

Come, Let us Worship and Bow Down Psalm 95

Introduction

Buckner Fanning was a U. S. marine during WW II. He was stationed in Nagasaki just 3 weeks after the dropping of the atomic bomb. There he was – an American amidst the rubble and wreckage of the city demolished by an American weapon. Radiation burned victims wandering the streets. Survivors looking for other survivors. Some of the dead still unburied. Buckner – felt deeply the pain and devastation around him.

While patrolling the streets one day – he spotted a building with a sign on it in English – *Methodist Church*. He made note of the location and made plans to return there the next Sunday morning.

When he returned – he found that the building was partially collapsed – windows shattered – walls buckled. But there was a Christian service about to be held. As Buckner entered – Fifteen or so Japanese were setting up chairs and removing debris. They stopped and turned to look at him. Just 4 weeks ago he would have been regarded as a filthy enemy.

He knew only one word in Japanese and he heard it right then – ‘brother’. They welcomed him and offered him a seat. He opened his Bible and focused his thoughts on God. During communion – the worshipers brought him the elements to partake along with them

Even with the language barrier - - He knew that He was in a house of worship - - - and that Jesus Christ was the focus - - - and He had found such a place on Sunday – the Lord’s Day

We come to Psalm 95 this morning - - - which is one of the great worship Psalms

Psalm 95 – has been used in the church as a classic call to worship – going back to at least as early as the 4th century

Psalm 95:6, 7 - 'Come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand . . .'

Worship is a vast topic in Scripture

It certainly is a fair question to ask from time to time: ‘Why do we gather for worship as the church / the people of God?’

Why do we gather for worship one day a week / on Sunday? / is there any significance to these practices?

What constitutes a worship service?

These are not minor matters when it comes to our faith

Colin Smith: 'God's answer to a world that blasphemes His name is a community of people who honor His name!'

Not everyone worships the God of the Bible

But – in the here and now - - - one of the ways God's people manifest themselves in the world is by heeding the call / the invitation to worship God - - - in the name of Jesus Christ

'Come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.'

I. An Invitation to Worship - vv. 1-7

This Psalm addresses the people of God and summons them to worship – or more particularly to the worship service

Worship certainly takes place in ways other than the church gathered [private prayer / etc.] - -
- but this is a call unto corporate worship with the people of God

We are coming before God – we are to come with praise and thanksgiving

Worship music has always played a significant role amongst the people of God

The entire book of Psalms is the Hebrew song book of worship

Some of the Psalms were written by David – a good number by the sons of Korah - - - who were assigned as worship leaders in the tabernacle / temple

Jesus with the 11 disciples sang one of the Psalms on the night of the Passover – after He dismissed Judas – [probably Psalm 118]

Matthew 26:30 - 'And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.'

So the invitation is to gather - - - then sing His praises

The NT reiterates the importance of God's people gathering together

Hebrews 10:24-25 - 'and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.'

We are invited and told not to forsake

Bring your kids to worship – I remember church as a young boy - - drawing pictures of airplanes and cars - - - but I also remember hearing the beauty of God’s people singing together the great songs of the faith

C.S. Lewis: 'The New Testament does not envisage solitary religion: some kind of regular assembly for worship and instruction is everywhere taken for granted in the Epistles. So we must be regular practicing members of the Church.

There are two parts to this Psalm

One is an invitation to worship – sing praises [vv. 1-7a] / the other is a warning to heed what God’s Word says [vv. 7bff] – to obey God

At first reading - - - we might think – boy – the 2nd half of this Psalm sure puts a damper on the spirit of joy in the first half

But - both - - - are central aspects of worship

The same God who invites us to worship Him with joy in the assembly - - - is the same God who struck Uzzah for touching the Ark

The same Jesus whose Name we praise and call upon as Lord - - - is the same Jesus who flipped over the tables of the money changers in the temple - - - for taking advantage of the poor – and turning a place of worship into a den of thieves

In fact – John Piper – once did a series on worship – he titled it ‘gravity and gladness’

It’s a serious thing to come into the presence of the Lord - - - and a joyful thing

So – we come with joy over what God has done for us - - we come with humble hearts of obedience - - - both are central to our worship

Psalm 95:1 - 'O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation.'

