

Worship the Coming King

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The nature of most human's lives, the lives of men and women, is such that they are focused on what's happening today, what's happening now, what their plans are for life on this earth, and they're concerned about finding their purpose, finding their identity, finding what they want to do in life so that they can do whatever they want to do in their life. The nature of biblical Christianity is something that is completely different. Biblical Christianity changes your perspective radically, it changes it into something that is completely foreign to the mindset of the world. Rather than a focus on self, there is a focus on Christ and a concern for the interests of Christ, of knowing Christ, and serving Christ, and believing Christ, and trusting Christ, and that becomes the ever-growing dominating perspective in the heart of a true believer who is growing in Christ, there is a love for Christ that transcends all else, that makes a Christian distinct from the man of the world who is living for the interests that he has, whether it's his personal interests or his charitable interests. The Christian is focused on the person of Christ rather than his own pursuits, is my point, and there's a second aspect to it in that the man of the world is preoccupied with the life of this world by nature. It's what he has. It's all that he knows. It's what he's pursuing. For the Christian, there is the recognition that this world is passing and that we are living for a coming event that transcends all else, we are looking forward to the return of Christ because the return of Christ will be when Christ establishes his kingdom, when he comes to reign from Jerusalem, when he reigns over the nations. We are looking forward to something that transcends this life either when Christ returns or we go to be with him by death and we are in his kingdom that way, we are looking forward to something that far transcends this life, and by comparison, the coming of Christ, the coming of being with him, that future time when we are with him is the reason that we exist and it transcends anything else that might happen in this life.

Our text tonight is going to be Psalm 96 but before we go there, I want you to just go to John 14 for just a moment to frame our thinking about these matters in a way that I think will be helpful as we consider Psalm 96. John 14, beginning in verse 1 says,

1 Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

And we see something so radically critical in that text, we see the Lord Jesus Christ displaying and declaring by his sovereign power that he reigns over the course of human history and that at a time of his choosing, he will return to execute his will on the earth. Now that is so fundamental to Christianity, the reality of the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ is central to true Christianity and it has a defining impact on the way that we think about life, to realize that the world in which we live, the world in which we live and move and have our being, that in which we exist is not a closed fixed system that will just perpetuate and go on and on on its own power forever and ever without end. No, Christ existing outside the realm of this world will intervene, he will come back, he will assert his will and further the purposes of God one day, a day at his choosing, and that is what we're living for, we're living for the day when the King comes back. We trust in all of the work of Christ that he accomplished in his first coming, his first advent when he accomplished redemption for his people in his perfect life and his sacrificial death and his resurrection from the grave, we trust in that and yet we also look forward to the fact when he comes again, that second coming of Christ in which he comes to receive us to himself and that defines the whole way that we look at life and it radically reorients us from a preoccupation with the window of 70 years or 80 years that we live on this earth, recognizing that we are looking forward to and trusting in Christ for the fulfillment of his word that he's going to come back and that's when true reality will be introduced into the world, true reality because that will be the abiding reality and the temporary reign of Satan over this world will be overturned, the curse will be reversed and Christ will reign and we will be with him to reign with him. That is critical to understand in your perspective of life. All of a sudden life is not about the ups and downs of today, there is this abiding fixed reference point that we look to, Christ is going to return and that is where we set our hope, not on anything that happens in this particular life and so we just need to always have that in mind.

Now if you go back to Psalm 96, we'll pick up on that because Psalm 96 is about the return of the coming King. Psalm 96 and I'll just read that text to set it in your mind. For those of you that are visiting with us or you're fairly new to us, we have been preaching through the Psalms on Tuesday nights off and on for a number of years now. We started with Psalm 1, we're up to Psalm 96 now, and so you're joining us in the middle of a series in which we are going through Psalms 1 through 150, and Psalm 96 says this in its 13 verses beginning in verse 1,

1 Sing to the LORD a new song; Sing to the LORD, all the earth. 2 Sing to the LORD, bless His name; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day. 3 Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples. 4 For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. 5 For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the LORD made the heavens. 6 Splendor and majesty are before Him, Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. 7 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. 8 Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name; Bring an offering and come into His courts. 9 Worship the LORD in holy attire; Tremble before Him,

all the earth. 10 Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved; He will judge the peoples with equity." 11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; Let the sea roar, and all it contains; 12 Let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy 13 Before the LORD, for He is coming, For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness And the peoples in His faithfulness.

