

# Psalm 95

Exodus 17:1-7    1 Cor 9:24-10:5    Psalm 95    Matt 20:1-16  
February 5, 2023    Septuagesima Sunday  
Pastor Dave Bolte



Worship is truly *the pulse* of your spiritual life.

If your faith is living and active, then you will be worshipping; if your faith is dead or dying, then you will not be worshipping. Worship is the most public thing that you do as a Christian; it signals and sets you apart as a believer in Christ. God's people gather with other believers to Worship the Lord!

Unlike most evangelicals and Protestants, we do not understand worship as primarily our act towards God. Worship is not a pep rally that tries to build up your emotions and your sense of closeness to God.

*Rather it's exactly the opposite.*

In worship *God is serving us*. In worship, we are poor sinful beggars asking God for mercy, grace, and help. God comes to us through His Word and Sacraments to forgive sins, strengthen faith, and give eternal life. We even called this a "*Divine Service*" because God is serving us through His Word and Sacraments.

In response to all of this, then we act. Then we are involved in responding to God's grace and mercy with our songs, prayers, tithes, offerings, fellowship, and loving service to others.

*Psalm 95 is all about worship.* In fact the first seven verses are such a powerful statement about worship that it has become a Canticl<sup>1</sup> in the Holy Christian

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<sup>1</sup> A Canticl (from the Latin 'canticulum', "song") is a hymn or song of praise with lyrics taken from a Biblical text. Canticles are used in the liturgy of Christian worship. Here at Trinity, we use Canticles in our 7:30, 11:30, and 6:00pm worship services. You might recognize some of these: the Gloria Patri, Gloria in Excelsis, Nunc Dimittis, Te Deum, Benedictus, Sanctus, and the Magnificat.

Church. It is called the **Venite**, the Latin word for the first two words of the Psalm, “*O Come*”. I printed it for us today on the pink insert; let's read it responsively. \*\* see the sidebar →

This Psalm is filled with joy and excitement at the thought of worshipping the Lord. The Great Creator and King invites you into His presence to bow down in worship and sing for joy. God is present with His gifts of salvation and life. The Psalm confesses the confident faith that you belong to God, and that you are under His care.

Where does this kind of attitude towards worship come from?

Is this something that you are supposed to generate yourself?

Are you supposed to try to work yourself up to feeling like this<sup>2</sup>?

## OF COURSE NOT!

This is the *result of faith*; in Christ these things that the Psalm describes are *fruit of the Holy Spirit* at work within you.

In Christ, you are reconciled to God through His death on the cross. You have peace with God; and have been brought into His family through Holy Baptism. As the Psalm says, “*For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care.*” The only way that happens is through faith in Christ.

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<sup>2</sup> Much of Evangelical and protestant worship has become just this. It is simply an emotional experience where you feel close to God. The preacher, the music, the lighting is all designed to create an environment. The intent is to create a “concert” feel. It is a manipulation so that you “feel” close to God; worship is turned upside down into something that you do for God. Invariably, the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is lost in these environments. To read an insightful article about this, see: [www.9marks.org/article/4-reflections-after-listening-to-18-hours-of-sermons-in-americas-biggest-churches](http://www.9marks.org/article/4-reflections-after-listening-to-18-hours-of-sermons-in-americas-biggest-churches)

### THE VENITE<sup>1</sup>

Psalm 95:1-7

P: O Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;

C: **let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.**

P: Let us come before Him with thanksgiving

C: **and extol Him with music and song.**

P: For the Lord is the great God,

C: **the great King above all gods.**

P: In His hand are the depths of the earth,

C: **and the mountain peaks belong to Him.**

P: The sea is His, for He made it,

C: **and His hands formed the dry land.**

P: Come, let us bow down in worship,

C: **let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;**

P: for He is our God

C: **and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care.**

<sup>1</sup> “Venite” comes from the opening word of Psalm 95 in Latin: *venite* -- “come!” (it is a second person plural imperative.) It has come to be known as a morning Canticle sung in the Holy Christian Church since the 13<sup>th</sup> Century.

If you want to hear it in liturgical context, see this three minute video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uuRsTgTdnwc> or do a simple video internet search for “LSB and Venite”.

- ⇒ Only in faith, do you belong to God
- ⇒ Only in faith, do you have access to God and can come into His presence
- ⇒ Only in faith, can you worship the Lord, our Great God and King

Your worship of God is not depended on your feelings. You can be hurting terribly and still worship the Lord.

We come into the presence of God through faith in Christ to receive God's good gifts in Word and Sacrament. In every single worship service, *God is at work* to forgive you sins, strength you faith, and give you eternal life. Every single week of your life, God provides these things for you in public worship. God does not force you to come to worship, He wants you to come freely because you are the people of His pasture and the flock under His care. The truth is, because of our persistent sin and the terrible brokenness of this world that we live in, *we need* God's forgiveness, love, and care that He freely gives us in His Son Jesus. We need it each week, each day, each moment! God invites you to public worship every single week of your life!

Psalm 95 begins with a beautiful song of praise and worship; *but it turns on a dime*, and it issues one of the **STRONGEST WARNINGS** in all Scripture.