Worship music shows that we are coming before Him in a fitting manner - - - with hearts filled with praise - - - and thoughts turned to Him

v. 2 ‘Let us come . . .’ = [kadam – Heb.] = to make haste - - - hurry up – let us go to worship!

Calvin: 'He calls upon them to speed into the presence of God.'

Don’t be indolent or sluggish to make it to worship! [He’s not telling us to get a speeding ticket!]

Don't let other things keep you from the worship of God

Why? Because God is a great God – v. 3

If we were invited to bow down before Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue - - we would be right to stay away or refuse / to walk with slow and heavy feet to the service - - - or to sleep in -- - hoping nobody misses us!

But – we aren't talking about worshiping an idol - - - we are talking about the worship of the living God

And we declare His importance / worth - - - by how we worship Him

Let's make haste to be there when God's people are gathered in worship

In fact the English word worship – comes from the combination of worth -ship – we declare His worth

He created us / our world – vv. 4-5 - - - it's all in His hands / Our life and being!

*** We can say God is important to us - - - but one of the ways we show it is by gathering together with the people of God for worship in a worship service

Why have a corporate gathering one day in seven? / on Sunday?

Where did the idea of one day in seven come from? / even a 7 day week

- The moon gives us our months
- The orbit of the earth around the sun gives us our year

Where did the week come from? [seven days]

The French tried to establish a ten day week – around the time of the French Revolution - - - but it did not work - - they reverted back

The seven day week is not revealed by any natural cycle in the stars - - - but seems particularly suited to our bodies - - - we have to ask why?

We find its basis in the book of Genesis

Genesis 2:1-3 - 'Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. And by the seventh day God completed His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God created and made.'

One day in seven – was reflected in the Jewish Sabbath command – a day of resting from one’s labors / worshiping God

It was the custom of Jesus to attend synagogue on the Sabbath

Luke 4:16 - 'And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up and read.'

He read from the book of Isaiah that day – [some of our church practices have a background in synagogue worship - - - etc. scripture reading / etc.]

That phrase – *as was His custom* - - - it was his regular practice - - - once every seven days – the Sabbath rolled around - - - He went to synagogue

The early church almost immediately began worshiping on Sundays - - to reflect the change that has occurred with the coming of Christ - - to honor the resurrection which occurred on a Sunday – the tearing of the veil / end of the sacrificial system

The Didache [2nd century] - 'But every Lord's Day do ye gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure.'

Sunday came to be seen as 'The Lord's Day.'

Revelation 1:10 - 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.'

B.B. Warfield: 'Christ took the Sabbath into the grave with Him and brought the Lord's Day out of the grave with Him on the resurrection morn.'

Some of the principles from a Sabbath concept we recognize as having timeless spiritual truth involved – a day of rest / worship / spiritual focus

- 1) Life is about more than making money / eating bread / the physical - - - man has a soul
- 2) Just as our bodies need physical rest - - so does our soul need time to recharge and refocus / replenish

Worship / praise / God's Word is God's intended power source to replenish our souls

Kevin DeYoung: 'Sunday is the day that the Lord has given you to attend to your soul.'

Suppose someone says – ‘Man – I am really struggling in my faith right now - - - I barely pray / I have little desire for God and His Word - - - I am battling this sin - - - God just feels really distant right now.’

One question we should ask: ‘Are you going to church? / Are you worshipping God with others?’ [fellowshipping with other believers?]

The church has traditionally met on Sundays - - and in Western society - - - there has been respect for that

Businesses were closed for the most part on Sundays in America for many years

Even today - - - the stock markets are closed over the weekend / many professional places are closed over the weekend or at least on Sunday

That was a societal nod to the idea of a Lord’s Day – and the influence of Christianity on Western Civilization

Chik-Fil-A states this about their business practices

‘Our founder S. Truett Cathy made the decision to close on Sundays in 1946 when he opened his first restaurant in Hapeville, Georgia. Having worked seven days a week in restaurants open 24 hours, Truett saw the importance of closing on Sundays so that he and his employees could set aside one day to rest or worship if they choose, a practice we uphold today.’

Does everybody do that?