Now you see in Psalm 96 that there is this in the first half of the Psalm, there is this call to worship the Lord, to worship Yahweh, and we'll go through this all verse by verse this evening, but the conclusion of the Psalm, the closing verse of the Psalm gives the grounds for that worship, gives the explanation for it. Why shall we worship this God? What is the motivation? What is the compulsion to worship him? In verse 13 it tells us he's coming and he is coming to judge the earth, and so we worship him in reverence in respect for his sovereignty, we worship him in reverence and respect for his position as our Judge, and we worship him and we reverence him because he is coming to judge the earth.

Now a couple of things, just observations about the Psalm as we kind of look at it in a big picture sense before we go into it, Psalm 96 has often been called a missionary Psalm, if not the missionary Psalm because of its emphasis upon the nations coming to worship God. You see in verse 1, "Sing to the LORD, all the earth." Verse 3, "Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples." It goes on and says in verse 7, "Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the people. O families of the peoples," I should say. Verse 10, "Say among the nations, 'The LORD reigns.'" And then in the closing verse in verse 13 he's coming to judge the earth, "He will judge the world in righteousness." Now that little overview gives you a sense of the immense breadth of this Psalm, the breadth of the Psalm, the far-reaching consequences of what it says. This Psalm is addressed and calls upon all men everywhere, of all times, of all nations, to worship the God of the Bible, to worship Yahweh, to worship the God of Israel as their own God, and there's a context as you go through the Psalms that we want to remember. We've said many times that Psalms 93 to Psalm 100 are what we call theocratic Psalms, they worship God as King, and different nuances are brought out through those eight Psalms.

Now in Psalm 95, what we saw when we were last here in the Psalms a couple of weeks ago, two or three weeks ago, we saw this call to worship and we saw that there was a call to worship and yet there was a warning about the consequences of refusing to do so. Look at verses 10 and 11. Actually, let's go to verse 8. After giving this call to worship in Psalm 95, the psalmist says and gives this warning, "Do not harden your hearts," against this call, "as the people of Israel did in the wilderness." I'm paraphrasing somewhat just for the sake of time, "When your fathers tested Me, They tried Me, though they had seen My work. 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. Therefore I swore in My anger, Truly they shall not enter into My rest." And so Psalm 95 concludes with a warning against refusing the call to worship. It warns against unbelief. It warns against disobedience, you could

say, and that has a particular application in that Psalm to Israel as it is focusing on the rebellion of the nation of Israel in the wilderness after God delivered them from the nation of Egypt.

Now that becomes very significant as you pivot to Psalm 96. Psalm 95 ended on the rebellion of Israel in the earlier history of the Old Testament, now Psalm 96 comes and takes, as it were, the declaration of the Gospel to all the nations. Israel would not hear, Israel would not believe in the wilderness and therefore the Gospel will go to all of the nations, is the idea that is being spent here. It reminds us of the Apostle Paul when he went to the Jews and they rejected his ministry and he shook the dust from his clothes and said, "If you won't have it, we'll go to the Gentiles, then." And this unbelief as you read about it in Romans 11, this unbelief of Israel becomes, as it were in the plan of God, the occasion by which the Gospel is taken to the nations. If Israel would not have it, it will go then to the nations and that's what we see Psalm 96 doing, and here in the Old Testament, we see that even in the Old Testament you see very clear and direct indications that the Gospel was for all the nations, it wasn't simply for Israel, and Psalm 96 is one of the great texts that make this evident to us.

