

Psalm 96

by Theron Young

The sermon emphasizes the importance of singing a new song to the Lord and inviting others to join in worship, using the example of Psalm 96 and the Ark of the Covenant being brought into Jerusalem.

Duration: 44:33

Scripture: Psalm 96:1

Topics: "Psalms"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of sharing the great things that the Lord has done for us and the potential for effective evangelism. The psalmist in Psalm 96 invites the whole world, including families, to ascribe glory and strength to the Lord. The use of music as an evangelistic tool is highlighted, as it can attract people and express the work of the Lord. The speaker also emphasizes that the Lord deserves to be praised, as all other gods are mere idols.

Transcript

Okay, we're continuing our study of the psalms. And this morning I want to look at Psalm 96. We've spoken about several techniques.

Perhaps tomorrow or the next day I should give you some kind of a list, just to review in your mind what techniques we've seen in these psalms. But this morning I don't want to start with the techniques. I want to first take a look at the overall outline of this psalm.

Is that clear? Okay. First let's read it. And the team in the kitchen yesterday said that they couldn't hear the first part of my message.

I think that's because as I was reading the psalm, I was facing the projected image. And I'll try to stick a little closer to the microphone this morning. Let me find a copy of this psalm.

Okay. Oh, sing to the Lord a new psalm. Sing to the Lord all the earth.

Sing to the Lord, bless His name. Tell of His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations.

His marvelous works among all the peoples. For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. He is to be feared above all gods.

For all of the gods of the peoples are idols. But the Lord made the heavens. Honor and majesty are before Him.

Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples. Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name. Bring an offering and come into His courts. Worship the Lord in holy array.

Tremble before Him all the earth. Say among the nations, the Lord reigns. The world is established and it shall never be moved.

He will judge the peoples with equity. Let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice. Let the sea roar and all that fills it.

Let the field exult and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the woods sing for joy. Before the Lord, for He comes.

For He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness. And the peoples with His truth.

You can see from the overhead this morning. That if we want to have a general outline of the psalm. We find that in verses 1 through 3. We have an invitation.

The verb there. Sing in the imperative. Of course the imperative can have many uses.

Sometimes it's a command. Sometimes it's more of an invitation. Sometimes it's an exhortation.

And here I believe it functions somewhat as an invitation. In the Hebrew we can see that this is in the plural. So the psalmist again is speaking to the congregation.

Or a number of people. And he's inviting them to sing to the Lord a new psalm. Then this invitation is followed.

By the reason for singing the new psalm. For He is for great is the Lord. Etc.

etc. And then we have another invitation. Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

And then at the bottom. We have a pattern from nature. And finally the reason for the second invitation.

Now I think the first invitation to sing to the Lord a new song. Is primarily to Israel. The reason I say that.

Even though in the second line. It says all the earth. Actually the Hebrew word there.

Could just as well be translated all the land. This word has reference. Normally to a country or an area.

The reason I say that it's primarily to Israel. Is because we find. In verse 2. Tell of his salvation from day to day.

And certainly it was primarily Israel. That experienced the salvation of the Lord. Ok.

The whole earth hasn't seen God's salvation. They haven't experienced it themselves personally. So there's an obligation here.

Being expressed. To tell of what the Lord has done. Tell of salvation among the nation.

If we could paraphrase this first verse. We would say. Sing a new song to the Lord among the nations.

And so I think that the psalmist here has in mind. The use of music. As an evangelistic tool.

Music used in evangelism. We have three times a year. A week long evangelism campaign at our bible institute.

Many of our students prepare music. That we will use in open air meetings. And music is sort of a universal.

Universally attractive way. To express what the Lord has done. People hear the music.

They're interested. So. Music can be a very effective evangelism tool.

Then we have the reason. Why we sing a new song to the Lord. And we find that in verses 4 to 6. Let me paraphrase that by saying.

It is because he deserves it. He deserves to be praised. In verse.

Five. We see that all the gods of the peoples are just titles. Okay.

Tomorrow or the next day. We're going to look at another psalm that talks about idols. And.

You get the thing what an idol is. It's just a hunk of rock. A hunk of wood.

Whatever the person that fabricates it. Elects to use. But.

The Lord is made to heaven. Okay. He's done wonderful works.

Tremendous things. And he deserves to be praised. Honor and majesty are before him.

Etc. Etc. He is so much better than the so-called gods of the nation.

He has great characteristics. He is great. He should be feared.

He has these characteristics of honor, majesty, strength and beauty. Now one commentator wrote that. That psalm writer must have been deeply impressed.

