

15th November 2020

**No. 1. Coming to Worship Sing
for Joy.**

Psalm 95



This is the first in a three-part series entitled 'Coming to worship'. We are going to base our thoughts on the Psalm that was read number 95.

The subject this morning is 'Sing for Joy'

Singing; is the act of producing musical sounds with the voice and augments regular speech using sustained tonality, rhythm, and a variety of vocal techniques.

Yes, it is natural for us, when we are happy, to sing. There is something special when singing with a large crowd. We are taken up with the enthusiasm of others. So, the Psalms are a good place to turn when we consider the subject of joyful singing.

This psalm is thought to have been a processional song where most likely the Levite priests would start at the far end of Jerusalem and call people to worship as they make their way up toward the temple. The call to worship is made in verses 1-2, the reason for it is explained in verses 3-5 (the character of God), the call is repeated in verses 6-7 as they enter the temple courts. The emphasis changing as they come into his presence to kneel and bow down in praise and worship. Then comes a warning about heartless worship.

1. How is God to be praised?

- a. Joyful noise. V 1&2. We perhaps might smile at this phrase, in other psalms it says, 'make melody'. Spiritual joy is the heart and soul of thankful praise. It is to be spirited in the sense that it is to be lively and driven by the Holy Spirit.
- b. Thankful noise. V2. We come because our hearts are full of thanks for all that he has done for us and we want to tell him and others of his great goodness to us. Who more than God's people can be thankful?
- c. Humble reverential noise. V 6. Whilst being joyful and thankful we still need to maintain our knowledge of who God is. That there is an infinite distance between who we are and who he is. That should not dampen our enthusiasm but temper our excesses. We should not lose control of what we are about and in whose presence we stand. V2.

2. Why is God to be praised?

- a. Because he is a great God. V 3. We praise great men for who they are and what they have achieved. But if we have a great God how much more should our praise and worship together be raised? We read that he is a great God and a great King! There is more here though, not just a great God but a God above all gods V 3. We can and should sing joyfully to such a great and powerful God.
- b. Because he is the Creator. V 6. We belong to God whether we want that or not. We can and should sing joyfully to God for giving us life, both physical and spiritual.

- c. Because he is the Shepherd. V 7. Now great Gods and Kings are one thing, but a Shepherd is altogether different. A shepherd conjures up a whole different set of qualities and characteristics. The essence of a shepherd is his love for the sheep. Not just the flock as a whole but for each individual sheep. A shepherd cares for his sheep, he will do all that he can to care for them, feed them, protect them, have their every good at the forefront of his mind. Add to this shepherd ultimate power, strength and knowledge, and we begin to form a picture of the God that we are called to humbly and joyfully sing to.
- d. Because he is our God. V 7. *'For he is our God,'* perhaps we might say that these five simple words are the key to this psalm. These few words take this psalm and its claims and instructions into a whole different realm. This makes it personal, *'and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.'* As Christians we have a special relationship with this amazing God. He is in every sense of the word our God. We are encouraged to worship and bow down, kneel before the Lord. Matthew Henry comments *'that idolators bow down to gods that they have made, we bow down to the God that made us!'. 'to him be glory in the church throughout all generations, forever and ever.'* Eph 3 v 21. Such a sweet and glorious relationship must be met with great degree of praise and worship and what better way than to sing. Doesn't it do our hearts good to sing together, praise to our great God who loves us and cares for us, it raises our hearts and spirits to a higher plain known only to those who have this close relationship with him.
- If you can't sing too well, stand next to someone who can.
When we sing we join with all the hosts of heaven.

3. Exhortation to those who sing. V 8-11. These last four verses might well seem out of context with the start of the psalm and we might well be tempted to overlook and ignore them. For one thing it is God who now takes over this psalm and addresses us, exhorts us even.
- The main emphasis of this psalm appears to be that **those who sing gospel songs should live gospel lives.**
- God expects us to listen as he speaks. *'We are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.'* *'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.'* John 10 v 27. Not only does he expect us to listen but also to follow and do the words ie. Obey.
- The sin is **hardness of heart** that leads to distrust.
- Distrust at present difficult circumstances. We need to be especially careful of that kind of distrust as Covid19 rages all around us.
- The Israelites did not trust God they wanted proof. V 9.
- Notice what God says about such people. V 10-11.
- What is the antidote to hardened hearts? It is to keep them tender, speak often with the Lord and his people, in order to maintain a correct perspective even in hard times.
- If we deceive ourselves be reminded that God knows our hearts.

It is possible to be part of the congregation singing these great hymns and yet not know Jesus or his Father in heaven, with words that we have referred to several times lately let me encourage you to *'be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure,'*

So, when you sing, do it with the Joy that Jesus has put in your heart.