

What's Missing? Zcc11.23.14 (Psalm 95:1-7a)

Oh come, let's sing to Yahweh. Let's shout aloud to the rock of our salvation! 2 Let's come before his presence with thanksgiving. Let's extol him with songs! 3 For Yahweh is a great God, a great King above all gods. 4 In his hand are the deep places of the earth. The heights of the mountains are also his. 5 The sea is his, and he made it. His hands formed the dry land. 6 Oh come, let's worship and bow down. Let's kneel before Yahweh, our Maker, 7 for he is our God. We are the people of his pasture, and the sheep in his care.

Did you ever go to the fishing hole, rig up, bait your hook, cast for an hour and yet come away not having fished?

Did you ever go to the store, look through the clothing, buy a couple of pairs of pants and one pair of shoes and yet get home without going shopping?

Did you ever go to the table, put food on your plate, use the utensils to put food in your mouth, chew it, swallow it and yet leave the table not having eaten?

Am I silly or what?

Let me ask you one more question...

Have you ever gone to church, listened to or read Scripture, sung hymns, prayed, heard a message—and gone home without having worshiped?

How could that be? How can we do all the actions and yet not accomplish what we came for?

It has been said that true worship is the missing crown jewel of the modern church. We talk about evangelistic churches and mission churches and family-chapel churches and hot churches and cold churches—but seldom do we say of a church, “they are a worshipping church.”

A very common complaint from the congregation of churches is, “I just don't get anything out of the worship services.” Even in churches where the pastor is a good teacher and Bible scholar, it seems that there is a definite lack of true worship.

I have been in formal churches, casual churches, beautiful churches, traditional churches, metal churches, dying churches, new churches—and you may have been in many like that, and even more.

Let me ask you, though, how many churches have you been in that you would define as “worshipping churches?” One or two—out of five or six or a dozen?

Again, how can that be? If there are services being held, how can they not be worshipping? What words or deeds are lacking? What part of the proper program did the worshipping churches include that the others didn't?

If it is difficult to define what is wrong or right, then we certainly cannot put together a five-step plan for accomplishing worship.

We cannot buy a book entitled, “Worship of the Living God Made Easy.” We cannot buy a package from the Disciples headquarters that will do the job—if we could, almost every church would buy one—and then set it aside after it failed to do the job.

It seems that true worship is hard to see and understand. It is easier felt. Still, there are some characteristics of true worship which can be found in the Bible. Where? In the book of worship, of course—the book of Psalms. I just read a worship psalm a few minutes ago.

Let's go back through line-by-line.

Verses 1 and 2 say: *Oh come, let's sing to Yahweh. Let's shout aloud to the rock of our salvation! 2 Let's come before his presence with thanksgiving. Let's extol him with songs!*

Why are we invited to join the psalmist in thanksgiving and joyful shouts? Why would we take him up on his invitation? Because we are righteous? Because we are Christians? Because we are here?

No! All of those may be true, but they are not the basis of our worship.

The answer is answer in verses 3-4: *3 For Yahweh is a great God, a great King above all gods. 4 In his hand are the deep places of the earth. The heights of the mountains are also his.*

God is great and mighty and he deserves our highest praise. These verses describe God's infiniteness. From the deepest recesses of the sea to the highest peak in the highest mountain range—our God is greater than anything or anyone found there.

He is greater than the ocean and the mountain. A God so awesome and mighty and great deserves our silent praises and our praise in song and our praise in shout!

One way to be sure that we worship when we come together is by taking the opportunity to shout to the limits of our voices, “Our God is GREAT!” He is above man-made gods. He is above our religions. He is greater than the greatest depths and the highest heights.

These verses also speak to ownership. He is in those places and he OWNS those places. As children of The King, we have an inheritance above all inheritances.

5 The sea is his, and he made it. His hands formed the dry land.

When we lived DownEast North Carolina, we got a 19-foot boat. It seemed enormous. I grew up around jon boats and occasionally you would see a 14 to 16 foot ski boat. At almost 20 feet long and flat bottomed and wide, our boat was HUGE!

I mentioned to one of the locals, Mitchell Morris, about how big it was. He said, “yeah, but sometimes when you're out there, she draws up a bit.”

Where we lived, the only way to get to the outer banks banks was by boat. After one of the hurricanes, (Bertha or Fran—I forget which) we decided to go over and see what had washed up on the beach.

Usually it is calm after a storm, but this time the wind came up after the storm passed. It came up while we were over there and it was blowing right up the sound. It was REALLY blowing. I'd say it was steady at 35-40 with higher gusts. When we broke free of the little bay where you go into the banks, the "chop" was 6-7 feet high and was breaking over the bow and going all the way over the stern.

The boat really drew up that day! It didn't seem very big. Kenny Lewis had a 68 foot trawler and one year he went off of Cape May to scallop. I think of the Mary Ann as being a really big boat—but he said that she didn't seem so big there on the Grand Banks. He said she drew right up.

Our God made the sea. Psalm 139: 9-10 says, *If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there your hand will lead me, and your right hand will lay hold of me.*

Why? How? Because the sea in all its power and glory belongs to God. He made it and he can control it. He has no fear of the waves or the wind. The very continents were formed by his hands—by his say so—according to this passage.

What is our reaction supposed to be to such an awesome and wonderful and mighty God?

Here is verse 6 again: *Oh come, let's worship and bow down. Let's kneel before Yahweh, our Maker.*

The most basic position of worship is to be on one's face before another. In ancient times, worshipers of God would intensify that position by literally kneeling and placing the palms of their hands on the floor—remaining prone before God with their faces hidden!

Verse 7: for he is our God. We are the people of his pasture, and the sheep in his care.

In true worship, we are preoccupied with the Lord and his Spirit. We don't watch something happen, we are participants. In true worship, or dependence on God and his love for us is REAL to us! In true worship, it is almost like you can touch God!

Worship is the real and proper human response to divine revelation. It is what we naturally do in the presence of a living God. It is a combination of falling-on-your-face awe and a realization that God considers us his children and wants to interact with us.

Just falling on our faces before a mighty God is a beginning, but it is not enough. True worship also contains an understanding that God loves us and God seeks to walk and talk with us and to show his love.

Such a God deserves more than prone silence—he deserves and desires shouts of praise and songs about his love and deeds. In this way, we touch the face of God and THEN we will find ourselves in true worship.

How do we make sure we worship when we come here to this place? How do we make sure that we really worship and not just go through the motions?

When we remember, each week, to corporately and individually come into his presence, declaring his love and his worth and his power—and his genuine care for us—as “the sheep of his pasture.” Then we will be open and ready for God to flood our thankful hearts and souls with his peaceful presence. THEN we will have worshiped God in spirit and in truth and indeed!

This is a great day for worship. A few days from now, our country will celebrate thankfulness for the bounty our forebears found in this new land. As Christians, we will also celebrate God’s provision for our daily lives—in our homes and our food and our families.

As we worship today and through the next week, we can also celebrate God’s love, as it was made known to us in the sending of the Son—to live and die and live again so that we could regain a right relationship to our Creator.

THAT is a reason to worship.

If you haven’t yet, I encourage you to open up and worship even as we come to the end of our “official” worship today.

One way to always be ready to worship God is by being always thankful—over-arching thankfulness and also moment-to-moment thankfulness.

Vonna and I try to remember to write something in our “thankful journal” each night. Today, I want to give you a chance to just say one word or one thing—something that you are thankful for.

I’ll begin. I’m thankful to have fresh venison in my freezer. In a sense the same bounty of the first Thanksgiving.

How about you? One word or one phrase...as we get ready to conclude our service of worship.