By the greatness of the glory of the Lord. And the greatness of his wondrous work. In order to feel that this knowledge was something that the nation needed to hear.

And that they would gladly receive if they but heard it. And I agree with that wholeheartedly. If a person truly grasps.

The greatness. Of our God. That knowledge ought to make him vocal.

In letting others know what great things the Lord has done. And that person should be ready to do. Excuse me.

Letting others know what great things the Lord has done for them. And what things the Lord is ready to do for all men. And so we can use music.

To communicate the great things the Lord has done. And it's an effective evangelistic tool. We have in the third part.

Verses seven through ten. An invitation to the whole world. There he says.

It speaks about the families. Of the people. Yesterday I mentioned.

A technique that is used. That's the repetition of key words and key ideas. And if you.

Would highlight with a pencil. Repetition. Here in the psalm you find that.

People. All the earth. These things are repeated.

Several places in the psalm. Families. These are some key terms.

If we could paraphrase verses seven through ten. We would say. Ascribe to the Lord.

The glory and strength. Due his name. Okay.

And then. Verses eleven through twelve. Give us the reason.

Why. Because he. He comes to judge the world.

This is in. Verses. Verse thirteen.

But in verses eleven and twelve. We have a pattern. Here.

Given to us from nature. The heavens. The earth.

The sea. The field. And the trees.

All know. That is. It is he.

Who made the world. And made them. And ruled.

And reigned over it. This. Put me in mind.

Of. What. Happened.

When Jesus. Entered Jerusalem. Let's look at Luke.

Chapter. Nineteen. Luke.

Chapter. Nineteen. Verses.

Thirty seven. Through forty. As he was now approaching.

Near the descent of the Mount of Olives. The whole multitude. Of the disciples.

Began to praise God. Joyfully. With a loud voice.

For all the miracles. Which they had seen. Jesus.
Is entering. Jerusalem. And.
The whole multitude. Of disciples. Began to praise God.
Blessed is the king. Who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven.
And glory in the highest. Some of the Pharisees. In the multitude.
Said to him. Teacher. Rebuke your disciples.
And he answered and said. I tell you. If these become silent.
The stones will cry out. Okay. Here we see that.
The multitude. Was ready to obey. The invitation.
Of this very poem. To sing to the Lord. To ascribe.
To the Lord. The glory that. Do his name.
But the response. Of the Pharisees. Was.
Completely negative. And. Jesus.
Said in reply that. Nature itself. Would respond.
If indeed. That multitude were silent. So we see here.
Not only the multitude. Is. Praising the Lord.
Ascribing glory to his name. But. Nature as well.
What do you think? If the. Stones. Song that day.
The. Praise the Lord. Would that have been rock music? That was.
That was. Pretty. Pretty basic.
I'll try to. Have fun. A little higher level.
Okay. And then we have. The section.
Of the reasons. As. Given above.
Because he. Comes to judge. The world.
We. As. Children.
Of course. Fear this. Judgment.
For us. Is. The coming of the Lord.

Should be a joyous. Occasion. Something that we think about.
With. Great happiness. And.
God. To judge us. He will judge.
With justice. And. Truth.
We're. Closed. In the.
Righteousness of Christ. Need. Fear this.
Judgment. Now. Returning.
First. Sentence. To.
The Lord. A new. Song.
I want to point out. That. This is an idea.
That's repeated. Several times. In the psalm.
In psalm. 33. Three.
We find. Sing to him. A new.
Song. Play. Skillfully.
With a shout. Of joy. And then.
In psalm. 40. Verse.
Three. He put. A new.
Song. In my mouth. Psalm.
69. 30. I will praise.
The name of. God. With.
Psalm. Psalm. 98.
One. Oh. Sing to the Lord.
A new. Song. Psalm.
144. Nine. I will sing.
A new. Song. To thee.
Oh. God. Psalm.
149. One. Sing to the Lord.

A new. Song. Okay.

This is an important idea. Singing a new song to the Lord. Now.

We had some songs this morning that were traditional songs. And I love to sing these old favorites. You know, each generation needs to express anew.

The things that the Lord has done for them. And the traditional songs, we need to continue to sing those. Because they express the things that the Lord has done for the previous generation.

And continues to do. These are very good ways of expression. But I think each generation as well needs to put into song it's own experience with the Lord.

This song. Psalm. 96.

Was sung one other time before. That's notable in scripture. No doubt it was sung many, many times in the history of Israel.

