

Sing to Jehovah

Psalm 96:1-13
Halifax: 3 August 2003

Last month, I began a first Sunday of the month series on worship from Psalms 95-100.

- This particular cluster of Psalms focuses on worship in the light of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

This is especially apparent in Psalm 96, the Psalm we are looking at today.

- It is clear that this Psalm was written especially for our day—
 - For the time following Christ's first coming.
- In a way, all the psalms are like that because they all find their ultimate fulfilment in Jesus...
 - But one really stands out—
 - for it calls the nations to sing praise to King Jesus as the One who has been made to rule over all the earth.
 - God did not command that the gospel be preached to the nations until after Jesus had ascended into Heaven, following His death and resurrection.
 - Yet this Psalm calls for proclamation of the gospel to the whole world!

This morning, I want to begin as this Psalm does with the earnest exhortation that is repeated three times:

I. "Sing to the LORD."

A. Each time, you are called not only to sing, but to sing to the LORD Himself!

1. I would remind you that when the word LORD is spelled with all capital letters in most English Bibles, it translates His name Jehovah!
 - a. This is His covenant name that He reveals to His people when He redeems them.
 - b. It means "I am that I am," and so refers to Him as the self-existing one by whom and for whom everything else has its being
 - And not just its being, but its being as blessed or cursed.
 - It was Jehovah who redeemed Israel out of Egypt to make them His people,
 - and it was Jehovah who cursed the Egyptians and destroyed them with the ten plagues in His anger.
 - He is the LORD, and all the nations are in His hand.

2. It is to this Jehovah that you are called to sing.
 - a. What a remarkable thing that mere mortals like you and me should be summoned before His face to sing praise to Him!
 - Though we can add nothing to Him, yet He graciously welcomes us to come with our feeble praises!
 - You would count it a great privilege to be summed before an earthly prince to honour him...
 - How much more before the everlasting God who has absolute sovereignty over all things!
 - b. And even more...
 - He calls you even though you are fallen into sin and corruption...
 - What grace that bids you to come and sing praise to Him.
3. How important it is for you to realise what you are actually doing in this!
 - a. It is so easy to come to church—or to sit in family worship—and forget that you are actually coming before the LORD of glory!
 - Surely it changes the way you approach Him when you are mindful of this!
 - Surely there is a greater alertness and keenness of mind for such worshipper!
 - There is no place for a wondering distracted, disinterested mind before the throne of Jehovah!
 - b. And how much more so when you remember that He sees into your very heart each Lord's Day when you appear before Him!
 - He sees what others do not see!
 - He sees the cold and indifferent heart of the best singer—
 - He sees you when you are mouthing the words,
 - even though you are thinking about something entirely unrelated!
 - But He also sees the loving heart that reaches out to Him in grateful praise—
 - the hungry heart that longs to know Him better—
 - and the worshipping heart that admires Him in His glorious majesty!

TRANS> Three times, you are reminded that it is before Him that you sing.

4. But notice that each time, something else is added...
 - a. The first time, you are told **what** to sing...
 - “Sing to the LORD **a new song.**”
 - 1) A new song is a song of redemption!
 - God has sent His salvation into the world, and the Bible teaches that when you come to Christ, all things are made new!
 - And that includes your songs!
 - 2) The old songs were the songs you sang before you came to know the LORD’s salvation—
 - For some they were songs celebrating rebellion—
 - songs about the immorality, songs about drunkenness, songs about violence, songs full of complaining and grumbling.
 - For others, the old songs may have been religious songs—
 - They may have even been the LORD’s songs—
 - But they were sung from a heart that did not truly know Him...
 - and so as far as He was concerned, they were old and not new.
 - You can’t sing new songs to the LORD unless you have new heart that rejoices in His salvation.
 - This is true of all your worship—
 - There is old worship that is dead and unfruitful...
 - And there is new worship that is living and spiritual because it comes from a redeemed heart.
 - 3) But let me add that even the redeemed heart does not automatically sing the new song—
 - Your affections can be sinfully caught up with other things...
 - And when they are, you do not sing the new song, but the old song.
 - But be assured...
 - the new heart will always get the victory!
 - In the genuine believer, the new song will again be sung—
 - He will once again delight in the LORD.

TRANS> So the new song **what** you are to sing...

- b. Next you are told **who** is to sing to the LORD.