Now when Psalm 96 was written, the occasion upon which it was written is likely found in 1 Chronicles 16, and if you would turn back in your Bibles a few books to 1 Chronicles 16, I'll show you why we say that. 1 Chronicles 16:1 is likely giving us the historical occasion that surrounds the writing of Psalm 96. In 1 Chronicles 16:1 it says, this is the occasion when the ark of God was brought into Jerusalem and in chapter 16, verse 1,

1 ... they brought in the ark of God and placed it inside the tent which David had pitched for it, and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before God. 2 When David had finished offering the burnt offering and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD. 3 He distributed to everyone of Israel, both man and woman, to everyone a loaf of bread and a portion of meat and a raisin cake. 4 He appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the LORD, even to celebrate and to thank and praise the LORD God of Israel.

Now you say, "Why does that necessarily connect to Psalm 96?" Well, if you go a little further in the chapter, chapter 16, you will see a nearly verbatim reproduction of Psalm 96 given beginning in verse 23 where it says,

23 Sing to the LORD, all the earth; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day. 24 Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples. 25 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; He also is to be feared above all gods. 26 For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the LORD made the heavens.

And going on all the way down through, we'll skip over some of it down to verse 33, let's say, or verse 32,

32 Let the sea roar, and all it contains; Let the field exult, and all that is in it. 33 Then the trees of the forest will sing for joy before the LORD; For He is coming to judge the earth.

Now all of that quoting from 1 Chronicles 16 simply to say this, that the parallel, the nearly verbatim reproduction of the Psalm in 1 Chronicles 16 indicates that the arrival of the ark was likely the occasion for the thoughts that are being expressed here in Psalm 96, and stay with me here, the ark was the symbol of God's presence. God had arrived, as it were, in Jerusalem and there is this response of grateful worship that is given in response to the reality of his presence. What Psalm 96 is saying is there is a coming day where not the symbol of God's presence will come, but the Lord himself will come. He will come in his own person and arrive to reign over Jerusalem from which he will reign over all of the earth. Look at verse 13. Remember, the ark had arrived and this Psalm comes and yet the Psalm is looking forward to something else, in verse 13, "the LORD is coming, For He is coming to judge the earth." The arrival of the ark, the symbol of the presence of God, was simply a down payment on the reality of his coming that was still future.

Now what happened is that Christ came in his humility, he came in his Incarnation in his first advent, and he offered his life in the context of that life as a sacrifice for his people to save them from their sins, what we see in Psalm 96 is – let me just say this – Christ did not reign over the earth at that time in the way it's contemplated here, he did not come as a judge in his first advent, he came as a Savior. Psalm 96 anticipates the coming of the Lord as a judge and so it is still future to us as we read Psalm 96 today the things that are in mind here, and so there is this picture of the coming of the Lord that underlies everything about Psalm 96 and what we find is that the reality of his coming is an occasion once again for joyful worship just as the arrival of the ark was an occasion for joyful worship in 1 Chronicles 16, but the occasion for us to worship is greater even now, the occasion of his coming again will be an even greater occasion for worship even than that great arrival of the symbol of his presence in the history of Israel.

Why would his coming be a reason for worship? Why should we worship the coming King? Well, this Psalm gives us two clear directions for worship that we need to consider here today. This is a joyful Psalm which beckons all men to praise the Lord. Now why do we worship this coming King? Well, number 1, he is great. He is great. The greatness of the King is the reason that we worship him. This call, this Psalm opens with a call to sing.

Look at verses 1 and 2 with me now as we get into the text proper, so to speak. Psalm 96:1,

1 Sing to the LORD a new song; Sing to the LORD, all the earth. 2 Sing to the LORD, bless His name; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day.

Notice the threefold repetition of "sing." Sing to the Lord. Sing to the Lord. Sing to the Lord. This worship is to be expressed with music, it is to be expressed in singing, and it's

a new song that is required because there are new mercies on display. Look at verse 1 again, "Sing to the LORD a new song," and the idea of a new song is anticipating a fresh response of worship, of joyful worship expressed in singing because God has put new mercies on display and, therefore, this new song is a fresh reaction to the divine glory, it is a fresh song in response to the arrival of the King. In 1 Chronicles 16, the symbol of the presence had arrived and there was a joyful response of celebration. When Christ comes again, when the King comes to judge, there will be a fresh outburst of worship given to him as he displays his divine glory and as he exercises his divine judgment over the world and as he exercises his kingly authority throughout the entire known realm of the earth. That is an occasion for worship because it will display his great sovereignty and his great power in an undeniable way that calls for his people to respond and honor him. Indeed, all of the world should respond in worship and the fresh new arrival of him will call for a new song of worship.