But let's look at 1 Chronicles chapter 16. 1 Chronicles chapter 16. And if you can scan quickly verses 23 through 33, you will note that the wording is nearly exactly what we have in Psalm 96.

But that's only a part of the lengthy song that has been sung in this chapter. Let's look at the occasion for the singing of the song. Verse 1 it says, And they brought in the ark of God and placed it inside the tent which David had pitched for it.

And they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before God. The occasion here is that the Ark of the Covenant is being brought up from the house of, excuse me, from the house of Obed-Edom and it's being brought into the city of Jerusalem. OK.

This is a prefiguring, of course, of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem that we just read about. It's the same type of occasion because the Ark of the Covenant, of course, represented or symbolized the presence of God and His coming to the holy city Jerusalem. In, let me see here, in verse 25 of the previous chapter, it says that, So it was David with the elders of Israel and the captains over thousands who went to bring up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord from the house of Obed-Edom with joy.

This was a joyous occasion and David undertook to make special preparations for this very joyous occasion. Let's look at what some of those preparations were in verses 17 and 19 of chapter 15 we read. So the Levites appointed Haman, the son of Joel, and from his relatives Asa, the son of Berechiah, and from the sons of Merari, their relatives, Ethan, the son of Cushiah.

OK. Some of these names are familiar to us, no doubt. How about Asa? Who is Asa? I'm sure some of you know who Asa is.

He wrote some of the Psalms. He wrote Psalm 50 and he wrote Psalm 73 through 83. So his name is familiar to us from those little titles that are at the beginning of these Psalms.

Ethan also, another one who was a Psalm writer. Psalm 89 was written by Ethan. Haman wrote Psalm 88.

And we have another name that is mentioned in this section in verse 41 of chapter 16. With them were Haman and Jedusun and the rest who were chosen. Jedusun wrote Psalm 39, Psalm 62.

And he collaborated with Asa on Psalm 77. OK. Why are they making these special preparations? We can continue on 1641.

With him were Haman and Jedusun and the rest of those who were chosen, who were designated by name to give thanks to the Lord because his loving kindness was everlasting. There's our good friend, the word hesed. That everlasting, that, I'm sorry, that loving kindness, that mercy, that love, faithfulness, loyalty that we've seen these last few days in the Psalms.

Good motive for us to put into songs the great things that God has done for us. His loyalty to us, his faithfulness. Now, how did they do that? In chapter 15, verse 16, it says, Then David spoke to the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their relatives the singers with instruments of music, harps, lyres, loud-sounding cymbals to raise sounds of joy.

It was interesting last night that we went out to see the fireworks in Virginia. And some of those fireworks make really loud noises. And they don't give off much light, but they make a lot of noise.

And Dan Hotchkiss mentioned that people really enjoyed those because after those loud-sounding fireworks, there were a lot of car horns blowing. So loud sounds was for them a certain way, a joyous thing. So they were giving expression with instruments, in this verse we read, and with singers as well.

And then in verse 22 of the same chapter, And Kenaniah, chief of the Levites, was in charge of the singing. He gave instruction in singing because he was skillful. We have a special core of people selected to undertake this task.

Among them were instructors, those who had ability to teach music. And they were skilled musicians. We might say that they were professionals.

Why professionals? Why did David select and set apart some professionals to this task? Well, because it's important. Okay, we have these exhortations here to do this. Sing to the Lord a new psalm.

It's important. God deserves this expression from us. And we should do it to the best of our ability.

Now, what was the role of Atah and some of these other singers? Well, first of all, they were to chant or to sing the psalm. But not only this. In chapter 16, verses 8 through 36, this is the presentation that was presented for the occasion.

We can notice in verses 8 through 22, if you would flip over to Psalm 105, verses 1 through 15, you'd read that and you'd find it's nearly identical to what we have here. Then in verses 23 through 33, we have Psalm 96 in nearly the same form that we have here in 1 Chronicles 16. And then verse 34, I should say verses 34 and 35, comes from Psalm 106, verses 47 and 48.

So we see here combinations of whole songs or parts of songs that were arranged, put in an arrangement, that was suitable for the occasion of bringing up the Ark of the Covenant and bringing it into Jerusalem. So these men were not only singers but arrangers as well. The authors, or we should say these arrangers, made some minor changes in those poems in order to serve the necessities of that particular occasion and that particular situation.

They were people with skills and they wanted to sing a new song to the Lord for this particular occasion. They were making good use of the creative art. They were putting into practice that creative ability that we

all have within us as those who are made in the image of God.