- **All the earth** is to sing the new song!
- 1) That's everybody!
 - That's right, everyone ought to sing the new song!
 - It doesn't matter if you feel like singing or not, you are still called to sing...
 - The Lord Jesus sang a hymn with His disciples on the very night that He was going out to be betrayed and arrested!
 - Probably He sang Psalm 118 about the stone that was rejected by the builders and was made the head of the corner...
 - at least that was in the collection of hymns that the Jews often sang at the Passover...
 - 2) But perhaps you will say,
 - I don't like to sing or I can't sing...
 - You are still called to sing.
 - If you have no voice, then sing with your heart,
 - Let the expression on your face sing...
 - You are still to sing from your heart even if your voice will not work,
 - but don't pretend to sing from your heart if you refuse to sing with your lips when you are well able to do so!
 - 3) Everybody without exception is called to sing.
 - a) God even calls you to sing if you are far away from His kingdom!
 - Even if you hate Jesus Christ, He still calls you to sing...
 - You are all called to sing the new song.
 - b) Now you will ask me,
 - "But how can someone who does not have a new heart sing a new song?"
 - You just finished telling us that one can sing the new song unless He has been redeemed.
 - How can an unbeliever sing the new song to the LORD?"
 - Yes, I know, of course the unbeliever can't sing the new song...
 - but the unbeliever is still commanded to sing it...

- He is commanded to get a new heart so He can sing the new song of the redeemed!
- To whom is the gospel of salvation to be preached?
 - Only to those who have new hearts?
 - Did Jesus not say to preach the gospel to every creature?
 - Did He not say, “**I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance?**”
 - Did the apostle not tell the men at Athens that God calls **all men everywhere** to repent?
- If you are an unbeliever, you are still called to sing the new song, but you will never do it until you repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - But God commands every human being to do that, and then to sing the new song.
 - He is a gracious God who commands only what is good for you and never what is harmful.
 - You would do well to think about that.

TRANS> So you see that everybody is supposed to sing the new song to the LORD...

- c. The third time the call to sing comes; you are told **what you are to do when you sing...**
- You are to **bless His name!**
 - 1) God’s name is everything that He has revealed about Himself—it is how He is manifested in the world!
 - He has shown His power in creating the world,
 - His love in sending Jesus to redeem the world,
 - and His wrath in afflicting the world for her sins...
 - In His word, He has revealed His titles and His character,
 - He has recorded His acts—
 - He has revealed His will for us...
 - And even revealed His thoughts toward us.
 - In the gentle rain that fell on our city yesterday,
 - He revealed to us His loving care and tender mercy.

- 2) The third commandment calls you not to take His name in vain...
 - But that is exactly what you do when you take His name on your lips in a careless, indifferent manner!
 - You don't have to actually curse His name to take it in vain...
 - You also take it in vain when you disregard it.
 - You bless His name when you in Him and praise Him for all that He has revealed about Himself!
 - You are to do this especially when you sing praise to Him!
 - For example, if you sing about the way He gives food to all that live,
 - you should think about how He has provided for you and your family and your heart should go out in love to Him as you sing.
 - How much more when you sing of His salvation to sinners!

TRANS> So you see that you are to sing to the LORD a new song—all of you are to bless His name.

- Always, your singing of praise is to be directed toward Jehovah!

B. But your singing is also to be directed toward others...

- You are called to sing about the LORD to other people!
- This is brought out in verse 2-3 where it says:
 - “Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples.”

1. Here, everyone is called to be sing to everyone else about the LORD...

- a. Understand that I am using the word “singing” in a poetical way here...
 - Much of this “singing” will actually be in **speaking** to others about the LORD.
 - As it says in the text, proclaiming and declaring...
 - But does this not include bringing your neighbour to church so that you and others might sing to him of the greatness of God...
 - all with a view to getting him to join in the praise with a new heart?
- b. The idea here is that you who have been redeemed are to earnestly and constantly sing the new song to one another and to the whole world!
 - God wants His praises resounding through the nations!

- Your great delight and desire should be to someday hear your unbelieving neighbours and relations sing the praises of our God...
 - And to hear your children and grandchildren singing His praises...
 - Even to hear the nations singing to Him the new song of redemption!
2. And so you are to proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day!
- a. The very language of the New Testament is used here...
 - Here is the very same call that Jesus gave to His disciples just before He ascended into Heaven...
 - to preach the gospel to every creature!
 - As a church, we are to go and tell the world that Jesus was crucified for sinners and that whosoever believes in Him will have eternal life through Him.
 - We are to tell them to repent and believe the gospel!
 - That the Kingdom of God has come because God has made Jesus who was crucified both LORD and Christ—
 - But we will return to this again when we get to verse 10...
 - b. Verse 3 goes on to explain that we are to make known among the nations of the world the glory and wonders of our Jehovah...
 - We are to give them reasons to praise Him!
 - As one man said of declaring His glory:
 1. Declare among the heathen the glory of God's perfections, that they may acknowledge him as the true God.
 2. Declare the glory of his salvation, that they may accept him as their only Redeemer.
 3. Declare the glory of his providence, that they may confide in him as their faithful guardian.
 4. Declare the glory of his word, that they may prize it as their chief treasure.
 5. Declare the glory of his service, that they may choose it as their noblest occupation.
 6. Declare the glory of his residence, that they may seek it as their best home.
 - And of declaring His wonders:
 1. The wonders of his Being, to inspire them with awe.
 2. The wonders of his creation, to fill them with amazement.
 3. The wonders of his judgments, to restrain them with fear.
 4. The wonders of his grace, to allure them with love.
 - c. Brothers and sisters, the beautiful vision here is of the whole world singing God's praise!

