

A Song for Mission

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[0 : 0 0] Well, right now we are in a series thinking about our vision at Christ Church Glasgow and! our vision of course is to be a church that is loving God and loving each other and loving Glasgow.

! And so today we're moving on to the third part of that vision which is loving Glasgow. And loving Glasgow is essentially what our mission as a church is. Our mission is essentially basically to tell people about Jesus Christ. That's what mission is all about and that includes of course our personal evangelism, it includes our outreach as a congregation, it includes our planting of churches in our city, and it includes our support of mission whether locally or globally. And we've been using the Psalms as you know to help us consider our vision. And today we're going to look at Psalm 96 and the idea or the theme of mission. And basically Psalm 96 is a song for mission. In fact C.H. Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher said that Psalm 96 is a grand missionary hymn and it's a call essentially for all people to come and worship the Lord. Why worship the Lord? Well the Psalm tells us in verse 10 it is because the Lord reigns. And so as king his reign involves the gathering of a people into his kingdom, that's the church, and that kingdom will eventually lead to a perfected kingdom where all creation will be put right. And so this Psalm fits into God's bigger story of God's plan and purpose for our world.

Now originally this Psalm formed part of a song of praise that David sang when he brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem and it's there in first Chronicles chapter 16. And the ark going into Jerusalem Jerusalem was a great occasion. But in reading Psalm 96 today we don't just look back to that occasion of the ark arriving in Jerusalem because the Psalm calls us to sing a new song to the Lord. And so it causes us to look forward to what Jesus would come to do. And so Psalm 96 declares this universal invitation of Jesus Christ to come and trust in him. And it proclaims this missionary call of God for all people to come to Jesus.

All people through the first coming of Jesus. But the Psalm also fulfills the promise of God to all creation through the second coming of Jesus. Because when Jesus comes again he'll judge and he will put everything right.

And so the residing message of the Psalm is there in verse 10. It is the Lord reigns. The Lord reigns. But you'll notice as the Psalm was read to us and as we read together that this universal call to worship God it is emphasized with three different appeals. And they come in three clusters. So first of all if you look verse 1 to 3 there is the repeated appeal to sing to the Lord. And then in verse 4 to 6 there is the reason why. Secondly there's this repeated appeal to ascribe to the Lord in verse 7 to 9. And then in verse 10 we're given the reason why. And then thirdly there's this repeated appeal to creation in verse 11 and 12.

[3 : 5 4] And it says let the heavens let the earth and so on and so on and it's followed by the reason why in verse 13. And so we're going to look at the Psalm under these three headings this afternoon. Dividing it according to the way it is divided in itself. So first of all the reason for mission in verse 1 to 6. Second the invitation of mission in verse 7 to 10. And then thirdly the climax of mission in verse 11 to 13.

The reason the invitation and the climax of mission. So first of all the reason for mission in verse 1 to 6. The reason for mission is there and it is that there is only one true and living God. Hence the summons and the psalm for all the earth to sing to the Lord. So let's read verse 1 to 3 again. Sing to the Lord a new song. Sing to the Lord all the earth. Sing to the Lord. Praise his name. Proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations. His marvelous deeds among all peoples. So what are we to sing? The psalm tells us we're to sing a new song. Well what is this new song that we're supposed to sing? Are we supposed to compose a new song every time we worship to write a new one?

Well the idea is not so much a new song in terms of content but a new song in terms of a fresh response to God. Where a deeper understanding of who God is and what God has done should lead us to sing a new song to him. Because the Lord is to be repeatedly praised as his people grasp more of who he is.

[5 : 47] But the Lord is not only the God of Israel. What the psalm tells us is that he is Lord over all nations.

And that's why all his subjects should worship him. All the earth is to sing to the Lord. His praise should fill all places and come from all people and happen all the time day after day. And so when the psalm states day after day is saying that the Lord must always be praised. That his salvation must always be proclaimed.

From the creation of the universe to the creation of a people for himself. God is to be worshipped for his marvelous deeds in both creation and in salvation. And so in the psalm there's this vertical dimension as people sing to the Lord. But then there's also this horizontal dimension as God's people go and tell all people about God. In fact the words that's translated proclaim there in verse 2 is where we get our word evangelize from. Which means telling the good news of salvation to all people. And so Psalm 96 calls us to direct our worship upwards to God and then direct our witness outwards to the world towards people. Now of course God's people will worship him. We will worship the Lord. That's why we gather here Sunday by Sunday. But the psalm also summons the nations to join the worshiping community. So that the whole world joins together to worship the one true and living God. Why? Well we're given the reasons for this in verse 4 to 6. For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise. He is to be feared above all gods.

