

“I am FBC Diana”

Gospel-centered Worship

Psalm 95:1-7

Intro: Worship has become quite an ambiguous term. It seems that most either assume a definition too broad or too narrow. Worship, the kind that is right and good and faithful, is more precise than most might imagine. Appropriate, biblical worship has a pattern, an order, a context, and a focused end. Simultaneously, biblical worship may be an all-encompassing way of life for every Christian. God has made humanity for His glory, and we may enjoy Him for who He truly is, on His terms, and only by His grace. Gospel-centered Worship is not just something we do; it is the most significant aspect of our mission as a local church.

1. Worship has become confusing, and God is perceived as underwhelming

- a. Underlying factors that have contributed to a low view of worship and confusion among both church leaders and members are as follows:¹
 1. An embrace and expectation of entertainment
 2. An unhealthy avoidance of any emotional response
 3. An overemphasis of emotionalism
 4. A nearly complete lack of distinction between the Christian community and the outside world
 5. A pandemic confusion over what a church is and what it means to worship in community

2. Worship is the most important mission of the Church

- a. Dockery - “The church is more than a society of Christians banded together for practical Christian endeavor... It is a company of Christian people.. molded into a unity of fellowship.. in Christ by the same power that made them Christians, the power of God... The first business, then, of a church is not evangelism, nor missions, nor benevolence, it is *worship*” (emphasis and spacing added).²

¹ These factors are taken from Dockery’s list on the matter at hand (see Dockery, 124).

² Dockery, 101

3. Defining Biblical Worship – Worship includes Revelation, Response, and Communion with God through Covenant

- a. Psalm 95:1-7 – “1 Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! 2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! [WHY?] 3 For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. 4 In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. 5 The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. [THEREFORE] 6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! [ON WHAT GROUND?] 7 For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.”

4. Worship begins with Revelation

- a. *3 For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.*
- Yahweh is a great God (*el*); He is the Mighty One
 - Yahweh is a great King (*melek*); He is the royal sovereign
 - Yahweh is above all gods (*elohim*); He exceeds all mighty rulers
- b. *4 In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also.*
- Yahweh possesses, controls and owns, all treasures for which men search and those things that are beyond our reach.
 - Barnes – “all those places which lie beyond the ordinary power of observation in man are in the hand of God. He knows them as clearly as those which are most plain to human view...”³
 - Yahweh owns the heights (*toaphah*) of the mountains, which refers to power, wealth and eminence.
 - The thrust of this poetic line is that Yahweh owns, possesses, and controls everything in regards to material, position, and geography.
- c. *5 The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.*
- Yahweh brought the sea into existence and now utterly controls its every wave.

³ See Barnes’ Notes on the Bible at <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/psalms/95-4.htm>

- Seas and oceans were the source of tremendous uncertainty and fear. These untamable and vast expanses brought a keen awareness of human powerlessness and finitude.
 - a. This claim is amazing in light of the context; Yahweh effortlessly dominates that which is an overwhelming terror to man.
- Yahweh created and sustains the source of all nourishment and the foundation of civilization.
 - Barnes says, because God created the land, “He has a claim, therefore, that it should be recognized as his, and that all who dwell upon it, and derive their support from it, should acknowledge him as its great Owner and Lord.”⁴

5. Worship includes a Response

- a. *1 Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!*
 - The initial invitation to “come” is an offer to approach the King of Glory.
 - This is also an invitation to community (“let us”).
 - Singing – “Music expresses adoration, communicates our prayers, teaches us doctrine, and helps us reverently reflect on God’s attributes beyond what we can sometimes fully explain.”⁵
 - To the LORD (Yahweh) – “It is to be feared that very much even of religious singing is not unto the Lord, but unto the ear of the congregation above all things we must in our service of song take care that all we offer is with the heart's sincerest and most fervent intent directed towards the Lord himself.”⁶
 - Make a joyful noise – This connotes using whatever instrument and/or vocal abilities one might have in a corporate and simultaneous sound of worship that reflects the deepest enthusiasm for the object of worship.

