

International Sunday School Lesson
Study Notes
December 14, 2014

Lesson Text: Psalm 95:1-7a
Lesson Title: Make a Joyful Noise

Introduction

Psalm 95 serves as an introduction to a series of psalms in Psalm 95-100 devoted to worship and praise. Because Psalm 95 does not have a superscription we are not told who the author is. It is possible that David authored this psalm. That possibility is based on Hebrews 4:7. Since the author mentions the wilderness wanderings of Israel in the final verse of the psalm, it could have been written to be read during the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles (Psalm 81.) During this feast, the people of Israel lived in booths, remembering God's provision for them in the wilderness.

In spite of the uncertainties about the author of Psalm 95 and the reason behind the writing, we know it was written to magnify the importance of worship. In his commentary of Psalm 95, James Montgomery Boice writes, "Psalm 95 tells us how to worship. Indeed, it does more. It is a call to worship; it explains how and why we should worship; and it warns of what can happen if we do not worship but harden our hearts instead."

There is nothing more important in the Christian life than worship. Worship is what we were made for. It is certainly true that man's chief end is to glorify and enjoy God forever. Our witness, our spiritual warfare, our work for the Lord, and our Christian walk all depends upon our worship. We not only worship *individually* by glorifying God in everything, we also worship *collectively* with the saints as we gather on the Lord's Day to give to Him the glory due His name.

Come and Praise the Lord (Psalm 95:1-5)

Verse 1

"O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation."

The opening words of this psalm, "O come" are words of invitation. In this verse, "come" means "to walk toward." "O" adds intensity to the word "come." The psalmist is stressing how deeply God wants you to come and sing and make a joyful noise unto him.

For God to invite us to “come” and “sing” is indeed an invitation of grace. In fact, the word “come” is mentioned three times in this psalm (verses 1, 2, 6). When you read the word “come” there is a *privilege* connected with that word and there is a *price* connected with that word. It is a *privilege* for any of us to “come” before the Lord. The *price* for man to come must never be forgotten. It cost Jesus Christ his life in order for us to “come.” When the Lord says, “come,” He is inviting man to do something that man could never do except for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When the psalmist said, “Let us” it is an invitation for God’s people to worship *collectively*. “Us” is all of God’s children. None should excuse themselves from worship. To “come” is one thing. To “sing” is another. It is not enough to just “come.” The psalmist calls the congregation to action. He calls us to “sing.” There is more than seventy references to singing in the psalms. Singing is one of many ways to express to God the glory He deserves. Biblical songs and singing that is based on truth and God’s attributes connect us with the past, present, and future. They are reminders of God’s faithfulness. There is nothing more glorious and honoring to God than a congregation of believers singing praise unto the Lord.

“LORD” is the name of Jehovah, “the Self-existing One.” It is the proper name of the one true and living God. He alone is worthy of our song. If you notice, the “song” that is to be sung is to be sung “unto the LORD.” We should not sing songs of praise to be heard of one another or to glorify our talents or singing abilities. Our songs of praise is not to showcase our talent or to entertain our audience or congregation. It should be “unto the LORD!”

“Let us make a joyful noise unto the rock of our salvation” means our worship and praise should be enthusiastic and joyful. Often times we think worship should be private and silent. Psalm 95 is about corporate worship that is meant to be public and vocal. “A joyful noise” means “a shout of praise.” For a Christian to break forth into song with shouts of joy and praise when assembled is natural. In fact, it is biblical!

The expression, “rock of our salvation” is taken from Deuteronomy 32:15. This metaphor for God is fitting in this psalm, which refers to the wilderness journey of the people of God. The “salvation” referred to here is not specifically defined so it can refer to any triumph, deliverance, or victory granted to us by the Lord.

Application: This verse teaches that God’s child should come together with his brothers and sisters in Christ and direct his song of worship and praise to the Lord. He should vocally and joyfully shout praised to the One who has secured his victories from every situation and enemy.

Verse 2

“Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.”

The word “come” here means “to precede with anticipation and haste.” It literally means “approach to meet God” or “meet God face-to-face.” It is certainly a wonderful thing to walk toward God, sing and make a joyful noise as verse 1 commands. But it is even more wonderful to know that we have a God who can be approached in worship.

As Christians we are able to approach God and meet him in worship through Jesus Christ. The Bible says, *“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh”* (Hebrews 10:19-20). Jesus Christ is our access to God in worship.

As we “come” or approach “his presence,” we must do so “with thanksgiving.” It seems that the congregation the author of the psalms is addressing had experienced some type of deliverance for which they should be thankful. Does your church family have any reason to be thankful? Has God delivered your church family from anything? If so, “come before his presence with thanksgiving!”

