

**A Call to Joyful Worship**  
*Here I am to Worship; Here I am to Bow Down*

**Worship Matters!**  
**Palmetto Baptist Church**  
**Summer Series 2023**

**Texts: Psalm 95**

*Psalm 95:1-11 - Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! <sup>2</sup> Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! <sup>3</sup> For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. <sup>4</sup> In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. <sup>5</sup> The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. <sup>6</sup> Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! <sup>7</sup> For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, <sup>8</sup> do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, <sup>9</sup> when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. <sup>10</sup> For forty years I loathed that generation and said, "They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways." <sup>11</sup> Therefore I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter my rest."*

**Introduction:**

**Nothing is more important to God than the glad worship His people render to His glorious name. From the opening paragraphs in Genesis to the final chapters of Revelation, the storyline of Scripture focuses on how, why, when, and where God's faithful people worship Him.**

**Nor is worship confined to redeemed humanity while they live life under the sun; what happens on earth is patterned after what happens in the heavenly realm where all created beings (including redeemed image bearers) assemble together to render joyful praise and obedient service to God in light of who He is and what He has done for the glory of His name and the advancement of His gospel.**

**Listen to what John heard when he was given five glorious visions of what that glad worship looks like and sounds like in Heaven:**

1. Revelation 4:6-11

<sup>6</sup> And before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: <sup>7</sup> the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. <sup>8</sup> And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, *"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"* <sup>9</sup> And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, <sup>10</sup> the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, <sup>11</sup> *"Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."*

## 2. Revelation 5:9-14

<sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying, *"Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,* <sup>10</sup> *and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."* <sup>11</sup> Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup> saying with a loud voice, *"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"* <sup>13</sup> And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, *"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"* <sup>14</sup> And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

## 3. Revelation 11:16-18 (ESV)

<sup>16</sup> And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, <sup>17</sup> saying, *"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. <sup>18</sup> The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth."*

## 4. Revelation 15:2-4 (ESV)

<sup>2</sup> And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. <sup>3</sup> And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, *"Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!"* <sup>4</sup> *Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."*

## 5. Listen to the four great Hallelujahs in Revelation 19:1-10:

<sup>1</sup> After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, *"Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,* <sup>2</sup> *for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants."* <sup>3</sup> Once more they cried out, *"Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever."* <sup>4</sup> And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down

and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, *“Amen. Hallelujah!”*<sup>5</sup> And from the throne came a voice saying, “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.”<sup>6</sup> Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, *“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*<sup>9</sup> And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”<sup>10</sup> Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

**This is what is going on in heaven and this is what should be going on as we love and serve this same God during our time on earth. In fact, we find God’s desire to receive the glad worship of His people fuels the first half of the prayer Christ taught His disciples in Matthew 6:9-10 – *“May your great name be exalted; May your glorious kingdom come, and may your gracious will be done . . . on earth as it is being done in Heaven!”***

**In other words, worship is of such great importance to God that all of mission and all of life are designed to bring about the glad worship of His name. Recognizing this great spiritual reality, John Piper framed this in his memorable statement, *“Missions exists because worship doesn’t!”* (John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!*)**

**In other words, God is so eager to receive glad worship from His people that He sent His Son to die to make such worship possible, and He sends His redeemed sons and daughters to give up their lives to advance the gospel so that others may join them in rendering glad worship to God. *So, since worship matters much to God it must matter much to us.***

**Several years ago, our founding pastor preached a very sort series on worship from two primary texts – Psalm 150 and John 4:1-26. I have listened with great profit to that brief series and commend it to you as the foundation upon which this series rests and on which it intends to build.**

**For about a year now, I have felt the need personally to drink deeply from the refreshing water of God’s Word specifically related to the concept of worship. We all go through seasons of life where our soul feels parched, the path seems**

**long and hard, and the terrain feels more like desert wilderness than the rich green pasture or still water described in Psalm 23. Where do you go for spiritual nourishment that will strengthen your soul and satisfy your heart when you find yourself on a long trek through the barren wilderness? Each week I found an oasis here at PBC. Sometimes it was a song we sang together that watered my soul. Sometimes it was the call to worship that Pastor Brian led us in or even the benediction prayed by Pastor Ben at the end of our service. Sometimes it was a conversation from one of you sharing something God had done for you, a prayer He answered, or a provision He granted that gave me strength for the next week. Often it was the very Word I was preaching that spoke hope and joy into my heart. In other words, our gathered worship together is what God used to help me see, experience, and take joy in God more than in my circumstances or even my feelings.**