Now looking back at verse 1, "Sing to the LORD, all the earth," and let me just point this out to you, "all the earth" there in verse 1, dropping down to verse 13, "He is coming to judge the earth," as so often happens in the Psalms, a key theme is shown by the way this Psalm is bracketed together and so the earth beginning and ending the Psalm gives us this comprehensive sense that all the earth is summoned to obedience to the call to worship expressed in Psalm 96 and, you know, here's the way that we should think about this and we need to think about this aspect of worship and the universal command to worship the one true God, we need to think about this biblically. The reality is that all men throughout all of the world are the subjects of God the King because God reigns over all. His providence superintends all things. He is the Creator of heavens and earth. He is the sustainer of heavens and earth. He is the one who gives life to each individual man and appoints the lengths of his day. Beloved, what Scripture says and what Scripture teaches us is that all men everywhere are subjects to the one true God who is revealed in the Bible and who is revealed in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a result of that, they are all subject to him and, therefore, they all owe their worship to him. The right and proper response of everyone throughout the world is to worship the one who made them and the earth upon which they dwell. All men are his subjects and therefore they are all called to worship him. That is the biblical picture of things.

Now it was typical that before a king would make his procession that heralds would go before him and announce the coming of the king. We as Christians before Christ returns, we are in a position where we have the lovely privilege of going before his return, as it were, proclaiming the things that we're talking about here this evening, calling people to faith in Christ, calling them to worship him and in a sense heralding his coming before he actually returns. We go before as forerunners announcing the coming of this King, proclaiming that he is returning and calling men to worship him in anticipation of his arrival. Now I understand quite clearly that many men will not honor that call and not obey the call, if not most men will not honor the call, but here's the thing, beloved, that does not restrain us from making the call, that does not diminish the moral force of the call, the moral force of the call remains because God truly is sovereign over them, he does reign over them and they need to respond in worship to their Sovereign. The fact that they refuse to do so is an act of disobedience, it is not an indication that the call is

somehow defective or wrong. So the psalmist is calling for intelligent praise in response to who this God is.

Look at verse 2 with me again, "Sing to the LORD, bless His name; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day." That's what we have the privilege of doing together here this evening as we teach from God's word. Now verse 3,

3 Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.

So it's opened with a threefold call to sing and then worship is defined more particularly and what is to be done is defined, look at the verbs here: bless his name; proclaim good tidings; tell of his glory. So we sing in a vertical act of praise to God and then horizontally we give testimony to men about who this God is. We proclaim what he has done and we call men to submit and put their faith in him and we tell them what Scripture says here, for example, in verse 5, "The Lord to whom I call you to worship, He is the one who made the heavens." And so as we declare creation, as we declare the work of Christ, as we call people to faith in him, we are obeying the call of Psalm 96 to declare these things to men throughout all of the world, to tell the acts of the glory of God, and to call them to respond in faith and obedience to him, and this is to be done to every creature throughout all the earth.

Well, that's a pretty daunting call. This Psalm has wide ramifications but do you know what? The nature of God has wide ramifications. The fact that he is the maker of heaven and earth and the maker and sustainer of life on earth means that everyone is affected by him, everyone is subject to him, everyone is under a duty to believe his word and to submit to him. Everyone without exception. It doesn't matter that there are other religions that do not recognize this God, whether it's Islam or Mormonism or whatever other religion you want to name, they are still under the same obligation as everyone else. The fact that they are engaged in false worship does not excuse them from the call and it does not diminish the truthfulness of the call that we make to them. That is so very important to understand, in fact, you see that as the Psalm goes on it makes precisely that point.