For all the gods of the nations are idols. But the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him. Strength and glory are in his sanctuary. So the reasons for worship give the reason for mission.

Here's why the church must proclaim God's salvation to all the earth. Because there is only one true God. It says for all the gods of the nations are idols.

[8 : 28] And the original this isn't the common word that's normally used for idols. Instead it's a word that's very close to the word for God. And it's like a pun that serves to emphasize just how opposite to God idols actually are. They're not real so they're powerless. They're completely useless so they're utterly pathetic. They're good for nothing. And so the psalm wants to draw this really sharp distinction between the one true and living God and the many lifeless idols of all the nations.

And this is emphasized by the fact in verse 5 that the Lord made the heavens. So he is the creator. He created everything so he is powerful and he is real. And so he is worthy of all praise because his of his splendor and of his majesty and his strength and his glory. There's no comparison to God. There is one God and so he rules over all. And that's why the psalm is saying to us every single one of his creatures is to fear him and sing his praise. And so it is a sensible thing to worship the Lord. Whereas it is a stupid thing to worship idols. And yet this is the world that we live in. All the gods of the nations are idols and yet there are plenty of them. Some of them are obvious like the gods of all the other world religions. But our secular culture is full of idols too. Every culture has got its own set of idols. The gods of beauty, power, money and achievement for example. And these gods are worshipped in the various temples that our culture has erected. Temples of the beauty salon, of the gym, of the office, of the stadium. Because people are driven by these gods. Driven by image, by career, by riches and by success.

And of course we never really refer to these things as idols. But if we elevate them in life above God or above everything else, it means that they replace God. They're a substitute for God, for us.

[11 : 09] They become what we worship. And even if they are good things, if they take on this god-like status in our lives, then they become idols. And yet no matter how popular the idols of our culture are, no matter how powerful the idols of our culture are, none of these idols can truly satisfy us. Only our creator, God, can do that.

And so, well, how do we apply this before we move on? Well, Psalm 96 basically anticipates the mission of the church today. Where the church has got the message that the world must hear. So that people will turn from worthless idols to the one true God. And the psalm shows how mission essentially begins with worship. So as God's people come together, as we do to praise him and to proclaim his salvation, this then propels us out into the world to share the good news of Jesus with other people.

But worship and witness aren't two different things that the church does. Because what we see in Psalm 96 is how worship and witness come together. So the church is never meant to be some kind of holy huddle, where all those who are there are all Christian believers. So God's people are to worship by praising him in song, by proclaiming his salvation, by declaring his glory and his marvelous deeds. But the Psalm tells us we're to do this among the nations and among all peoples. So God is to be worshiped before all the nations.

And all the nations of the earth are to be summoned to join in. And so Psalm 96 is a command for the church to engage in what could be called evangelistic worship as part of our mission. In other words, making the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ in our worship services as clear as possible, as accessible as possible, because we expect unbelieving people to be in our worship services.

[13:33] Remember the city of Glasgow's motto, Lord, let Glasgow flourish through the preaching of thy word and praising thy name. And so as we preach God's word about Jesus, and as we praise God's name, we want to do it among the peoples of our city. Because all the earth is called to worship the one true God. And so that's the first point, the reason for mission. The second point is the invitation of mission there in verse 7 to 10. And so the invitation of mission is a summons to the whole world to come to the one true God. Let's read that verse 7 to 9. Ascribe to the Lord all you families of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength, ascribe to the Lord the glory due to his name, bring an offering and come into the glory of the Lord to the Lord to the Lord to the Lord to the Lord to the Lord.

And so the Lord is to come into his courts, worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness, tremble before him all the earth. Again, do you notice that threefold appeal? This time it's not sing to the Lord, but it is ascribe to the Lord, ascribe to give the Lord what he is due because of who he is. And so who is to give the Lord the glory due to his name? Well, it's the families of nations or the families of peoples. The word families is more than just the nuclear family like mum, dad and 2.4 kids.

Families here covers a spectrum of different groups of people. And so the psalm is an invitation to all people, whoever they are, wherever they're from, whatever their culture to come to the Lord. In fact, the same word for families is found earlier in the Bible in God's promise to Abraham in Genesis chapter 12, when God says, and all peoples, same word for families, all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. And so it's clear from the very start of the Bible, in the very beginning, that God's plan has always been to bring families of nations to himself. And so Psalm 96 is actually looking forward to the worldwide blessing that God promised Abraham and which is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ. And so the psalm is saying the whole world is invited to come to God, to know God, to love God, to worship God. So verse eight commands, bring an offering and come into his courts. And so the offering is an act of worship. It's to be brought into his sanctuary. And so the offering, whether it's a sacrificial offering or whether it's a financial offering, basically signifies the offering of oneself to God.