**I know that some come to a worship service like ours where – because of our resources and the limitations of this building – it is easy to see what went wrong that week or what we wish were different, but when you are walking in a very dry and barren path through the wilderness, a service like this is life-giving! Worshipping God with Jonah and with you has actually been spiritually invigorating – even in the middle of all the imperfections and brokenness that is part of our church because it is part of our lives. I guess what I am trying to say this morning is that our gathered worship has been transformative in my life – and I want you to have that transformative experience as well!**

**And as I began to think and pray about that desire, I began to ask the question, What is it about worship that makes it so powerful? What is it about worship that has such life-giving force and such transformative power in our lives as we gather together in corporate worship each week? And so I went to the Bible to see if I could find the answer to that question – and as I began to see the beauty of what God designed in corporate worship (which will be our focus for this series), I decided to make “worship” the theme of our summer series.**

**I have several goals for this series:**

1. That we would see the beauty and power of corporate worship through the joyful praise and glad worship of God to fuel a life of obedient service to God. *(Joyful worship fuels our glad service to God.)*
2. That we would understand the glorious design of worship throughout the storyline of Scripture – beginning in Genesis and culminating in Revelation – so that our worship is shaped by Scripture and not by our own preference or tradition (as helpful as those things may be). *(Thankful worship is our response to the grand story about God.)*
3. That we would understand worship (private and corporate) is what we are designed to do! *(Corporate worship is the chief means by which we glorify God and magnify Him before the nations.)*
4. That we would see *worship is transformative – therefore we must worship of who God is, with all of who we are, with all that we have.*
5. That we would each grow in our desire, ability, and commitment to worship both personally and corporately. *(Worship is worthy of our spiritual focus and demands our intentional engagement.)*

So with all of this in mind, I am calling this series “Worship Matters!” And the title (though not original to me) is intended to communicate two important things. *First*, worship is the most important thing we can give ourselves to as believers – so it matters<sub>[h1]</sub>! And *secondly*, God has given us specific instruction about matters related to worship – and so this series will help us see and understand those matters!

I thought one of the best ways to begin our series is to go to a passage that displays the life-giving, transformative power of worship in the life of God’s covenant people during a prolonged series of darkness when everything that mattered to them on earth had been lost because of their repeated sin against God and their failure to keep their covenant obligations before Him.

So let us turn to Psalm 95 – one of the greatest and most joyful expressions of worship in one of the darkest and most difficult days in the national life of God’s chosen people. *Let’s read this psalm together.*

## I. The Call to Worship (vv. 1-2)

*Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! <sup>2</sup> Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!*

- Psalm 95 is one of a series of psalms that David wrote for the corporate worship of Israel to celebrate the fact that Yahweh (LORD in vs. 1) was their King (Psalm 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1).
- This psalm was originally composed for the great national celebration that took place when David brought the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem in a glorious procession led by David and filled with celebration, pomp, and circumstance (1 Chronicles 13-16).
- What makes this psalm interesting is that the one leading the celebration (David) has just been crowned king over all of the tribes of Israel in a great national celebration (1 Chronicles 12:38-40).
- Now this great king leads an even greater and more joyful celebration to declare that there was a greater King over the nation than himself – Yahweh!
- As thankful as the tribes were for the great deliverance David had fought and won for them and as joyful as they were to have him as their king . . . there was a greater King who had won even greater victories for them and who was worthy of even greater honor and glory and thankful praise than what they had given to David – and that King is Jehovah . . . their Lord.
- And so the entire nation is summoned to enter into the court of this great King to render Him joyful, enthusiastic, and grateful praise!
- *Note three things about this call to worship:*

***1. It is corporate and not private*** – the people of God are summoned to gather together in the sight of the nations to worship God as their true King.

- Private worship did exist and was important for each individual Israelite (cf. Psalm 1:1-3).
- But private worship did not eclipse or replace the responsibility of the entire nation to come together corporately in public praise and obedient worship of God as their true King.
- This worship was to be done regularly and repeatedly in ways designed by God and prescribed in His Word.

***2. They were to come with joyful, enthusiastic, and grateful praise.***

- Note the exhortation to sing joyfully to the LORD and to make a joyful noise (literally shout aloud) to to the Rock of our Salvation – these verbs are active (not passive) and they are filled with energetic joy.
- One translator said, “The English translations are for the most part too calm: both verbs call for loud, enthusiastic, joyful praise to be given to the Lord.”

### ***3. They were to come as thankful members of His covenant people.***

- They are to come before the LORD – use of His covenant name.
- They are to come into His presence as His chosen people who have been redeemed, delivered, and protected by Him – *the Rock of our Salvation*.