Look at verse 4,

4 For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.

The psalmist was preaching or writing this in a polytheistic age in the nations that surrounded them, but it did not diminish, it did not thwart his call that they should all respond in worship and that this God is the God over all of their so-called gods. And in verse 5, he says,

5 For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the LORD made the heavens.

And so Psalm 96 is not simply a positive call to worship the God of the Bible, it is a devastating polemic against every other religion that has ever existed in the history of man. You want to talk about comparative religion, the Bible's perspective on comparative religion is this: there is one true God and everything else is an idol. There is no other God, and because he is the true God, he is worthy of our praise and faith and obedience. He is great above all others.

Now commentators point out in verse 5 when it says "all the gods of the peoples are idols," verse 4, "He is to be feared above all gods," understand this, understand that he's not suggesting that there really are other gods, rather he is simply, he is not recognizing the true reality of other gods, he is dismissing all claims to the existence of other gods as being so much useless idolatry. He's saying, "You say that you have your gods but they're just idols, they're nothing, and the God that I proclaim to you is over all of them." This is what needs to be declared to the adherents of every other religion that is not true biblical Christianity, is that the god that you worship is a worthless idol, he doesn't exist. The one true God is the God who made the heavens, revealed in the word written and revealed in the Word Incarnate.

So you could look at Isaiah 41 just to see this emphasized, I guess, Isaiah 41 in a polemic against idolatry from the prophet Isaiah 700 years before the time of Christ. He says in Isaiah 41:21,

21 "Present your case," the LORD says. "Bring forward your strong arguments," The King of Jacob says. 22 Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place; As for the former events, declare what they were, That we may consider them and know their outcome. Or announce to us what is coming;

It is a challenge to false gods, "Tell us what the future is? Declare the future to us before it happens if you are gods. If you exist, tell us what's going to happen." Verse 23,

23 Declare the things that are going to come afterward, That we may know that you are gods; Indeed, do good or evil, that we may anxiously look about us and fear together.

He's mocking them and then in verse 24 he draws a conclusion,

24 Behold, you are of no account, And your work amounts to nothing; He who chooses you is an abomination.

Idolatry is an abomination to God as we will look at down the road in another series that I'm working on. But the point of the passage is these so-called gods of other nations, they can't do that, they can do nothing. Why? Because they are nothing. They can do nothing because they are nothing. They do not exist. That's why they can't do these things and, therefore, the call of Psalm 96, the call of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the call of all of the Bible to everyone who is not worshiping the true God today in the New Testament realm

through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the call to everyone is to come out of their false religion, to abandon what they have previously believed and put their faith in Christ alone, to acknowledge his worth, to acknowledge his existence, to acknowledge his character, to acknowledge his works, and to bow down in worship before the Lord Jesus Christ as he is revealed in the 66 books and no more of the Bible.

Beloved, in this pluralistic day in which we live, in this postmodern world where everybody can have their own truth, you have your truth that works for you, I have my truth that works for me, we're good with each other, so to speak, what you and I must never forget and always remember is this, is that Scripture rejects every world religion without apology. There is only one God and there is only one way to approach him. Scripture is not party to the postmodern spirit of our age. The Bible says, "There is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me." There is no other way to God except through Christ and even though that is contrary to the spirit of our age, that must be what we proclaim to all men everywhere and we must warn men about the dangers of their false religion, we must call them to repent of their idolatry and come to Christ who promises them to welcome them, to give them eternal life, to forgive all of their sins based on his righteousness and shed blood. There is no reason for anyone to reject such a gracious call as that.

For our purposes here this evening, I just want to reiterate what we've tried to say over the years is that we must understand and be committed to recognize that it is not enough simply to say, "I believe the biblical faith," that's good to do that, but to recognize the implication of the biblical faith means the exclusion of all others. Jesus Christ makes an exclusive truth claim and there can be and there are no competing truth sources other than the Lord Jesus Christ, other than the 66 books of the Bible. Everything else is false. Everything is idolatry that is under the judgment of God and you and I need to know that from Scripture, we need to believe it and part of your Christian commitment, part of your faithfulness to Christ is to be committed to proclaim that and to hold to it even when it is unpopular, even when it brings division to human relationships. We cling to that, we hold to that. Look, we do not have the prerogative to soften the edges of the truth claims that Scripture makes on all the world. That's not right for us to even think that way. It's not right when people try to accommodate other religions and to make other ways to God. Scripture rejects that and we need to be faithful to the word of God which revealed the Son of God to us who was the only Savior of our souls, who has forgiven our sins, given us new life and will take us to heaven to that place where he's been preparing for us. Fidelity to him requires that we be faithful all the way to it.