- That all the world would all be speaking to one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our hearts to the LORD, giving thanks always to God Father in the name of Jesus Christ.
- The whole earth is full of His glory, so let the whole earth sing praise!

TRANS> The Psalm goes on to show us that...

II. Jehovah is worthy of such universal praise!

A. He is worthy because He is great!

1. There should be an equality between the greatness of a thing and how much that thing is praised...
 - We all have an ability to determine greatness...
 - In hockey, you can easily distinguish a novice from a seasoned champion.
 - In music, it is easy to tell an accomplished violinist from someone who just picked the instrument up for the first time.
 - Even in purchasing a couch, you know the difference between a broken down, smelly old piece of junk with torn fabric and a finely upholstered piece of furniture.
2. But how much better this world would be if we could but see the greatness of Jehovah compared to everything else!
 - a. Verse 4 says, “He is to be feared above all gods!”
 - We miss so much, my brothers and sisters, because we do not see His greatness compared to other gods!
 - We have other gods that we trust in—
 - Sometimes we trust in our governors and princes to make us blessed...
 - Sometimes we make gods of successful people or popular people—we look to them to show us the path to blessing...
 - Sometimes we set up idols—
 - Whether they are actual images like Buddha or the Virgin Mary that we bow before...
 - Or whether they are things like money or honour that we put in the place of God and say, “If only I had this, all would be well.”
 - b. But v. 4 says that Jehovah is to be feared above all gods!
 - These other gods can do nothing apart from Him.

- When you feel that you must obey them in order to be blessed—to have your life—you greatly err...
 - When you ignore Jehovah who is truly the great One and fear these gods, it is the height of folly.
- c. Verse 5 lays out the contrast!
- 1) “all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.”
 - The word **idol** that is used here is a word that means “nothings”
 - “The gods of the peoples are **nothings** compared to Jehovah.”
 - He alone has the power to bless and to curse.
 - 2) He is the One who made the heavens.
 - a) This was a real rebuke to the heathen when this psalm was written...
 - because many of them worshipped the sun and the planets and the stars...
 - but David says, “God is the One that made all these—He made the heavens!”
 - b) So it is when you worship riches—
 - God also made silver and gold and everything that they can buy...
 - They cannot bless you of themselves!
 - Will you ignore God to gain them?
 - c) So it is with honour, fame or popularity
 - Jehovah is the One who gives honour and who takes honour away.
 - He is the One who makes honour a blessing or curse.

TRANS> Jehovah is the great One who is greatly to be praised.

- Do not stop with these lessor things that have no life in themselves.
- He is worthy of universal praise because He alone is great!

B. Look at verse 6!

- Honour and majesty are before Him, strength and beauty are in His sanctuary!
1. God’s sanctuary is His dwelling place on earth—
 - the place from which He reveals Himself to us!
 - a. This is where we humans are able to behold His greatness!

- It is here that we see His honour and majesty, His strength and beauty!
 - From the time that God called Israel out of Egypt until Jesus Christ came, His sanctuary was at the earthly tabernacle or the temple.
 - It was there that He revealed His saving grace through the service of worship that He had appointed at the altar.
- b. But when the fullness of time was come, He set up a new sanctuary!
- He prepared a body for His Son in the womb of the Virgin Mary!
 - The new sanctuary is the Son of God in human flesh whom John says “tabernacled among us,” so that we beheld His glory!
 - By His miracles,
 - He showed us plainly that He is the Creator who has power over life and death, power to save and to destroy.
 - And by His crucifixion and resurrection,
 - He showed us the greatness of His redeeming love!
- c. Brothers and sisters,
- here is honour and majesty; strength and beauty in God’s sanctuary!
- 1) What could be more honourable than the way He conducted Himself among us, when He was reviled, He reviled not again?
 - 2) And what could be more majestic than Christ in ascending to the throne of His glory to take dominion until every last thing has been put under His feet?
 - 3) What could be stronger than this mighty Son of God who conquered the sin that undid the human race?
 - 4) What could be more beautiful than His love that was expressed to the Father and to us in bearing the cross for our sins?

