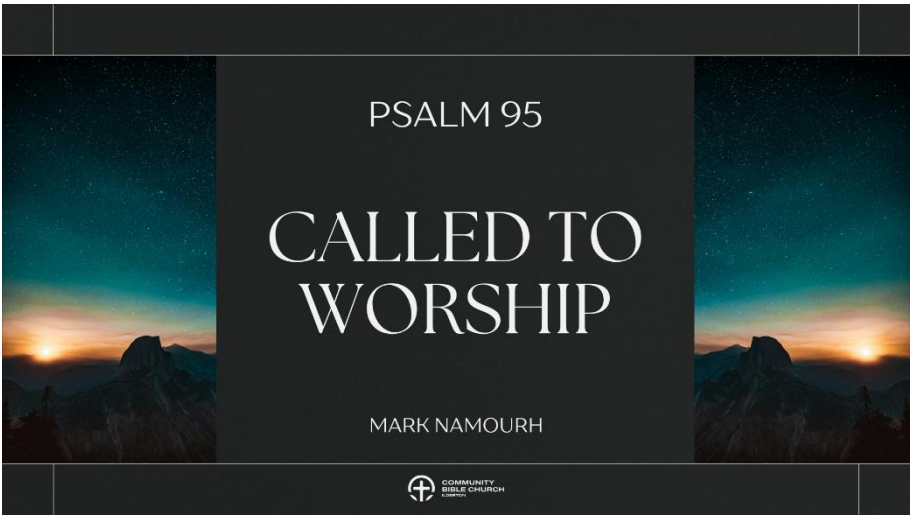

Good morning, church! What an awesome privilege it is to come together as the people of God to worship the Lord. We thank him for his great mercy and grace. Without his grace and mercy, it would be impossible for us to come into his holy presence.

My family and I have been here at CBC a few times before, and today, I am so glad and honored to be invited to share God's Word with you.

A couple of weeks ago, when Pastor Michael told me that he was going to begin a series of sermons from the Book of Psalms, Psalm 95 came to mind. It resonated with me.

This psalm is called *Venite*. *Venite* is the first word of the psalm in Latin, and it means, "Come." Psalm 95 calls us to come together before the Lord to worship him.

We, God's people, are called to worship. In Exodus 7, God commanded Pharaoh, "Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the wilderness." Edmund Clowney writes,

> God brings (his people) out (of the land of slavery) that he might bring them in, into his assembly, to the great company

> of those who stand before his face… God's assembly at Sinai is therefore the immediate goal of the exodus. God brings his people into his presence that they might hear his voice and worship him.

So, God's goal in redeeming Israel was, first and foremost, to create a people who assemble to worship him. But, as the Bible tells us, God's people turned away from him and served idols. Therefore, God judged his people by scattering them into exile.

But God promised that his purpose for his people would ultimately be fulfilled. As we read in many passages in the Old Testament, God promised that there would someday be a great assembly—not just of Israel, but of people from all nations—worshiping before his throne. And the fulfillment of that promise started when Jesus began to build his church.

Edmund Clowney puts it this way,

> Pentecost was the time of the firstfruits, the beginning of the great harvest of redemption… The Spirit (of God) had been poured out, the worship of the new (era) had been ushered in. The church, the assembly for worship, was praising God…. Now the ingathering had begun.
>
> The gospel call is a call to worship, to turn from sin and call upon the name of the Lord….
>
> The picture of the church as a worshiping assembly is … presented in the Epistle to the Hebrews (ch. 12) … (You can read Hebrews 12 when you go home. it tells us that) In our worship in Christ's church we approach the throne of God the judge of all. We enter the festival assembly of the saints and the angels. We gather in spirit with the spirits of just men made perfect. We enter the assembly of glory through Christ our mediator, and the blood of his atoning death…

Then, Clowney concludes,

> Reverent corporate worship … is not optional for the church of God…. Rather, it brings to expression the very being of the church. It manifests on earth the reality of the heavenly assembly.

The church is called to worship the Lord, and Psalm 95 does not merely call us to worship; it also guides us in worship. It shows us the way to worship.

The Way to Worship

First, we are called to worship the Lord joyfully

Let's read again vv. 1 & 2 of Ps. 95,

> *Oh come, let us sing to the LORD;*
> *let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!*
> *Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;*
> *let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!*

Making a joyful noise with songs of praise is not the only way to worship God. In some psalms, we find the psalmist worshiping silently, and sometimes even with tears. But to come singing into God's presence, as Derek Kidner puts it, "it is the way that best expresses love."