The Bible begins with God's creative activity and then tells us that we're created in His image. And because we're created in His image, we also have a creative ability. We are able to put in current form the expression that we have of our praise and our adoration of the Lord.

And I should say also that the psalms that we have here in the Old Testament are some of the best poems and best songs of that age. How can I say that? Well, I believe it was in 1946 that a farmer in northern, along the coast of Syria, turned over a stone and began to see that beneath his field there was something significant. Archaeologists were called in and over the next 10 to 12 years the site was thoroughly excavated.

That site was Biblos or Ugarit as it's more generally known today. Now, within that site were unearthed approximately 100,000 tablets written in a language very similar to Hebrew. It's not Hebrew, but it's a very, very close relative to the Hebrew language.

That language is known as Ugaritic. And we have hundreds of poems. In fact, most of the non-commercial documents are poems.

They are hymns and psalms and stories which represent the worship of the local Canaanite population there. And, of course, they weren't worshipping the Lord. They were worshipping Baal.

Now, if you read some of these poems, you find out that they look surprisingly like our psalms. I should say it's the other way around because these come from the 15th to 17th century B.C. Of course, Israel entered into the Promised Land just about halfway through the 14th century, excuse me, 15th century. So what we find is that Israel came into the land worshipping the Lord and they adopted the same forms that were popular among the Canaanite population.

Forms that were used to worship these pagan deities, Baal and Moab and Ashtoreth and these deities. Let me give you one or two examples. We read, for instance, Psalm 136.

And what was the prominent technique that the psalm writer used there? The one that should just leap right out at you when you look at Psalm 136. Exactly, this antiphonal refrain. The writer had a line and then each line was followed by this antiphonal refrain.

We have an Ugaritic text and let me just read a translation of this to give you an idea. It's talking about a fight between the god Moab who was the god of death and Baal who was considered to be a god of resurrection or renewal. They gave blows one to another like animals.

Moab is strong, Baal is strong. They gored each other like buffaloes. Moab is strong, Baal is strong.

They chewed each other like serpents. Moab is strong, Baal is strong. They kicked each other like animals.

Moab had fallen, Baal had fallen. So we see this antiphonal refrain employed in the poetry of Ugarit. Now one technique that I do want to point out this morning, the common technique in the psalm, you see it here two times, is what's known as an expanded colon.

That's the technical term. It doesn't have anything to do with your digestive system. A colon is a line of poetry.

You see the first line, sing to the Lord a new psalm. We have a core idea there, sing to the Lord. And that idea is expanded in the second line, sing to the Lord all the earth.

And in the third line, sing to the Lord his name. So in the following lines we have an expansion of the idea that is given in that first psalm. Our brother last night read from Psalm 29.

We see a good example in Psalm 29 of the expanded colon. Let me read there. Ascribe to the Lord, O sons of the mighty.

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to his name. Nearly equivalent to what we have here in verse 7. In Psalm 93.3 we see another example of this technique.

The floods have lifted up, O Lord. The floods have lifted up their voice. The floods lift up their pounding waves.

So this is a technique that we find used frequently in the psalms. Well, we find this also frequently in Ugaritic poetry. Let me read one text.

Now your enemies, O Baal. Now your enemies will be decent. Now you will destroy your adversaries.

Okay, let me give you another example from a story about King Charrot who was childless. And this is a story that goes on about how he resolved this problem. The wife that you take, O Charrot.

The wife that you take for your house or to your house. The woman that you introduce into your royal court. And then the idea goes on.

So the point here is that when the Israelites came up out of Egypt and they entered into a covenant with the Lord at Mount Sinai and then they wandered in the desert for some 40 years and then entered into the Promised Land, they, during this period, were beginning to write these psalms and beginning to give expression to the redemption that they had seen through God's mighty hand and extended arm. And they didn't invent a new style of music. They didn't invent a new form.

No, they used the form of the local population. Even though it was a style of music that was used to worship pagan deities, Baal and Lot and these others. The other thing is that they didn't bring in a style from outside of the country.

If you look at the psalms, they don't seem to be of an Egyptian character, as you might expect. They had dwelt in Egypt for 400 years. As you might have expected, they brought Egyptian songs into their worship.

I'm not an Egyptologist. I don't pretend to know that much about the Egyptian language. But I do know that as I look at the commentary on psalms and Hebrew poetry, there's none of the scholars, even the scholars that are Egyptologists, are suggesting that we have Egyptian psalms or psalms that are in that form.

Well, they didn't take a form that was foreign and introduce it into the local population. They were using their hymn to give expression to their worship of their lord. It was the means by which they not only worshipped the lord, but that they communicated who the lord was to the local population.