TRANS> Truly the Great One has been revealed in the sanctuary of the flesh of Jesus.

- He is worthy of universal praise and worship!
2. But I should add that now there is a new sanctuary that He set up after He ascended into Heaven...
- a. And that new sanctuary is the church which is His body...
- It is here, in His church, that He is proclaimed throughout the whole wide world!

- b. It is here that we gather to hear the gospel through which He is revealed to us in all His glory,
 - It is here that we sing praise to His name.
 - It is not in the outward display of costly robes, human performances, or pompous ceremonies that His glory is revealed...
 - These are things that dazzle the eyes of the world...
 - Absalom and Adonijah had to get fifty men to run before them to show that they are king...
 - but such things only detract from the glory of our Lord.
 - He is revealed in the simple ordinances of the New Testament that are all designed to show forth the glory of Jesus Christ and Him crucified and risen again...
 - the congregational singing of praise, the reading and the preaching of the word, the simple administration of the sacraments...
 - It is in these that His holiness and justice and wisdom and grace are most clearly set forth.

C. So I urge you to give to the LORD this greatness in your worship!

- 1. In other words, ascribe these things to Him as it says in verses 7-9:
 - Give to the LORD, O families of the peoples, Give to the LORD glory and strength. Give to the LORD the glory *due* His name; Bring an offering, and come into His courts. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth.
 - a. To give God glory is to recognise the glory that is in Him—to see it...
 - and to thus praise Him for it.
 - You have to first open your eyes to see it, then lift your voice in praise!
 - We call public worship a worship service because it requires work—it is a service of praise to the LORD.
 - b. You are to give glory to Him because it is His due.
 - You do a great injustice when you come before His courts without deep heart-felt praise for Him!
 - When you come unprepared to sing a new song.
 - c. It was often said in the Old Testament that the worshipper must not come before the LORD empty handed—
 - He was to come with His offering as it says in verse 8.

- In NT days, the offering consists in the fruit of your lips giving thanks to His name on account of His finished work!
 - And it includes the sharing of your finances to support the ministry of the word and provide for the poor.
 - With such sacrifices God is pleased—
 - as long as they are offered to Him from a heart that gives Him the glory!
 - From a heart that is responding to Him in grateful praise and adoration!
2. Brethren, these verses call you to kind of worship in which you are truly enamoured—not with the ceremonies of worship themselves—
- but with the God that you come to worship!
 - It is the kind of worship that is done in the beauty of holiness—
 - in a going out of yourself to be enraptured with His majesty and beauty...
 - In such a way that you tremble before Him as one overcome with awe!
3. How impoverished you are when you don't ascribe these things to your God!
- a. When you are all caught up with lesser things—
- Things that have no greatness or beauty in themselves...
 - When you are so caught up with these things that you fail to see the glory of God, and only go through the motions of singing His praise!
- b. Imagine a world in which there was nothing great—
- 1) In which there were no lesser lights and no greater light, but all the same...
- In which there were no lesser poets and no greater poets, but all the same...
 - In which there were no lesser abilities and no greater abilities, but all the same...
- 2) What a dull and boring world it would be.
- But when you do not have a full view of God as He is revealed in Christ...
 - When you do not see His greatness and ascribe the glory to Him in praise and worship...
 - You live in a very flat world—
 - There are a few bumps here and there,
 - but there is no mountain!

- There are a few stars of various intensities,
 - but no sunshine in whose appearing all the stars disappear.
 - You are living in the darkness.
- c. And let me tell you that a world without the glory of the LORD is not just dull and boring—it is a world that is perishing...
- It is a world that is dead because it has lost sight of the glory of God.
 - That is the nature of sin—all have sinned and come short of the glory of God—
 - It comes short of the glory of God because it is dead to God.
 - A sinner does not live up to the world that he is in because he does not see the most conspicuous, most important thing—
 - He misses his whole reason to be!
 - He is surrounded by God’s glory, but he is dead even while he lives and cannot see it.
 - That is what makes up the dead world,
 - And the dead world is the world that perishes.
 - It is the world that ought to be praising God, but is not because it has lost sight of His glory.

TRANS> But there is good news for the world!