So in verse 6, we see that the glory of the symbol of the presence of God was pointing to a greater and even greater glory of his person. Verse 6,

6 Splendor and majesty are before Him, Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.

Why do we worship this God? Well, he's the only true God. He's a God who has done great things. He is the maker of heaven and earth. Why do we humble ourselves before him? Why do we give him our allegiance and our obedience and why do we trust him? Well, it's because he's so full of splendor, he's so full of majesty, his whole essence is a radiation of glory that far transcends anything that our mind could see or comprehend. He's strong. He's beautiful. And so of course we bow in worship because we are in the presence of one who is greater than we are and that's the only rightful thing to do. You were created, you were made in order to worship him like that.

Now so we see in these first six verses this call to worship the greatness of the King. Secondly, the second section of the Psalm is we see the worship of the King described. The worship of the King described. And we've already been saying this throughout our exposition so far, but the great – oh, I love this – the great works of God and the great worth of God that have been described in the first six verses here, require a response from men. What is the response to the greatness of this God, the greatness of this King? Well, look at verses 7 through 9 as he pivots now and he says, "Here's what you are to do in response."

7 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. 8 Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name; Bring an offering and come into His courts. 9 Worship the LORD in holy attire; Tremble before Him, all the earth.

And so we see as we've emphasized here, this command goes beyond the people of Israel, this goes to all people everywhere, and the repetition of the command, "Ascribe. Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name," there is this building crescendo of praise that climaxes in the object of worship and the reason that we worship is the glory of his name; the fullness of his revealed character is what we are worshiping in response to. God has shown that he is glorious. The Hebrew word for glory carries the idea of weight. God is weighty, he is impressive. He is majestic and so we worship in response to that and we are to ascribe glory to him.

How do you ascribe glory to him? How do you worship? Well, the psalmist says here at the end of verse 8, "Bring an offering, worship the LORD in holy attire; Tremble before Him." Bring an offering, worship, tremble, gather together with the people of God and join in the praise and the proclamation of his glory, and the best way to praise God is to recite his attributes back to him and to do so in fear and trembling. There is a building excitement as this goes on: ascribe, ascribe, ascribe, bring, worship, tremble. There's this developing longing for the fulfillment of this in the maximum climax possible.

Now let me show you something here. Look at verse 9 again, "Worship the LORD in holy attire." The holy attire is creating a sense of a solemn disposition, a solemn disposition, a sense of reverence. As you go to great ceremonial occasions on earth or important ceremonial occasions on earth, you dress for the occasion. You go to a wedding, you dress up. Go to a funeral, most people dress up in one way or another in

recognition of, your clothing is a manifestation of the inner recognition of the importance of the occasion of what you're doing. Here the clothing aspect is a reflection of the inner disposition that this is important, this is weighty, and so the occasion of worship, beloved, watch this, the singing in verses 1 and 2 gives us a picture of joy, of exuberance, and yet that exuberance is not superficial. There is a certain solemnity to it. It matters. It's important. We are responding to the holy God and our disposition and frame of mind should reflect that. God is holy and so our disposition toward him is also holy, it's sanctified. When we are ascribing glory to his name, there is a setting apart, a separation of our mind and our affections into a realm of worship that is distinct from the way that we live otherwise in the world, when we are consciously directing ourselves in that direction. It is a mistake of unspeakable proportions for churches to try to make worship just as casual and informal as possible, as if you were getting popcorn on the midway at the county fair. This is not the way to respond to the holy God. You come with a sense that this is solemn and serious and reverent, and we are to respond to him in a way that reflects the greatness of the glory of his holy name.

