

Our Worship: Singing

Psalm 95

Intro

Are you a survivor of the worship wars? Worship wars over the last few decades

Not a new phenomenon - throughout history of the church - some O.G. worship wars - major figures of the reformation 15th and 16th - Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin

Luther - if you are familiar - it is what you would expect from the man who wrote "A Mighty Fortress is Our God."

He believed in the importance and power of song in the church. Luther taught that the praises of the faithful would drive away the devil. He also was convinced that hymns were a great device for teaching doctrine. (W. Robert Godfrey, *Reforming the Church's Singing*)

Zwingli took quite a different approach

...probably the best musician among the major Reformers - had a radically different position from that of Luther. Zwingli believed that music was too powerful and too emotional to be used in Christian worship.

Shut it all down - no music, no singing, no choirs, not even special music with a young lady in the church singing "Wind Beneath My Wings" accompanied by a tape player. Real ones know...

John Calvin took a position somewhere between the two:

Calvin believed that Paul wanted "the songs of Christians to be spiritual, and not made up of frivolities and worthless trifles." His search for the spiritual led him to the Psalms. The inspired Word of God, for Calvin, was the proper source of song for the church. Calvin said of the Psalms: "there is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror." The Psalms and New Testament songs became the divinely inspired praises of the Genevan church.

This morning we will take time to examine what the Bible says about worshipping God through singing and this endeavor this morning leads us to the Psalms - while we are not a church that only sings Psalms as Calving taught - with turning to the Psalms to instruct us on singing - I'm confident Calvin would approve as far as that goes. This is a divinely inspired Psalm that models for us an important framework for our worship through singing as we gather each Sunday to join our voices together to sing to the Lord:

Three important facets of biblical worship when we gather each week to sing together:

Three simple headings from NT scholar Derek Kidner that are clarifying:

- I. Rejoicing
- II. Reverence
- III. Response

I. Rejoicing

- A. This Psalm begins with an enthusiastic invitation and exhortation - "Oh come" invites the psalmist to each one of us - "Oh come let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock our salvation" - "let us come into his presence with thanksgiving - let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise"
1. This is a call and invitation to sing and not only to sing but rejoice through song - this is a call for us to raise our voices - to make joyful noise - a call to loud and happy and noisy and joyful singing

[1] Shout for joy to God, all the earth; [2] sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise! (Psalm 66:1-2)

- B. The psalmist in Psalm 95 and throughout the psalms calls the people of God to sing and to shout and to rejoice when we gather together
- C. This is not a call to emotionalism - to somehow drum up enthusiasm when we sing - we are given reasons that engage our minds and hearts and provoke a happy, rejoicing response - we sing loudly, we make a joyful noise BECAUSE we sing to the LORD - we sing to the rock of our salvation - the bedrock of our lives - the one who has saved us from sin and death
- D. Furthermore - more reasons for loud and joyful singing - v. 3 - we sing with joy for the LORD - Our God is a great God - the great King above all other so-called gods - the depths of the earth down to the molten core and heights of the highest mountains EVEREST - are in his hands - he holds the whole expanse of creation he in the palm of his hand - he has created all of it - the sea and the dry land were formed by his hands
1. THIS IS OUR GOD - The only appropriate response to the one who is our rock and salvation - the one who is the great God and King of the universe - the one who created all things and who holds all things in his hands - JOYFUL NOISE - LOUD SINGING
- E. We gather each Sunday to behold our God and to rejoice in the presence of our great Savior King and creator God
1. Your pastors and worship leaders are careful with the songs that we choose to sing on Sunday mornings - we want songs that are theologically informed - songs that are rooted in sound and clear biblical doctrine about God - is it because we are a bunch of theology nerds? I AM - not in the first place.
2. We endeavor to honor God in and through our singing - by singing songs that are rich with the truth about God - his glory and his grace - WE know that clear, sound, biblical doctrine - rich theology in the songs we sing - fuels joyful noise - it fuels loud songs of praise
- a) NO LIGHT SHOWS OR STAGES FILLED WITH SMOKE - THE BAND SERVES TO HELP US SING - IT IS THE ONE WE SING TO WHO FUELS OUR HAPPY SINGING

If we would be strong and happy servants of Christ, let us meditate much on God's greatness. He is the infinite God, unmeasurable in all his glorious attributes. There is no limit to any of his perfections,

and there is no perfection of God, in which his people may not find matter of exultation. (William Plumer)

Illustration: Terrace chants - no-one watches soccer - we get it you're better than the rest of us - sing for hours - as their team marches into a 0-0 tie. Good times. We are hardwired to sing. Fly Eagles

F. FURTHERMORE, we sing - understanding that we serve a God who sings

The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. (Zephaniah 3:17)

G. Application

1. Using the voice - loud singing, shouting for joy is appropriate and in fact it is what we are called too in God's Word.
 - a) Not to call attention to ourselves but to express that we have grasped something of the glory and grandeur of the God we love and worship - He is the infinite God, unmeasurable in all his glorious attributes - there is no limit to any of his perfections and therefore no limit to our exultation
2. EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN THE WEST Men - reluctant to sing -DO YOU HEAR THIS EXHORTATION TO MAKE JOYFUL NOISE? SHOUTING AND SINGING LOUDLY - DO YOU THINK YOU ARE MORE DIGNIFIED THAN GOD?
3. Hear the Word of the Lord inviting you into singing and even shouting - rejoicing in the presence of our great God when we gather together
4. Amen during the sermon (no-one wants to do it)
 - a) Glory - more reasons to sing - grace 6-7a