Just as our lord spoke about the breaking of bread. As often as you do this, you do so forth my death until I come. There was an evangelistic aspect to the worship of the lord.

And I think that the evangelistic aspect is as important today as it was back then. I asked this morning for a favorite, that song from, that traditional song, A Mighty Fortress is Our God, that of course was first used by Luther, certainly Luther didn't write in English what we have in our hymn today as a translation from German. But the hymn, or I should say the music, was to my understanding, what I've heard, was a pub song.

It was a tune that was being used to drink beer with. Luther was asked twice, he said, why should the devil have all the good tunes? Okay? He was using a popular mode of expression in order to express and communicate the greatness of this god who is a mighty fortress. And so he made use of a style that was well known within his culture.

Now in Portugal, we've had a hundred years of missionary activity. And many of our new believers think that the proper way to express praise to the lord is by translating those North American songs that we missionaries have brought. In fact, if you go to the hymn books, I doubt that you'd find more than 10% that are not imported from North America or from England or from missionaries outside of the country.

Well, you know, the Portuguese have a very traditional, very Portuguese way of singing. It's called the Fado. Okay? And you can go in any town and there are Fado singers.

There are different types of Fado. The word Fado means faith. And some of these are very melancholic, very, to a certain degree, depressing.

But others sing about love and joyous things. So it's a way of singing that is well known within the culture. Unfortunately, it hasn't been used for writing songs and hymns within the Portuguese evangelical community.

Some reasons are given. I'm not sure exactly why. But we're beginning to see some of our young people now begin to realize that, hey, if we can put what we know about the Lord in a form that is well known within the culture, maybe we'll get a better hearing for the gospel.

Okay? But we need to be careful here. I'm very much in favor of using the style of music that is popular in order to express what we know about the Lord. However, we do need to be careful.

First of all, we, of course, we're not going to employ the same lyrics. The lyrics have to be genuinely expressing the truth that we know from God's Word. We need to monitor these lyrics and make sure that they express true truth.

So the message and the focus of these things, of these hymns, needs to be fundamentally different. And, you know, I think the Lord merits the best of our creation. And in the area of creative arts today, we have many skilled musicians.

That's the musicians that are trying to bridge the gap between just writing for evangelicals, just writing for believers. They're trying to have some influence in the secular world. Okay? In general, I'm in favor of this.

But I think we need to be cautious in this area. Okay? I think, first of all, that we need to do what Brother James spoke about last night. We need to uncover hidden motives.

You see, our young people can be attracted to the fame and the glory. And once you're in that musical world, it's an entirely different world. There are many temptations that we don't face day to day.

So I think we as believers, we should be upholding these people in prayer. You know, I get really annoyed when some of these believers that are functioning within the popular music world stumble or represent the Lord badly. Because it's my Lord.

I want Him to be represented faithfully. And I think musicians today, first of all, should be commended to this type of ministry. In 1 Chronicles, they were commended.

They were ordained by David to a special ministry. It is a ministry. Or at least it can be a ministry.

It's not necessarily a ministry if your motives aren't pure before the Lord. But given that a person is commended, then they need to be under the supervision of the local church leadership, the elders, who can not only uphold them and uplift them with prayer and support, but can monitor them. And sometimes they need to be brought down to earth.

But I think there's a necessity for each generation to sing a new psalm and to express within the popular music styles the things of the Lord. This psalm invites the participation of everyone with antiphonal refrains. We find in the psalms with a plural imperative.

It exhorts us. Why? Because to give praise to God is not just something for professionals. It's for all of us.

We need to be participating. We need to take part. And, in fact, as we see here, all the world needs to become involved in this.

What do you think? Are there people with skill among us that can undertake this task? I think there are many sorts of people. Like our brother said, some are and think they are. What a pity.

But we do have some skillful people. And our young people. One of the gals was practicing on the piano this morning.

We had another one, one of our teams that participated on the violin. And we need to encourage our young people to make use of this skill that God has put within them. To use their talents in creative ways to express their joy and their happiness in the Lord.

Do you think that giving praise to the Lord still has importance? I think it still does. And the nations still need to hear about our God. And they need to hear it in ways that they will receive.

And we need here to use some of the popular style in order to communicate this message. And then we ought to, all of us, join in with the new song. And just as the sea and the fields and the trees join in, we need to join in as well.

Singing the glory and the majesty of our God of God. And announcing His salvation. Because certainly He will come soon to judge the world.

Thank you.

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