Today, if hear His voice, "Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the wilderness, Psalm 95:7b-8

This verse is quoted in the New Testament book of Hebrews as an **apostasy warning!**<sup>3</sup>. A hard heart towards God will quickly destroy your relationship with Him; a hard heart is one that stops hearing God's Word, no longer needs Christ nor His forgiveness, and avoids and stays away from worship. A hard heart chases after idols, falls into sexual immorality, and grumbles and complains about God. The writer of Hebrews calls this a *sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the Living God*. This is a strong and powerful

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<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 3:7-11 quotes the last 4 verses of Psalm 95, and then note how it is summarized: "As the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts . . . See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God."

warning in Holy Scripture about falling away from the faith! Be sure to listen to it! Don't harden your heart! Don't let this happen to you!

*The first sign of this apostasy is avoiding and staying away from worship.* Worship is the pulse of your spiritual life. If your faith is living and active, then you will be worshipping; if your faith is dead or dying, then you will not be worshipping.

*If your heart is soft in faith, then you will be worshipping  
If your heart is hard in sin, then you will not be worshipping.*

If you find that your heart is getting hard and cold towards God and His Word, then **repent!** If you have idols, then **turn around!** If you are engaged in sexual immorality, then **STOP!** Turn away from sin and back towards God and His love in Christ. In Christ, there is forgiveness; and there is renewed faith. In Christ, there is life, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Christ, you belong to God and are under His care.

In Psalm 95, the fruit of repentance is worshipping the Lord; singing for joy to the Lord and shouting aloud to the rock of your salvation!

Take Psalm 95 to heart! Make sure that you're not neglecting worship; not only by avoiding and staying away, but also when you are here and you are not paying attention nor are you engaged in what's happening.

You belong to **Christ**. The **Holy Spirit** is living in active within you. You are part of the **Father's** flock and under His care through faith in His Son Jesus.

In worship, God is here for you, at work in Word and Sacrament to forgive your sins, give you peace, and strengthen your faith!

Come and worship the Lord! Come before Him with thanksgiving and extol Him with music and song! For the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods! Amen!

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**God the Father, we thank You for making us Your people and caring for us as Your flock through faith in Your Son Jesus. Help us to worship You in Spirit and in Truth, with great joy and celebration. Guard us from hard hearts that would turn away from You and stay away from worship. Renew us in faith so that we may always come before you and bow down and worship and kneel before you as our Lord and maker. we pray this in Jesus' Name, amen!**

## Exodus 17:1-7

The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.<sup>2</sup> So they quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” Moses replied, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?”<sup>3</sup> But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?”<sup>4</sup> Then Moses cried out to the Lord, “What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.”<sup>5</sup> The Lord answered Moses, “Go out in front of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.<sup>6</sup> I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.” So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel.<sup>7</sup> And he called the place Massah<sup>l</sup> and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the Lord saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

## 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea.<sup>2</sup> They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.<sup>3</sup> They all ate the same spiritual food<sup>4</sup> and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.<sup>6</sup> Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.<sup>7</sup> Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.”<sup>[a]</sup><sup>8</sup> We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them

died. <sup>9</sup>We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. <sup>10</sup>And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel. <sup>11</sup>These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. <sup>12</sup>So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! <sup>13</sup>No temptation<sup>[d]</sup> has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted<sup>[d]</sup> beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

## Psalm 95

<sup>1</sup> O Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;  
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.  
<sup>2</sup> Let us come before him with thanksgiving  
and extol him with music and song.  
<sup>3</sup> For the Lord is the great God,  
the great King above all gods.  
<sup>4</sup> In his hand are the depths of the earth,  
and the mountain peaks belong to him.  
<sup>5</sup> The sea is his, for he made it,  
and his hands formed the dry land.  
<sup>6</sup> Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;  
<sup>7</sup> for he is our God  
and we are the people of his pasture,  
the flock under his care.  
Today, if only you would hear his voice,  
<sup>8</sup> “Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah,  
as you did that day at Massah in the wilderness,  
<sup>9</sup> where your ancestors tested me;  
they tried me, though they had seen what I did.  
<sup>10</sup> For forty years I was angry with that generation;

I said, 'They are a people whose hearts go astray,  
and they have not known my ways.'

<sup>11</sup> So I declared on oath in my anger,  
'They shall never enter my rest.'

## Matthew 20:1-16

<sup>20</sup> "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup> He agreed to pay them a denarius<sup>[a]</sup> for the day and sent them into his vineyard. <sup>3</sup> "About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. <sup>4</sup> He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' <sup>5</sup> So they went. "He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. <sup>6</sup> About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' <sup>7</sup> " "Because no one has hired us,' they answered. "He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.' <sup>8</sup> "When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.' <sup>9</sup> "The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. <sup>10</sup> So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. <sup>11</sup> When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. <sup>12</sup> 'These who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.' <sup>13</sup> "But he answered one of them, 'I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? <sup>14</sup> Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. <sup>15</sup> Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' <sup>16</sup> "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."