II. Reverence

- A. Another invitation O come let us sing and make a joyful noise v. 1-2 - V. 6 oh come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker
1. A call to reverent worship - bowing down - kneeling before the LORD - here's why
 - a) He is our Maker - reference to him making us a people - we see in v. 7
 - b) He is our God and we are the people of his pasture the sheep of his hand
 - (1) So the hands that created the seas and the dry land - the hands that hold the depths of the earth and the heights of the mountains are the hands of the Shepherd - the same hands that personally and lovingly care for us.
 - (2) We bow down before God - we kneel in his presence because we are humbled before him - for this great and glorious King has made us his own and has dedicated himself to care for us - all of grace
 - (3) John 10 - I AM the good shepherd - the good shepherd lays his life down for the sheep

The faithful are called to bow in his presence because he is their God, the one who graciously elected them to be his people and who takes care of them like a shepherd. (Allen Ross)

B. Application

1. YOU ARRIVED THIS MORNING UNDER THE PROTECTION AND CARE OF THE SHEPHERD - HOWEVER YOU FEEL
2. V. 1-5 a vocal response to God - v. 6-7 A bodily response to God's grace - bowing down, kneeling - the Scriptures are full of appropriate bodily responses to God in worship - bowing down, kneeling, raising hands, dancing, so forth

Our bodies naturally respond to what effects our souls. I open my arms wide when my daughter runs to greet me. I jump up from the couch with my hands in the air when my team scores the winning touchdown. I lunge when a glass of milk is about to be knocked over. I gratefully applaud heroic acts of unselfishness. I cry when a friend's child dies. Not one has to teach us those responses. In a similar way, God-honoring expressiveness in corporate worship begins with clearly seeing the One we worship. (Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters*)

3. Reasons why we might not pursue God-honoring expressiveness in corporate worship
 - a) If we do not clearly see and love the One who is worthy of all praise - we may see it as a duty to endure

Illustration: I loathed church as a teenager

- b) Fear of man - self-conscious - certainly we aren't trying to impress anyone
- c) Church experiences - RUNNING DOWN THE AISLE
- d) Too respectable for all that - yet we find here and throughout Scripture exhortations to engage in worship - using our bodies in appropriate ways to express the reality that we have experienced amazing grace and that we sing to the Good Shepherd who has devoted himself to our care

Is there any physical expression of worship that God has given us in Scripture that I've never displayed? And if so, why? (Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters*)

III. Response

- A. v. 7b marks what may appear to be an abrupt shift in the message that the psalmist is communicating - Today if you hear his voice - if you hear his voice - in the psalmist's day when the priests read the Scriptures - if you hear his voice do not harden your hearts - if you hear the voice of the Shepherd described in v. 7a - to not harden your hearts

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:27)

- B. The psalmist gives a warning as he describes a primary example of hardening one's heart

1. Meribah and Massah
 - a) The people of God had been rescued and redeemed out of Egyptian slavery by God's grace and power - parting the Red Sea and devouring their enemies - speaking to them through his prophet Moses - providing manna - bread from heaven and plentiful quail to feed them in the wilderness
 - b) STILL IN LIGHT OF HIS PATIENCE AND GENEROSITY - The Israelites grumbled and complained and in Exodus 17 we read

[6] Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

[7] And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?" (Exodus 17:6-7)

- c) Massah = testing - Meribah = quarreling
 - (1) They had seen God's wonderful works on their behalf - stiff-necked - unresponsive - hearts hardened toward God
2. V. 10 - 40 years I - literally "was disgusted" with that generation of hard-hearted rebels - in my wrath says the Lord - they shall not enter my rest"
 - a) RESIST ANY TEMPTATION TO RELEGATE THIS STORY TO OT ISRAEL - JOSHUA LEADING THEM INTO THE PROMISED LAND - AUTHOR OF HEBREWS:

[6] Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, [7] again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted,

**"Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts."**

[8] For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. [9] So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, [10] for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

[11] Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. [12] For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. [13] And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:6-13)

3. Vital connection between the Word and worship - our worship is a response to God's revelation - THE ACTIVE AND LIVING WORD OF GOD - our response can be joyful submission - or hardening our hearts - never neutral - apathy is a kind of hardening
4. In all of this shouting, singing, joyful noise, kneeling, bowing down in worship - the psalmist addresses the condition of our hearts - ONE CAN SING AND DANCE ON SUNDAY AND LIVE LIKE THE DEVIL ON MONDAY

This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; (Matthew 15:8)

C. Application

The 'Today' of which it speaks is this very moment; the 'you' is none other than ourselves, and the promised 'rest' is not Canaan but salvation. (Derek Kidner)

1. CALL TO UNBELIEVERS - THE GOSPEL - NOW! TODAY!
2. EACH ONE OF US - An opportunity to repent - grace to forgive - grace to strengthen
 - a) AS WE CONCLUDE -THIS MORNING - TODAY - Our hearts line up with our singing!

Close

The critical question is not "Do I have a voice?" but "Do I have a song?" And if you're a true worshiper, forgiven and reconciled to God through the atoning work of Christ, the answer is a resounding yes. It's not a song we originated or created. We can't add to it, change it, or improve upon it. It's the song of the redeemed for their great Redeemer. It's a song we were never meant to sing alone. (Bob Kauflin, *True Worshipers*)

THIS IS WHY WE SING

As we sing again in a moment let me repeat the question:

Is there any physical expression of worship that God has given us in Scripture that I've never displayed? And if so, why? (Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters*)

Not to shame, not to encourage, to respond to God's Word - worship that reflects glory and grandeur and grace - worship that is shaped by God himself through his Word as we respond to him with sincere and submissive hearts.

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do not alter the wording in any way and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to this document on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Living Hope Church.

Please include the following statement on any distributed copy:

By Ben Kreps

Website: <http://livinghopechurchpa.com>