## **II. The Context of Worship**

- There is a grand and glorious story told in Psalms about an ancient promise made to our first parents on the day they were expelled from Eden.
- God promised them He would send an anointed, appointed champion who would rescue an ancient race, reverse an ancient curse, and remove an ancient enemy so that all of Adam’s descendants who worshipped God and not the Serpent could one day return to Eden and enjoy the glorious bounty of God’s garden forever!
- Like Adam and Eve, because of their disobedience, God’s chosen people were expelled from the land God had promised to Abraham and his descendants – a land described as flowing with milk and honey.
- After 70 long years of exile and captivity, a remnant of this nation has just returned from exile, and the book of Psalms was compiled to remind them that God has not forgotten His promises to them and that the great story is still in play!

***1. The prologue (Psalms 1-2) introduces us to the champion and tells us of His divine, global mission.***

**2. *The epilogue (Hallel psalms – 146-50)* calls for a crescendo of praise to God (hallelujah) that begins personally (146:1) and ends with everything that has breath in the universe celebrating the successful mission accomplished by mighty deeds done by this champion (Psalm 150).**

**3. *Book 1 (Psalms 3-41)* introduces us to David, the founder of the dynasty from which the champion will arise.**

**4. *Book 2 (Psalms 42-72)* recounts the establishment of David's dynasty by celebrating the enthronement and coronation of David's son, Solomon, whose name means "*shalom*" and whose wisdom was renown throughout the earth!**

**5. *Book 3 (Psalms 73-89)* opens with one of God's servants stumbling in confusion at the apparent prosperity of the wicked. This section tells the story of what happened to Solomon and the rest of David's descendants the kings of Judah who became more and more wicked and who led the people into greater and greater wickedness until there was no healing from the Lord left to them.**

**6. *Book 4 (Psalms 90-106)* is written to a nation in exile. The throne of David is empty, the temple has been destroyed, the city of God (Jerusalem) has been burned, and God's people have been taken captive to Babylon. BUT . . . God is still on His throne! And He is their God and He is reigning over all the little kings and kingdoms of the world in which they live – therefore, He is the rock of their salvation (95:1) and the good shepherd of their soul (95:7) who will heal their affliction and redeem them from whence He has scattered them in answer to their prayers (Psalm 106:47) "*Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise!*")**

**7. *Book 5 (Psalms 107-45)* begins with thankful praise to God for His goodness and steadfast love by which He has redeemed His people from all of their trouble ("*Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, who He has redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south!*" Psalm 106:2-3). By the time we get to the end of Book 5, Jerusalem has been rebuilt, a descendant of David has been reseated on David's throne (Psalm 110), and God's**



people are once again ascending to Zion to worship in a glorious rebuilt temple (the psalms of ascent – 120-34).

### III. The Circumstances of Worship

- Psalm 95 comes right in the middle of Book 4 when God's people have been carried away into captivity at Babylon, Jerusalem has been burned to the ground, the throne of David is empty, and their glorious temple has been burned so not one stone remains on another!
- These are dark days for God's people.
- This is a hard space and a difficult place in which God has called His people to live faithfully and endure patiently.
- In the midst of this darkness and difficulty – Book 4 (Psalms 90-106) filled with exhortations, reasons, and reminders from God designed to *help His people endure His chastening, encourage them in their difficulty, and give them reasons for hope* as they serve Him before the nations.
- What will sustain them, encourage them, and fill them with hope is the worship God summons them to give in Psalm 95 – to enter into His presence with joy-filled worship that focuses on Him and not on the difficulty of their circumstances.
- This is precisely what corporate, gathered worship is intended to do for us when our own journey becomes difficult, the way seems dark, and the path barren and dry.
- When we come together as God's people and celebrate the reality that God reigns and is over all the enemies that come against us, our hearts are encouraged, our souls are healed, and our strength is renewed!

### IV. The Cause for Worship (vv. 3-7)

*For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. <sup>4</sup> In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. <sup>5</sup> The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. <sup>6</sup> Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! <sup>7</sup> For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.*

God's people are summoned to worship – “Come let us worship” (v. 6).