The congregation is also exhorted to “make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.” This is the second time in as many verses that the people are called upon to “make a joyful noise.” In this verse the “joyful noise” or shout of praise from the congregation is to be “with psalms.” “Psalms” are hymns or songs of praise. The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Colossae and said, *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”* (Colossians 3:16). *Psalms* were taken from the Old Testament psalter, the book of Psalms. They sang psalms put to music, much as we do today. *Hymns* were expressions of praise to God. *Spiritual songs* emphasize testimony.

Verse 3-5

“For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land.”

This verse begins with the word “for,” giving us the reason why we should worship. The psalmists mentions three reasons:

1) The LORD is a great God. “The LORD is a great God” literally reads, “A great God is Jehovah.” The word “great” means “great in any sense.” It means “large in magnitude and extent.” *“From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD'S name is to be praised. The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high”* (Psalm 113:3-5).

2) The LORD is a great King above all gods. The word “gods” used here is a reference to the false “gods” of the world. Although the Hebrew word for “gods” is *elohim*, the usual Hebrew word for our God, it is used here to refer to imaginary gods of the heathen. The psalmist is not suggesting that the “gods” of this world are real. He just wants the congregation to know that any man-made idol or deity is nothing compared to Jehovah.

The words “a great King” speaks of God’s sovereignty and majesty. He is without question “above” or over all the “gods” of this world. There is no competition!

3) The LORD is Creator. God created everything and He holds it all together. That’s a good reason to worship the Lord! It’s all “in his hand.” The Lord made the sea and every creature in it. He formed the dry land. The psalmist wants the congregation to see the difference in Jehovah God and the pagan man-made god’s of this world. Unlike the idols of the pagans, who were localized gods, the god of the mountains, and the god of the sea and so on, the Lord made it all and owns it all.

The word “formed” means “squeezed into shape.” By God’s divine activity he fashioned and framed everything that is. As we studied previously from Hebrews 1:3, Christ *“upholds all things by the word of his power...”* This speaks of his creative power. The Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Christ Jesus of the New Testament and we worship Him as Creator!

Application: Worship is not to be flippant and shallow. Worship is based on a biblical knowledge of a holy God. Worship ceases when God’s people willfully ignore or forget the awesomeness of God. Our “LORD is a great God.” Our “LORD is above all gods.” Our “LORD is Creator!”

Bow Down and Worship the Lord (Psalm 95:6-7a)

Verse 6

“O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.”

The psalmist gave us the *reasons* to worship God and now he gives us the *response* in our worship to God. “Bow down” and “kneel” speak of humble posture in the presence of “the LORD our maker.” When we “bow down” and “kneel before the LORD our maker” it shows the reverence and respect we have for a holy God. Again, the psalmist is speaking to the congregation and the “kneeling” and “bowing down” is to be done in public. In fact, the Hebrew word for “worship” in this verse means “to depress, to prostrate, to crouch down and do reverence.” To “kneel” means “to bless or praise.”

Taken together the words “worship...bow down...and kneel” mean that as worshippers we should publicly and corporately place ourselves in a humble posture, showing respect and reverence to our God as we bless and praise his holy name!

Application: The posture of bowing publicly is almost an unheard of action in public worship. While we should always be careful not to make a show of flesh in our worship, we desperately need to return to the public posture of humility in public worship. For those who are physically unable to bow the knee, bow the head. And more than anything, bow the heart in humble worship.

Verse 7a

“For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.”

Here the psalmist speaks of the *relationship* in worship. “For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand” expresses and intimate relationship. Worship has become so formal, so lifeless and so unattached for so many people. That is not the way God designed it or desires it.

Look closely at the metaphors of verse 7 which all express God’s commitment to us as His own. He is “our God.” We are in “his pasture” which speaks of provision, protection, and care. And we are “the sheep of his hand.” Being in “his hand” is so personal, so precious, and so priceless. Is that any reason to worship?

Conclusion

Why should we make a joyful noise unto the Lord and worship him? He is our Creator and our Shepherd. He made us and he cares about us. He is above all the man-made gods of the world. He has delivered us from so many dangers and situations in life.

When you gather with your church family on the Lord’s Day for worship, are you just going through the motions? May I encourage you to embrace the

truths in Psalm 95 and ask the Lord to renew your worship? If you realize that God is your Creator and your Shepherd and that He holds everything in his hand, including you, true worship will result. And isn't that what God seeks? Jesus said it was (John 4:23).

Amen.