[16:45] And so as we read the psalm today in the light of Christ's coming, the Apostle Paul says in Romans chapter 12, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. This is your true and proper worship. Because we know we can't simply approach God as we are. God is holy and we are sinful human beings.

And so we can only worship the Lord and the splendor of his holiness, as verse nine tells us, in and through Jesus Christ. Otherwise there's no possible way any of us can get to God.

God. And that's why the psalm tells us to tremble before him all the earth. There in verse nine, it's saying that while there is this gracious invitation from God to come to him, his holiness means that we've got to go to him with a proper sense of awe and reverence. This reminds me of C.S. Lewis's the lion, the witch and the wardrobe. When Lucy and Mr. and Mrs. Beaver are having a chat about Aslan, the great lion who's supposed to represent Christ. And so Mrs. Beaver says, if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly.

Then he isn't safe, said Lucy. Safe, said Mr. Beaver. Don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? Of course he isn't safe, but he's good. He's the king, I tell you. Psalm 96 is saying the one true God is king. And he is good because he gives us this gracious invitation to come to him through Jesus Christ. But he isn't safe because he is holy. So he is angry at our sin.

[18 : 53] And yet the fantastic news is that we can still go to him because Jesus can forgive our sin and make us acceptable to God. And then when we go, then we experience his blessing.

But the psalm doesn't just invite us to come to God. It also gives us the reason why we must go to God.

It's there in verse 10. Say among the nations, the Lord reigns. The world is firmly established. It cannot be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity.

So the reason we must go to God as human beings who have been made by God is because the Lord reigns. It means that he is king. And so people from all nations, the world over, are invited to join this choir and to sing with God's people that the Lord reigns. And so what does his reign mean? Well, that means, first of all, that the world belongs to him. The whole world, all people who've ever lived belong to God. And secondly, it also means that the whole world is under his control because the psalm tells us it is firmly established. It cannot be moved. Well, how's this? Because the world doesn't exactly seem to be firmly established today, does it?

[20 : 23] If anything, it seems to be completely and utterly fragile and broken. But the psalm can declare this because the Lord's reign includes his judgment.

Because we're told he will judge the peoples with equity. And so things can never spiral out of control because he rules with justice and equity.

And this is expanded upon at the end of the psalm. Because as judge, the psalm is telling us that he will bring about perfect justice the world over.

And so part of this is the establishment of his kingdom in the world now through the mission of the church. So when Jesus arrived, remember the first words of his public ministry that Mark records for us in his gospel.

Jesus said, the time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news. And so the Lord's reign on earth was established through the spread of this message of Jesus, the gospel.

[21 : 40] Where the good news of Jesus, of his death and of his resurrection, means that all people are invited to believe in Jesus and then enter into God's kingdom.

And so in a day when people are divided across so many different fronts, I don't think in the short time I've lived, well, relatively short, I don't think I've seen the world as divided as the world is now, whether it be by race or by nationality or by class or by politics.

Because that's how people tend to see the world, isn't it? Well, those people are like that. Or they think like this. Or that's how those people behave.

Or they're just different from us. Or we're just different from them. We tend to divide ourselves up according to what we think is right.

And yet aware of all of these distinctions, what we see here in this psalm is an invitation to belong to God's kingdom, where none of these things divide us, whether race or nationality or class or politics.

[22 : 59] Because the values you see of God's kingdom and life under God's reign and rule, that's the very opposite of this world.

And so see how the psalm describes humanity in all of its diversity, with all of its difference. As they are described in verse 7, all you families of nations.

That's all of humanity. And what it means is that in God's eyes, we are not actually as different from each other as we tend to think. And we tend to think we are different.

And perhaps discriminate because we are. But God's invitation is for all the earth. All culture groups, all ethnicities, all nationalities, all religions are invited to come to him.

Because this gospel offer, the psalm declares, is a universal offer. It's for all people. Which means the defining factor that divides all of humanity is not class, race, ethnicity, politics, or anything else.

[24 : 09] The defining factor that divides people is whether those people will bow to the Lord who reigns as king and acknowledge his rightful rule over their lives or whether they will reject him.