We love the Lord because he loved us first and redeemed us. Our redemption is firm and unwavering because He is the Rock of our salvation.

We are created not only to glorify God, as John Piper argues, but also to enjoy him and delight in his excellence. And we experience delight in God more fully in worship than in any other activity in this life.

David sought one thing above all. He says in Ps. 27:4,

> *One thing have I asked of the LORD,*
> *that will I seek after:*
> *that I may dwell in the house of the LORD*
> *all the days of my life,*
> *to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD*
> *and to inquire (or meditate) in his temple.*

This was also Asaph's desire. He says in Ps. 73:25,

> *Whom have I in heaven but you?*
> *And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.*

And the sons of Korah say in Ps. 84:2,

> *My soul longs, yes, faints*
> *for the courts of the LORD;*
> *my heart and flesh sing for joy*
> *to the living God.*

The early church knew such joy in worship. Immediately, after Jesus' ascension into heaven, the disciples, as we read in Luke's Gospel, “returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God." Luke also says in the Book of Acts, “day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people."

Wayne Grudem comments,

> Of course, such activity of continual praise cannot last forever in this age, for living in a fallen world requires that we give time to many other responsibilities as well. But extended praise does give us a foretaste of the atmosphere of heaven, where the four living creatures “never cease to say, ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Amighty, who was and is and is to

come!'" (Rev. 4), and the other heavenly creatures and the redeemed who have died join in that heavenly worship and extol "the Lamb who was slain" (Rev. 5).

Psalm 95 provides us with the reason why we should worship the Lord joyfully. Let's read together vv. 3-5:

> *For* (here is the ground of our joyful worship) *the LORD is a great God,*
> *and a great King above all gods.*
> *In his hand are the depths of the earth;*
> *the heights of the mountains are his also.*
> *The sea is his, for he made it,*
> *and his hands formed the dry land.*

Psalm 95 belongs to a group of psalms that begins with Psalm 93 and continues through Psalm 99. One theme unites these psalms: they praise God as the King of the universe. They are hymns of praise for divine kingship, namely, God's rule over creation.

These psalms reminded God's people that the God who rules over them is the universal Creator and Sustainer— the Lord, who one day will rule all nations.

This King is worthy of our worship. The English word *worship* historically carries the idea of worth ship. We worship joyfully when we see and grasp the worth of God and realize how great He is.

Timothy Keller, through one of his illustrations, helps us understand the true meaning of worship. Keller imagines a woman who inherits an old brooch (or jewellery pin) passed down through her family. For years, the family has had it but doesn't really know its value. It is sometimes even misplaced and forgotten.

One day the lady finds it and decides to take it to a jeweller for appraisal. The jeweller examines the brooch carefully through his

magnifying glass. He looks at things such as the facets of the stone, the way they refract light, its colours and texture, and the craftsmanship.

As he continues examining it, he suddenly realizes something extraordinary: this is an incredibly rare and priceless piece of jewellery. The craftsmanship is from a lost tradition, and the piece is worth vastly more than anything else in his store.

And when the woman comes to know the value of her inheritance, she is astonished. She realizes that she has possessed something extraordinarily valuable without knowing its true worth. And that has changed her life.

Keller puts it this way,

> The psalmist is calling us to do exactly what the Jeweller does. It starts with thinking. It starts with looking at who God is and what he has done for us. It enumerates; it inventories; it goes through until it dawns on you the value—the beauty of who God is.

Many people claim to believe in God in a sense they have God. They believe there is a God. There is a Creator. They have God the way that woman had the brooch: completely unaware of the value of it.

That's why we need to spend time reflecting on who God is and what he has done for us. We need to meditate on his attributes, his perfection, and his majesty. We need to ask His Spirit, through his word, to open our eyes to see the beauty of God, so that we would not worship Him mechanically, with cold hearts, but joyfully, with hearts overwhelmed by his greatness.

Worshipping the living God cannot be boring. R C Sproul argues that it is conceptually impossible to be bored in the true presence of God. When people encounter the living God in Scripture, they respond with

profound awe, terror, silence, weeping, or overwhelming joy—never boredom. If corporate worship feels boring, Sproul argues, it is because God has been lost from the center of it.

Authentic worship brings deep, giddy gladness, but it is a sacred, trembling joy rather than casual amusement. We are called to worship the Lord joyfully.