No - - - but when you see someone that says that - - - you know that they have thought deeply about the place of worship in life

We don’t have time to do everything in our lives - - - but our faith is shown in that we make time for God and worship [we believe our lives belong to Him]

As a church – we set aside a regular time for worship 10:30 Sunday Am – soon to be 10 am

That is our *sacred hour* - - - we invite you to make it your sacred hour and join together with the people of God in worship – ‘come let us worship and bow down’

You don’t have to - - - it’s purely voluntary

But – it’s a symbol – it’s a way of saying God matters - - - it’s a way of saying that I love the Lord - - - and I want to honor what honors Him

II. Hearing His Voice - vv. 7b-11

Today, If you Hear His voice – v. 7b

There is an urgency to this voice

We are to do things today - - because we are not guaranteed tomorrow

In this life – we make choices - - we only have so much time in this world to make peace with God – to have our sins forgiven thru Christ - - - and to begin living to the glory of God

If we rightly respond to the call to worship God - - - we will be those who heed God’s voice

John Stott: 'We are not only to open our lips to sing God's praise, but to open our ears to hear His Word.'

Derek Kidner: 'To hear His most holy word is presented as one of the most prime acts of worship.'

v. 9 – God Himself is quoted

This reminds us of the proper place of Scripture in a worship service – we see this in the NT as well

Paul wrote to Timothy – a young pastor in Ephesus

I Timothy 4:13 - 'Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.'

Those were to be elements of the church worship service – along with singing praises / giving / taking communion / etc.

Kevin DeYoung: "The acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by Himself and so limited by His revealed will." In other words, corporate worship should be comprised of those elements we can show to be appropriate from the Bible.'

Paul told Timothy:

II Timothy 4:2, 3 - 'Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires.'

Paul says – ‘Timothy – you preach the Word’ – from the Bible

Not every church is going to proclaim God’s truth

When a Duke Divinity Student - - gets up and prays to the Great Queer One in the sky – at a chapel service - - - we would say - - - they are tickling the ears of the culture

We read this of the early church – in the book of Acts

Acts 2:42 - 'And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.'

We believe in a Holy Bible / sacred scriptures
This is a book like no other - - it is God’s Holy Word

One of the ways we worship is by how we hear God – and let God be heard

Meribah and *Massah* were incidents where Israel tested God - - - quarreled about water – showed a lack of faith in God

They did not trust God as they should have – particularly after witnessing all the miracles of the plagues poured out on Egypt

The exhortation is to not be like them – they were unfaithful

None of the wilderness generation were allowed to enter the Promised land but Joshua and Caleb

A hard heart is a heart that will not listen to God

If somebody doesn’t want to hear from God - - - it’s pretty simple what they can do

They can close their Bible - - - and stay away from a Bible teaching church

James Boice: 'The warning to hear the voice of God and obey it is actually a critical part of what needs to be said about the worship God accepts. Worship without obedience is a mere sham. It calls down the judgment of God the Father and Jesus.'

As sinners - - - there will always be the pull to push God’s Word to the side – to substitute things that might be more entertaining / more flashy / more culturally acceptable

O. Palmer Robertson: 'It is not the daily newspaper that is being read at worship. It is not the latest opinions of men that are being rehearsed. It is

the unchanging word of the Almighty God that is being declared before the congregation. His word must be given all the respect it deserves.'

The world may blaspheme God's name - - but we are invited to worship God – in the name of Jesus

Others may use the precious name of Jesus as a swear word – close their ears to the Bible

We say that He is Lord and that someday every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord

One of the ways we show that faith today - - - is by heeding the call: 'Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our God – our Maker.'

Conclusion

Author George Vandeman writes about a mountain climbing experience:

“A young stranger to the Alps was making his first climb, accompanied by two experienced guides. It was a steep, hazardous ascent. But he felt secure with one guide ahead and one following. For hours they climbed. And now breathless – they reached for those rocks protruding thru the snow above them – the actual summit.

The guide in front wished to let the newcomer have the first glorious look at the earth from this height. He moved out of the way. Not thinking about the strong gales of wind that blow across the summit rocks – the young man leaped to his feet. But – the chief guide dragged him down and shouted at him: 'On your knees sir! You are never safe here except on your knees!'"

There is only one safe way to approach our God in worship – that is thru the shed blood of Jesus Christ

John 14:6 - 'Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.'

We come thru the blood of Jesus – we repent of our sins / we believe Jesus took our sins to the cross – paying the debt for our sins in full – then rose again from the dead

We are invited to the worship of the living God

Our response is to be joyful worship / humble reception of the sacred word