III. The world will not perish because “the LORD reigns!”

- Verse 10 says:
 - Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns; the world also is firmly established, it shall not be moved; He shall judge the peoples righteously.”
- A. Do you see what this is saying?
1. The world will not perish because Jehovah Himself has come to reign here!
 - John 3:17: “God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved!”
 - a. Because Jehovah, the LORD Jesus, is now King, the world will stand without tottering!
 - “It is firmly established, it shall not be moved.”
 - How can it perish when Jesus reigns here?
 - Instead it will be perfected, refined in the refiner’s fire and purified.
 - But it cannot perish because Jesus cannot perish.

- b. Don't misunderstand...
 - This is not saying that those who refuse to acknowledge Jesus as LORD and Christ cannot perish!
 - Just the opposite is the implication!
 - Because Jesus reigns, all who refuse to own Him as Lord and Christ will be destroyed...
 - They will be cut off from the world and the meek will inherit the earth!
 - The world will be given to the sons of God who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and who have become His servants by grace.
 - Sinners will be destroyed from the world, but the world itself will be redeemed and gloriously restored as a place where God is worshipped forever.
 - It will be made into a new heaven and a new earth wherein righteousness dwells.
2. Look at what Jesus does as the reigning LORD...
- a. The end of verse 10 says, "He judges the peoples righteously!"
 - 1) The word judge refers to his government in general...
 - When we hear the word judge,
 - we tend to think only of the courtroom where the righteous are justified and the guilty are condemned—
 - but the concept of judging here (as in other parts of the bible) includes all aspects of Christ's government.
 - Not just the judicial, but the executive and the legislative as well.
 - 2) His judging is His coming to be our king, to set up His kingdom, and to gather His people into it and to lead them in righteousness!
 - Do you remember how the judges in the book of judges were?
 - They did more than merely show the people their sins and sentence them to punishment—
 - They led them into God's righteousness and restored them to His favour.
 - But of course, they were only able to do this in a provisional way...
 - Even David, the great king of Israel was likewise only able to restore righteousness in a provisional way.
 - But Jesus sets up a righteous government that is eternal!

- b. Verse 10 says that Jehovah Himself now reigns!
- 1) This does not speak of His timeless sovereign reign, but of His reign as Mediator—
 - The Bible says that it was not until after His suffering and death that He was declared to be Lord and Christ...
 - He Himself said that all authority had been given to Him in heaven and earth so that now—in light of that fact—the gospel was to be preached in all the world!
 - This speaks of Him reigning in a way that He did not reign before He had finished His work on the cross and ascended into heaven to sit at God's right hand.
 - He now reigns as Saviour of the world—and has been given a name that is above every name!
 - 2) Now as the One who governs righteously, He sets things right in the world...
 - He takes the dead world that does not worship God and sets it right!
 - He makes the dead world into a worshipping world!
 - He makes the perishing world into a world that is firmly established and cannot be moved.
 - 3) How does He do this?
 - a) He does it by giving His Holy Spirit to dead hearts to make them alive—
 - This is called the new birth, and it is given by the effectual call!
 - He goes forth spreading life all over the globe—life that can never be destroyed.
 - b) He brings life back into the dead world!
 - He gained the right to do this by His death on the cross...
 - There He died to atone for the sins of the people He came to redeem so that we could be forgiven, and could live again!
 - His gospel reaches you when His word comes to you and calls you to turn from your death and start worshipping God...
 - To flee from the dead world and come into His living kingdom.
 - To come to Him and be cleansed by His blood that was shed on the cross—
 - No one can enter His kingdom without being cleansed by Him...
 - You are cleansed by faith in His shed blood.

B. And so there is cause for great rejoicing in the world!

1. Here what the poet says in verse 11-12!

a. READ v. 11-12

b. This is a poetic picture of the dead world coming alive to God!

- The world that was mute and unable to praise is made alive by the reigning Christ!
- The whole creation was subject to vanity because of sin, but is now redeemed through Jesus Christ so that all in heaven and earth are praising God.
- God's praise is spreading through all the world as the gospel goes forth and sinners every where come alive and start praising our God!

2. The poet is enraptured in verse 13!

- "For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth!"

a. See how he has to say it twice!

- It is a matter so great because what was dead and perishing is now made alive by His glorious appearing!
- What a great King!

b. He set us right who were all wrong!

- "He shall judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with His truth!"
- What good news!
 - He brings us back to the reality of God!
 - He makes us worshippers of God in spirit and truth!

Conclusion

So now, put away that old song because it is the song of death.

- Come and sing the new song of life: Jesus reigns!
- It is a song for all the earth!
 - It is a song for you!
 - He came that you might have life and that you might have it more abundantly!
 - Do not be silent, but join in the music!