So this idea of bringing an offering, worship, trembling before him, you could state it this way: the command to worship is a command, first of all, to assent to the truth of what's being said, to agree with it, to sympathize with it and to acknowledge it as true. What is worship? In part it is an acknowledgment that what God has revealed about himself in the Scriptures is true, that Christ is true, "I agree with that. I assent with that with all of my mind." That's part of worship. The command requires praise. It's not simply a mental acknowledgment but an expression of devotion and reverence and worship to him, and you could say with the idea of trembling, that there is this idea of heartfelt submission to him. "God, I submit to You in love. I submit to You in faith and obedience. I submit to You. You're the God over all and therefore I bring the whole disposition of every aspect of my personality, I bow it before You in acknowledgment of the greatness of who You are and my subordinate position to You in the order of the universe. You are Creator and I am subordinate to You. As a Christian, You're my Redeemer and You own me in a twofold way; as Creator and as Redeemer, you own me and I gladly submit to You."

So this worship of assent, praise, heartfelt submission, beloved, don't you see that the majesty of this King deserves the best honor that we can bring to him? Nations should fear him and bring a tribute, especially in light of their past idolatry. So there is this response to the King expressed in verses 7 through 9.

Now I said I had two sections to it, there's actually a third section, I misspoke earlier, a third section found in the final four verses of the Psalm reflecting the coming of the King. The coming of the King. And oh, this is just wonderful. There is this declaration of the greatness of the King in the first six verses, there is this response of worship to the King in verses 7 through 9, and now building to the crescendo, building to the great climax of this Psalm in these last four verses, we see the coming of the King. It's not simply that this God is in the heavens and we worship him for who he is there, although that's very true, there's more to this story than that, the more to the story is this, is that this King is coming back. This King will return and make himself visible.

Verse 10,

10 Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved; He will judge the peoples with equity."

Notice the forward-looking nature of the statement there at the end of verse 10, "He will judge the peoples with equity," and in this verse we get an expression of what is to be said to the nations, the content of the message to the nations. Verse 10, it couldn't be any more clear. What shall we say to the nations? This is what we say in verse 10, you say to them quote, "The LORD reigns. God controls everything that happens on the earth. He is sovereign over it all." That's what the nations need to hear and yet it is this God calling men to himself through his sovereign call to worship him, and the wonder of it is well expressed by what Charles Spurgeon said, when this message goes out to the nations and they are called to come to him not simply to worship him but to be under his blessing as the people of God, Charles Spurgeon says this and I quote, "God always had designs of love for all the families of men and never intended that His grace and His covenant should relate only to the seed of Abraham after the flesh." The call is going out to the nations indicating that that's what God planned all along. God planned for the nations to be included, indeed his promises to Abraham in Genesis 12 said, "Abraham, in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

And there at the end of verse 10, what's also said to the nations is that, "He will judge the peoples with equity." The Lord reigns, that's part of our message, he will judge the peoples with equity is also part of the message. It means this: in the future God will establish justice and fairness with complete integrity. This is the most wonderful thing that a beleaguered soul could hear, it's what this world most needs to hear in the collapse of events all around us, it's what people need to hear in wartime, it's what people need to hear in the times of moral crisis like what we have today. The day is coming when God will set everything right. He's going to make it all right from the smallest detail to the greatest catastrophe. God is going to set everything right. He will judge the peoples with equity. When Christ returns, he will establish righteousness on the earth, he will establish justice and peace by his power, and the chaos of what we now know will be overturned and the greatness of that future era will bring praise to his name. When righteousness is established, when injustice is corrected with such great power and might as will happen at the return of Christ, there will be this monumental response of praise that goes to him coming from the hearts of his people and acknowledged by force from those who are his enemies, and so great will be the praise that the psalmist personifies all of creation as joining in the worship.

Look at verse 11. In response to the recognition that Christ will come and judge the peoples with equity, the response at the coming of the King is this in verse 11,

11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; Let the sea roar, and all it contains; 12 Let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy 13 Before the LORD, for He is coming, For He is coming to judge the earth.