**A. *Worship because of who He is – His glorious identity***

- **He is a great God and a great King – He is supreme over all other deities and human rulers. No one is higher in authority or greater in majesty than Yahweh.**
- **He is a strong God (the depths and heights of the planet are in His sovereign control – nothing is too hard for Him).**
- **He is a gracious God – He has made a good and gracious covenant with us (LORD) and invited us to enter into His royal presence as His favored people (think coronation and throne-room presence of King Charles III and who was granted access and favor before the watching world).**

**B. *Worship because of what He has done – His gracious work***

**1. *He called us out of Egypt, redeemed us, and made us a nation!***

*Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! <sup>7</sup>*

- **The same God whose hands made the sea and dry land through His mighty hand made these people into a nation that belonged to Him and gave them a gracious covenant to guide and sustain them.**
- **And that same God by that same mighty hand has called us together as His people and has given us an even greater and more gracious covenant – the New Covenant!**
- **He is our God and we are His people – the Church!**
- **And like it did Israel in David's day, Psalm 95 instructs and should shape our gathered worship each week!**

**2. *We are the people of His pasture and sheep of his hand!***

*And we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.*

- **Not only did this great God redeem them and make them His chosen people, He promised to be their Shepherd – to protect them, preserve them, provide for them, and sustain and satisfy them!**
- **And this is what He promises to do for us as our Good Shepherd.**

**V. The Content of Worship (vv. 1-2, 6-7)**

*Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! <sup>2</sup> Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise!*

***A. Joyful Celebration for Who God Is (v. 1)***

- We are to come with corporate praise that is marked by enthusiastic joy at the incredible privilege we have in belonging to this God!

***B. Grateful Thanksgiving for What God has Done (v. 2)***

- We are to come with expressions of deep gratitude for what He has done for us in saving, redeeming, and providing for us!

***C. Careful and Attentive Obedience to What God has Said (vv. 6-7)***

*Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! <sup>7</sup> For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice,*

- Note the terms “*bow down*” and “*kneel before the Lord, our Maker*” – these are terms that reflect wonderful adoration and humble submission.
- They are attitudes that must be intentionally cultivated and expressed in the formal, gathered worship of such a great king!
- Illustration: Imagine being invited to be a part of the recent formal coronation service of King Charles III – there would be an official and formal invitation sent to you as well as careful, clear instructions as to how you were to enter and how you were to present yourself before the king in the formal assembly. You might have certain freedoms in your private time with the king as a family member – but even family is expected to kneel and bow in the formal assembly and give deferential, careful attention to the words of the king.
- And that is precisely what the psalmist is calling us to do – we are to come joyfully and enthusiastically before the presence of the King. We are to render glad and grateful thanksgiving to Him. But we are also to give humble, careful, and thoughtful attention to what He has said in His word.

## VI. The Condition for Worship (vv. 8-11)

<sup>8</sup> Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, <sup>9</sup> when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. <sup>10</sup> For forty years I loathed that generation and said, “They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways.” <sup>11</sup> Therefore I swore in my wrath, “They shall not enter my rest.”

### ***A. We must determine to hear His Word submissively.***

Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness.

- “Harden” means to stiffen up or to refuse to receive – to close your heart to the words, wisdom, or commands of God.
- The places mentioned in the text (*Meribah* – “to strive”; *Massah* – “to test”) refer to the discontent and rebellion of God’s people in the Wilderness when they did not see how they would get water or food (described throughout the book of Numbers).
- They complained about their circumstances, which led them to grumble against Moses, and finally to rebel against God by constantly refusing to trust Him or to obey His Word.
- The psalmist reminds God’s people in his day of their ongoing danger of repeating this same sin against God in their day when they are discontent with their circumstances.
- And that is true in our own day and in our own circumstances!

### ***B. We must determine to do His Word obediently.***

*They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways.*

- The people in the wilderness had witnessed God’s power over Pharaoh, been rescued from bondage, received God’s word through Moses, and experienced God’s miraculous faithful provision of water from a rock and bread from heaven . . . and still they refused to trust God, to follow His leaders, or to obey His words!
- And so God said of them, *“They are a people who constantly go astray in their hearts!”*
- And the psalmist is warning God’s people (then and now) that when we come to worship, we must come with hearts ready to hear and eager to obey! Hearts that are soft before the Lord and not hardened in our own ways!

**Conclusion: So, what do we do with a psalm like this?**

*A. We must receive it thankfully.*

*B. We should rejoice in it personally as well as corporately.*

*C. We should respond to it thoughtfully and intentionally (“Today, since you are hearing my voice, do not harden your hearts”).*

*D. We should rest confidently in His promise and follow faithfully in His precepts.*

**For our God is a great King . . .**

**He is our God, and we are His People . . .**

**He is a Good and Gracious Shepherd . . .**

**Who will strengthen us,**

**sustain us,**

**and satisfy us,**

**as we enter into His rest!**

**And the primary way in which we experience all of this is by coming into His presence and gathering as His people to render Him appropriate worship with our lips and glad service with our lives!**

**This is why worship matters!**

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[h1]Use different wording to avoid using "matters" back-to-back with two different meanings?