⁴ See Barnes’ Notes on the Bible at <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/psalms/95-5.htm>

⁵ Dockery, 116

⁶ See Treasury of David on Ps. 95:1 at <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/psalms/95-1.htm>

b. *2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!*

- This is an invitation to be in the presence of, or before the face of, God – not with terror or dread, but with thanksgiving and praise!

c. *6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!*

- We must Respond to God’s Revelation in worshipful expression, and the psalmist speaks of reverent response here (see expressions “bow down” and “kneel”).
 - Dockery – “We must help people learn that worship is not passive but active... We acknowledge what God has done for us and is doing for us. Thus, we bless Him, hymn Him, and offer our gifts to Him, as well as our praise and adoration.”⁷
 - a. This is why we format our services as we do (Gathering – Revelation – Response [through singing, prayer, and giving] - Sending)
 - i. Dockery – “We must help people realize the need to prepare for worship... [structuring] services to have a coherent movement that is theologically, biblically, and thematically informed.”⁸

6. Worship is only experienced in Communion with God through Covenant

a. *7 For he is our God...*

- Yahweh is our God!
 - Verses 3-5 describe God as the possessor of all things, and yet here we are told that we possess HIM!
 - a. This One who dominates those things that terrify us, the One who holds the whole earth in the grip of His hand, the One who towers above the most powerful men, and the One who controls the finest treasures of

⁷ Dockery, 125

⁸ Dockery, 127

the world... This is the One who has made Himself accessible to us, and He is ours!

- “He” (Yahweh) is our God!
 - *“I am Yahweh, your God”* is an exclusively covenantal way that God has spoken throughout human history.
 - a. Gen. 15:7 – God tells Abram, “I am the LORD who has chosen you, and I will bless you” (paraphrase).
 - b. Gen. 17:7 – God confirms His everlasting covenant with Abraham (the man of faith) by saying, “I will be your God and the God of all who come after you” (paraphrase).
 - c. Ex. 3:14-15 – God says to Moses from the burning bush, “I AM WHO I AM, I am the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; this is my name forever” (paraphrase).
 - d. Ex. 20:2 – Just before God delivers His commandments, He reminds the people of His covenant by saying, “I, the LORD, am your God who delivered you from slavery” (paraphrase).
 - e. Ezekiel 34:23-24, 30-31 – Yahweh said, “23 I will set one shepherd over them, and he will feed them – namely, my servant David. He will feed them and will be their shepherd. 24 I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken! ... 30 Then they will know that I, the Lord their God, am with them, and that they are my people... 31 And you, my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, are my people, 17 and I am your God, declares the sovereign Lord.”
 - f. John 10:11-18 – Jesus calls Himself the “Good Shepherd” who lays down His life for His sheep.

b. *7b we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.*

- We possess Him, not as a trinket or a commodity, not as a symbol or a superstitious thing, but as a providential King and a discipling Shepherd.
 - Providential King – *We are the people of His pasture.*
 - a. Oh, Christian, you do indeed possess God, but you do not own Him. You may call upon Him, and know that He will answer you; you may feel at home in His presence, and not fear; you may rest assured that He is the lover of your soul, and He is steadfast. But do not ever imagine that you own Him! No, He is the untamed lion who rules and reigns. He is not mastered, and He is not confined. He is not in debt to anyone, and He is not obligated for a single moment. If you now enjoy the providential care of your King, then worship Him with thanksgiving, and celebrate His gracious supply.
 - Discipling Shepherd – *We are the sheep of His hand.*
 - a. Remember that there is no distant or uninvolved relationship between the Good Shepherd and His sheep. No, He is very near, and He utters constant commands. Commanding ‘Come this way!’ and ‘Don’t eat that!’ may not often be heard, but the melodious song and distinct voice of the beloved Shepherd ought to be familiar and followed. Those sheep that are the flock of the Good Shepherd are blessing indeed, for He takes charge over their souls and cares for them as His little children.
- It is because we are under the gracious care of the Good Shepherd that we are able to respond in worshipful expression to His self-revelation.
 - “We need to understand that Christian worship is primarily rooted in an event, the Christ-event in which God revealed Himself as our loving and compassionate Creator and Redeemer. Worship is a response to the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ.”⁹

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea
A great High Priest whose name is love
Who ever lives and pleads for me
My name is graven on His hands
My name is written on His heart
I know that while in heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart¹⁰

APPLICATION:

- Worship is our primary goal, task, objective, purpose, and mission
- We should seek to know God more fully in order to worshipfully respond Him more readily
- We ought to be lovers and studiers of the Gospel so that we might enjoy the communion (both vertical and horizontal) of worship

MY PRAYERS:

- 1) May God make us to see and know Him; May we behold the King of Glory
- 2) May God help us to understand what and who we are as a local church
- 3) May God grant us compassion for those who do not know Him as Shepherd

Bibliography

Dockery, David S. *Southern Baptist Consensus and Renewal: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Proposal*. Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2008.

¹⁰ "Before the Throne of God Above" (lyrics by Charitie Lees Bancroft, music by Vikki Cook)