one true God; he is great God
He alone in control - not contending for power vs alien forces

- his purposes not thwarted by other more powerful Gods
- IN his HAND are depths of the earth: (NOT Molech's) Mountain peaks are belong to him (NOT Baal)
- No circumstance, no event no part of universe isn't under his direct control: so we praise him

Even - SEA IS HIS - Jew - times of trouble, suffering, testing

Confidence WE have this pm: for which we praise God:

Whatever may be worrying us this morning; God has it in his hand
"Sea is his and he made it"

then - second call to worship: v6: Come, let us bow down in worship
READ v6

Why ??

For he is our God v 7a

2nd great thing we know about God: wonderful, amazing
He is **our God**

Made covenant with Israel

Makes covenant with those who love Jesus

Not only GREAT GOD

Made himself known in his world -

he is my God - your God

made himself known to

and me in intimate fashion

Father once met queen

To Father's great amazement - came to him, spoke naturally as you like !!

Amazing ? king of kings (not mere earthly monarch) shown love and mercy to ME - come shown himself to ME

He is OUR GOD: as such, takes personal pastoral responsibility for us
(here picture: picture of Middle eastern shepherd)

He guides when we need direction

Provides for our needs,

Protects from danger and evil,

Heals our diseases and saves us from sin,

Carries us when we are weak ----- further worship

Every time - to church: true, cause to praise;

God is great God, god is our God

2 things help us in worship: inspires praise, directs prayers

In world - revealed self as great god

To us - revealed as our God

Crowning glory: when we come together in this way:

----- be sure: God will speak to us through his word, in way that is fresh and relevant READ 8a

Hence: ALL IMPORTANT : that we should come to worship
expecting to be spoken to : in humility

Prepared to hear and heed what he has to say

*History of Israel: taught us - there is **no neutral ground** when God speaks*

Disobeyed God in wilderness, refused to trust in his provision

READ: Hebrews: Who were they that heard and rebelled? Were they not all those whom Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was he angry 40 years? Was it not those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert?

Ie - congregation - who had experienced God's power and redemption in Egypt - who descended into unbelief

God is at work in our worship, no middle ground! cannot be complacent, or indifferent

Either: respond or resist, submit or rebel

He is a great God, he is our God - and speaks with us!

Hence - prepare ourselves to meet with him, every time we worship -

- Turn our focus away from ourselves,
- Humbly come to his presence, give him what he desires and deserves: wholehearted praise, thanksgiving