In other words, creation itself is going to flourish, creation itself, as it were, will sing in rejoicing that the curse has been reversed and Christ has now taken his rightful throne as the second Adam reigning over all the earth. And what will that judgment be like? Beloved, there is a twofold positive and negative aspect to it and we tend to think about it mostly in this way, I suppose: God will bring vengeance on his enemies, he will bring judgment on the ungodly, but for those of us that are his people that have suffered for the sake of his name, the coming of Christ will be the time of our deliverance, it will be the time of our vindication. This will be the greatest of all times when Christ returns and the King is established and he acknowledges us as being his own and we share in his reign and we share in the ascription of glory to his great name. That is what judgment is going to be like, sin judged, God's people vindicated, and when righteousness prevails, the people of God will rejoice and the Scriptures say that all of creation will join in the celebration as well.

Beloved, we don't see that reign yet. We suffer under the curse for now but understand that what we said at the start we say now at the end. Christ said, "I will come again," and beloved, that is your hope. Your hope is not related to anything physical getting better. Your hope is not related to any financial reversal changing in the course of this life. Your hope is not as I've said hopefully sympathetically many times over the years, your hope is not even that your loved ones will come to Christ. That's not your final ultimate ground of hope because you don't know if that's going to happen or not. Rather our hope is in something transcendent. Our hope is in who Christ is and what he has said he will do. Who Christ is is the Lord of all and the Lord of our souls, and what he has said he will do, he will return, he will come for us, he will take us to the place that he has prepared for us, and when he does that, everything will be made right and everything earthly by comparison will be of little consequence when we see our lovely King exalted as he so richly deserves. That will be the fulfillment of every aspiration of our heart, that the one that we love the most receives the glory that is his due, and we will rejoice in that and Christ will take care of the details at that time.

Revelation 5, if you'd turn there with me. Revelation 5. As you're turning there, what all of this does is it teaches us once again to not put our hope in what happens in this world. This world is not your home. This world is not your destination. This world is not the object of your hope, beloved. We must understand that. We must get that through our head that our hope is set on something future and on the person who holds the future, not on the outcome of any circumstances but on that future day still to come.

In Revelation 5:9, it pictures the worship given to Christ at this time and it says,

9 ... they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

Here is the recognition of the fulfillment of the call in Psalm 96. Verse 10,

10 "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

And when that day comes when Christ rules over the earth, there will be this worldwide cacophony of praise offered to him that will be so resounding and glorious that it is beyond our present ability to comprehend.

Revelation 19:6 says this, you don't need to turn there, at the return of Christ it says,

6 Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

As though multiple severe thunderstorms were taking place, so reverberating and powerful will be the praise, like multiple versions of Niagara Falls taking place simultaneously and the roar of the thunder as the water hits the river below, so somehow will the wonder and the glory of the praise of God be so mighty, so glorious, so powerful, and the message being the message of Psalms 93 to 100, "The Lord our God, the Almighty reigns. He is King. He is majestic. He is the authority." And so we respond to this as the people of God as Christians gathered here tonight, we look at that and we set our hearts upon that. That's what we live for. That's what we long for and our prayer is the very prayer that closes the Bible, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." Is that where your heart affection is set? Do you know Christ? Have you received him? Are you anticipating him somehow like this? Scripture says that is the heart of true biblical faith and the heart of true biblical worship.

Let's pray together.

God, we pray for the coming of Christ. We pray for the coming of that day even as our Lord taught us to pray, "Lord, hallowed be Your name." We worship You. "Your kingdom come." We pray for the return of our Lord, Father, to establish His glory and His righteous reign over all the earth. That will be the ultimate fulfillment of our deepest desires, Father, not when we get what we want but rather when You get what You so richly deserve, the praise of nations, the praise of Your people, and when righteousness is restored to this fallen earth. So Father, give us an expectant faith as we look to the future reign of Christ on the earth. Let us have a vibrant testimony to those around us, a sense of joy, a sense of solemnity, a sense of just godly worship in response to You that reflects and permeates every aspect of our life here in corporate worship, now as we go back into the world. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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