Second, we are called to worship the Lord reverently

Let's read v. 6:

> *Oh come, let us worship and bow down;*
> *let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!*

We are called to worship the Lord not only with joy, but also with reverence. The three verbs in Hebrew in verse 6: worship, bow down, and kneel with the main verb "oh come" are concerned with getting low before God.

Yes, we greet God with an unashamed enthusiasm, yet we mustn't forget to make ourselves small before him. Derek Kidner writes, "This is the deep and basic note of worship, without which the 'joyful noise' of the opening will be shrill and self-indulgent."

The Lord is "our Maker." As John Calvin notes, "Maker" here doesn't merely mean the one who created us; it also refers to the one who made us his people—the one who called us to be his "treasured possession among all peoples" (Ex. 19:5).

We can say that we belong to God twice: because he created us, and because He redeemed us through Jesus Christ.

At the beginning of my spiritual journey, I heard a story that has stayed with me ever since. It's a story about a boy who spends a long time making a small wooden boat. He carefully builds it and is very proud of it. One day he takes it to a river or lake to play with it.

While he is playing, he falls asleep on the shore and wakes up to discover that the boat is gone.

He searches for it but cannot find it. Some time later, while walking through town, he passes a store and sees a boat in the window. He immediately recognizes it: it is his boat.

He goes inside and tells the shopkeeper that the boat belongs to him. He says, “Look at these marks. I made this boat with my own hands." But the shopkeeper tells him that he bought the boat from someone else and that the boy must pay for it if he wants it back.

So the boy asks the shopkeeper to put the boat aside for him. He then saves his money until, eventually, he has enough to buy it. When he finally returns to the shop, he pays for the boat and takes it home, holding it tightly in his hands. And as he walks home, he looks at his little boat and says, “Little dear boat, you are mine twice. I made you, and I bought you."

We belong to God twice over. He created us, and He redeemed us. And that is why we are called to worship him with reverence. To worship him, to bow down, and to kneel before him means to accept our place and acknowledge his. This is a public act of homage to our King.

Again, verse 7 provides us with the reason to worship him. It says:

> *For he is our God,*
> *and we are the people of his pasture,*
> *and the sheep of his hand.*

The King of the universe is our Shepherd. Our worship and our service to him is not the tribute of strangers. It is intimate. His commitment to us is constant, because He is “our God." And his care for us is all-sufficing and personal. All-sufficing because we are “the

people of his pasture," and personal because we are “the sheep of his hand."

So, let's remember again: genuine worship happens when we begin to see God as he is and then respond to his presence.

Even the angles, called Seraphim, as we read in Iseah 6, cry out in heaven, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"

When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water and then saw the wind cease when he got into the boat, Matthew writes, “those in the boat worshiped him, saying, ‘truly you are the Son of God’" (Matt. 14).

And the letter to the Hebrews, in chapter 12, teaches us that the proper response when we come into the worship is to “offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."

In his commentary on Psalm 95, Wayne Grudem writes,

> The marvel of being Israel is that such a majestic King has pledged himself to his people, making them the sheep of his hand … It is no surprise, then, that worship offered to him would be both exuberant … with astonished wonder, and humble … before such majesty. The whole person, body and soul, must offer this worship.

When we come to worship, are we aware that we are in the very presence of God? Some people teach that the church's worship on earth is a kind of practice for a later heavenly experience of genuine worship. But that's not true. As Grudem puts it, “Worship in the NT church… is genuine worship in the presence of God himself, and when we worship, we stand before his throne."

He says,

> The reality of the new covenant worship is all real, more real and more permanent than the physical creation that we see around us, which will someday be destroyed in the final judgment.

Do you believe in that? If we believe Scripture to be true, we must also believe that we worship with those already worshiping in heaven whenever we come to God in worship.

Finally, we are called to worship the Lord restfully

We are called to worship the Lord joyfully and reverently, and finally restfully. But what do we mean by that? At the end of verse 7, the psalmist reminds the congregation, the worshipers, that they must take God's word to heart by believing it and obeying their great King. Let's read vv. 7/c-11:

> Today, if you hear his voice,
> do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
> as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,
> when your fathers put me to the test
> and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.
> For forty years I loathed (or disgusted) that generation
> and said, “They are a people who go astray in their heart,
> and they have not known my ways."
> Therefore I swore in my wrath,
> “They shall not enter my rest."

