



EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

Psalms Sermon Series

Supports Session 4: God's Reign

Sermon Title: "Why We Praise" (Psalm 96:4-6)

Connection to Session 4

Psalm 96 highlights the kingship of God over all things: creation, nations, idols, families, and peoples. The passage for this sermon, Psalm 96:4-6, contrasts the worth of God and the worthless idols. The goal of the sermon is to provide three reasons why we praise God, in order to stir up praise for God while turning people away from trust in worthless things.

Introduction/Opening

In 1964, the G. I. Joe™ action figure was created. These toys took the world by storm. The action figure could move in different ways, however the child playing with it wanted to play with it. The irony in the term "action" figure is that the toy had no inherent power in itself. It could be moved and played with, but it had no power of its own. Idols in the Bible are described in the same way. They are worthless (Ps. 96:5) and powerless. We make idols out of all kinds of things (money, jobs, possessions, real idols) that we trust in to deliver us and save us from trouble. Yet, this psalm invites us to praise God and ascribe Him glory because He alone reigns and has the power to judge.

Outline

1. We Praise God because He is Great (Ps. 96:4)

- a. Throughout Scripture, God is described as "great." Psalm 47:2 echoes His greatness: "For the LORD, the Most High, is awe-inspiring, a great King over the whole earth."
- b. We often describe experiences, people, and things as great to express that we had a good time or that something has value. But greatness belongs to the Lord alone as He reigns above it all. His greatness should inspire the fear of Him in all the earth. Fear of God is directly correlated with His greatness.
- c. The biblical concept of the fear of the Lord runs like a thread throughout Scripture. Fearing the Lord means to have reverence for His name, recognizing His position as King and Creator of all things. When God led His people out of Egypt through many signs and wonders, the people of Israel saw His power and feared Him (Ex. 14:31).
- d. Our fear of God should impact how we live. In Leviticus, fear of the Lord is provided as a motivator for not wronging our brothers (Lev. 25:17).

2. We Praise God because He Created All Things (Ps. 96:5)

- a. The surrounding nations of Israel are noted for their idolatry. One only has to think of the episode with the idol Dagon in the Old Testament. The Philistines had captured the ark of the covenant and placed it before their god, Dagon. However, the Philistines woke up to find that Dagon had fallen before the ark, with the idols head and hands broken off (1 Sam. 5:4). The idol was proven to be worthless and powerless before the God of Israel.
- b. Across the world, idolatry is still prevalent. We often idolize ourselves, our possessions, and our money. Idols are made by human hands, and therefore should not be the object of praise.
- c. We ascribe too much worth and power to things that ultimately have no power to save us. In Psalm 115:4-8, the psalmist denounced idols as powerless, without the ability to hear, feel, walk, or speak. In contrast, only God is great and worthy of praise.
- d. God demonstrated his power when He “made the heavens” (Ps. 96:5). The Bible opened in the book of Genesis introducing us to the God who created all things, specifically “the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). The psalmist mentioned the heavens here because they are high above the earth; the Lord is not only creator of everything we see on earth but also everything above us and out of reach in the heavens.

3. We Praise God because He is Worthy (Ps. 96:6)

- a. The psalmist wrote that four things are before God in his sanctuary: splendor, majesty, strength, and beauty (Ps. 96:6). God is the source and standard of all things glorious and beautiful.
- b. By commenting on God’s beauty, the psalmist wanted us to see that God is desirable. We are attracted to many beautiful things—sunsets, people, pictures—and yet, God is ultimately beautiful.
- c. In a familiar psalm, David wrote, “I have asked one thing from the LORD; it is what I desire: to dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, gazing on the beauty of the LORD and seeking him in his temple” (27:4). David longed to see God in His beauty. When we praise God, we are aligning our hearts with the desire to see God, ascribing Him glory and worth.

Conclusion

We praise God for at least three reasons: He is great, He created all things, and He is worthy. If we have found our praise of God to be waning, perhaps it is because we have lost sight of why he is praiseworthy. We must remind ourselves of the greatness, power, and worthiness of God regularly to keep our hearts in a posture of praise before Him, not offering praise that belongs to God alone to anything else.

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