

praying AT HOME & TOGETHER

santa barbara community church



WEEK OF MAY 24, 2020

THE 'HOW' AND 'WHY' OF WORSHIP

Psalm 33 (NIV)

¹ Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him. ² Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre. ³ Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy. ⁴ For the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does. ⁵ The LORD loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.

⁶ By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. ⁷ He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses. ⁸ Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere him. ⁹ For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. ¹⁰ The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. ¹¹ But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.

¹² Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose for his inheritance. ¹³ From heaven the LORD looks down and sees all mankind; ¹⁴ from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth - ¹⁵ he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do. ¹⁶ No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. ¹⁷ A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save. ¹⁸ But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, ¹⁹ to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.

²⁰ We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. ²¹ In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. ²² May your unfailing love rest upon us, O LORD, even as we put our hope in you.

PRAYER

Our goal is always to pray Scripture back to God. After listening to the Word, pray each of the sections of the psalm, using the 4 R's.

- **Reflect:** What does it mean?
- **Rejoice:** What gives me reason to thank and praise God? A good way to think about thanks is being grateful for what God does. To praise him is to say "Wow" for who God is, his holy character and goodness.
- **Repent:** What in this text shed light on sin in my life? Confess your sin.
- **Request:** Based on what I see here, what may I ask God to give and do? Then ask!

When St Augustine described a Christian as a “hallelujah from head to toe,” he was merely echoing what Psalm 33 says in its opening line: “it is fitting for the upright to praise him” (1). Worship is one of the most natural, the most truly appropriate things a believer can do. Psalm 33 is a concise manual of how worship is to be done, and a splendid model of a hymn of praise to God for what he is and does.¹

THE HOW OF WORSHIP – Word-Centered, Directed

With fervor (1,3). Actually the language is more specific: twice we are commanded to shout joyfully, and the second time loudly. Note that it is a command, not a suggestion.

With skill (3b). The irreducible minimum requirement for acquiring skill is practice. Practice takes time, lots of time to become skillful. Holy exuberance is disciplined exuberance.

With freshness (3a). New songs in Scripture are not necessarily avant-garde and unprecedented. They are fresh songs, the way God’s mercies are fresh: ancient and yet new like the morning (Lam 3:23). Sunrises happen daily, yet no two are exactly the same.

With everything (2). Well, almost everything. Two instruments are mentioned, but many others are mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, each probably representative on the many ways humanity can make music. Psalm 150 includes wind, string and percussive (“clashing cymbals”) instruments, along with dance. Yes, dance.

With joyful, quiet hope (20-22). One commentator said rightly of the quiet closing verses of this psalm: “jubilation is not the only mood in worship.”² “Happy, clappy churches” do not embody all that is to be experienced in worship (cf. Isaiah 30:15).

THE WHY OF WORSHIP – Because of what God says and sees

More important than how to worship is why. God is supremely worthy of adoration and wonder because of what he says, does and sees.

What God says (4-12). This includes both the content of what he says, and the mere fact that whatever he says *happens*. There is no distinction between his words and his actions. What he says is what he does, “For he spoke and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm” (9). That powerful Word created the universe out of nothing. Let the nations make their plans and concoct their evil counsels – to God it is all “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing” (Shakespeare, *Macbeth*). The pagan worshiped the creation. The Christian worships the Creator.

What God sees (13-19). God sees everything, the small and insignificant as well as the immense and momentous – to us. For to God everything is small. In fact it is often what we think small he finds precious, like sparrows and hairs and children (Luke 12:4-7) and all who fear him. God’s sight is like his Word; what he sees he responds to. For God to see is for God to act.

“But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.” (18,19).

So of course, we shout for joy in the Lord!

1 Derek Kidner, *The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Psalms 1-72* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1979) p. 136

2 Derek Kidner, *Ibid*, p. 136.

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