Whether people will ascribe to the Lord the glory due to his name or whether they will continue to seek their own glory and ignore the one who made them.

And so Psalm 96 makes it clear no one is exempt from this gracious invitation of God to come to him.

So that's the invitation of mission. First, the reason for mission. Second, the invitation of mission.

And third, the climax of mission in verse 11 to 13. Well, the climax of mission in these verses is that

all creation will be put right when the Lord comes to judge.

And so the psalm appeals to all creation to praise the Lord. Look at verse 11 and 12. Let the heavens rejoice. Let the earth be glad.

[25 : 18] Let the sea resound and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant and everything in them. Let all the trees of the forest sing for joy. This is an amazing picture of creation.

And you'll notice how creation is personified. And there are seven parts to creation. If you look at verse 11 and 12, seven parts that are emphasized to show how all of creation is to praise the Lord. So first, there's the heavens, meaning the invisible world above. And then second, there's the earth, meaning this world below.

Then third, there's the sea. Fourth, all that is in it. Fifth, there's the fields. Sixth, and everything in them. And then seventh, all the trees of the forest.

The whole created order is called upon to praise the Lord. How? Well, we're told it will be glad, resound, be jubilant, and sing for joy.

[26 : 23] Can you see how this is a climactic vision of what is coming? As the climax of mission is the renewal and the restoration of all things.

It's a beautiful picture of where this world is heading. And so we hear a lot of talk about the climate crisis or the climate emergency and panic about what will be done and what can possibly be done so we can sort things out by recycling or by watching our carbon emissions or whatever.

But this is a far better picture of the restoration and renewal of all of creation. And it will happen because God says so. And so Psalm 96 answers this groaning of creation that Paul speaks about in Romans chapter 8.

Where creation is no longer under the curse as it is now, but is free from its bondage to decay due to sin. And so while creation waits with this eager longing, right now the day is coming when the creation will break into joyful song.

But how is this going to happen? Well, the Psalm tells us in verse 13, Let all creation rejoice before the Lord, for he comes.

[27 : 44] He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness. So who is coming in verse 13?

Jesus is coming. He has already come and he will come again to judge the earth. Jesus said himself that he is the judge.

And that's what the Psalm ultimately points towards. In fact, the phrase judge the world in righteousness is echoed by Paul in Acts 17, when he proclaims Christ in Athens.

And he says that God has set a day when he will judge the world in righteousness by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.

So why is the coming of Jesus to judge a cause for rejoicing? Well, it's because his judgment will put everything right, including creation.

[28 : 52] The Psalm is promising that everything will be sorted. For all disorder will be put into proper order. Because he will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness.

And so the world or nature will be perfected, which means no more floods, no more earthquakes, no more famines, no more disasters.

And the peoples, humanity, will be sorted out, which means no more wars, no more evil, no more disease, no more death.

And so what Jesus Christ accomplished at the cross when he defeated Satan and sin and death results in the final removal of this curse from creation.

And so when Jesus returns to judge, all creation will be fully and finally put right as Jesus completes his work of salvation.

[29 : 56] No wonder all creation will be singing when he comes. And Reubonner describes this as the happiest day our world has ever seen.

And so everything promised in this Psalm centers on the mission of Jesus. It began with his first coming, and it will be fulfilled with his second coming.

And so this is the climax of mission. And so we should be singing now because of what's coming. We should sing a new song to the Lord.

We should sing and we should long for the glorious return of Jesus Christ because that's what our world needs. And we should live as people with hope because we have hope.

And we should proclaim the good news of Jesus until he comes. In fact, as we come to celebrate the Lord's Supper, we'll read Paul's words in a moment when he said, for whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

[31 : 08] And so the Lord's death must be proclaimed because only Jesus' death will see you and me and everybody in this world safely through that judgment that Sam speaks of.

We can't face the judgment unless our sins have been forgiven at the cross. That's why Jesus said, repent and believe the good news.

And so it's by responding to the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection that we are welcomed into God's kingdom. welcomed into it now as we look forward to the day when we'll be part of that perfected kingdom to come.

And so can you see how Psalm 96 isn't simply a song for mission, though it is that, but it is also our motivation for mission. Because when we sing it from the heart, then we are longing for the day when Jesus will return as judge to put everything right.

And so in the meantime, we've got a job to do as we invest our lives in this eternal work of mission, whether it be near or far, and whether it be as an individual believer seeking to share Jesus through our personal evangelism, or whether it be as the church wanting to reach out to our community.

[32 : 43] We work to see the Lord's reign continue to spread over all the earth. Let's pray together.