This is one of the prime acts of worship: to believe and obey God's word. Psalm 95 summons those singing it to learn the lesson from the rebellion of a previous generation. “Massah" means “testing," and “Meribah" means “quarreling" or “strife." These are the names of the place where the Israelites grumbled against Moses because they had no water (Ex. 17).

But the oath, “They shall not enter my rest," comes in the Book of Numbers 14, after the people listened to the report of the ten faithless spies and refused to enter the land and take possession of it. That generation put God to the test because they did not take him at his word. They did not trust him, and therefore they did not obey him in faith and God didn't allow them to enter his rest, which is the promised land, Canaan.

Now, the Letter to the Hebrews in chapter 4 argues that God's rest, Canaan, was a foreshadowing of something greater. The next generation of Israel entered the promised land under Joshua after Moses, but Joshua did not give them the final rest of God intended.

Hebrews 4:4 points back to Genesis 2: “God rested on the seventh day from all his works." God's rest is his enjoyment of His completed work. The invitation to enter that rest means sharing in the rest God himself enjoys.

Hebrews repeatedly says, “Today" the word in Ps. 95. This means that God's promise of rest was not exhausted when Israel entered Canaan. The promise remains open to believers.

Hebrews 4:10 says, “whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his." The idea is not that Christians become inactive, but that we stop trying to establish our own righteousness or earn God's acceptance and rest in God's completed provision.

So, God's Sabbath rest in Hebrews 4 is the salvation-rest God offers his people through Christ—resting from self-reliance and unbelief, trusting in God's completed work, enjoying fellowship with him now, and looking forward to the fullness of eternal rest in his presence.

the “rest" of Psalm 95 begins with Canaan, but Hebrews shows that Canaan was only a picture of the greater rest God still offers his people in Christ.

That's what we mean by worshiping God restfully. Derek Kidner puts it this way, “Hebrews 4:1-13 argues that the psalm still offers us, by its emphatic *Today,* a rest beyond anything that Joshua won, namely a share in God's own sabbath rest: the enjoyment of his finished work not merely of creation but of redemption."

Jesus accomplished our redemption. He said on the cross, “It is finished." So, we worship restfully as we put our faith in his finished work and realize that in Christ, we are accepted by God and belong to him.

Many people approach worship as a duty—as something they need to do in order to be accepted by God. But God's Word calls us today to put our faith in Christ and enter into God's Sabbath rest. We worship God not to earn his acceptance, but because of who He is and what He has done for us.

Imagine receiving a bill that you could never afford to pay. Every month, you receive another notice, and the debt continues to hang over you. You work harder, pay what you can, and promise yourself that someday you will somehow pay it all.

Then one day, someone comes to you and says, “I have paid the entire debt for you." You look at the account, and there it is: PAID IN FULL.

What would you do? Would you continue working every day trying to pay a debt that has already been completely paid? No. You would rest—not because the debt was small, but because someone else paid it in full.

That is what Christ has done for us. We could never pay the debt of our sin or earn God's acceptance through our own works. But Jesus went to the cross and said, “It is finished."

So, you don't worship in order to make God accept you. You worship because, in Christ, God has already accepted you. You don't serve in order to earn his love. You serve because you have already received his love.

Conclusion

Church, we are called to worship the Lord joyfully, because He is the great God and the Rock of our salvation. We are called to worship him reverently, because He is our Maker, our King, and our Shepherd. And we are called to worship him restfully, because Christ has accomplished our redemption, and in him we can rest from trying to earn God's acceptance.

So, let me ask you this morning: What kind of worship are you offering to God?

Do you worship God with genuine joy because you have begun to see his greatness, his beauty, his mercy, and his grace? Or has worship become routine for you—a habit you go through without really thinking about the God who is here with us?

Do you worship him with reverence and awe? When you gather with God's people, do you remember that you are coming into the presence of the King of the universe? Or have you become too familiar with holy things?

And perhaps most importantly, are you resting in Christ? Are you trusting in his finished work, or are you still trying to earn God's acceptance through your performance, your goodness, your service, or even your religious activity?

Psalm 95 says, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."

God is speaking to us today. The question is not simply, *Did Israel believe?* The question is, Do I believe? The question is not simply, *Did that generation harden their hearts?* The question is**,** Is my heart becoming hard toward God's Word?

God's word is calling some of us today to recover the joy of worship. It is calling us to bow before him again with reverence and awe. It is calling us to stop striving and to rest in Christ—to trust again that "It is finished."

When we come to worship our great King, let's come with joy. Let's come with reverence. And let's come with rest.

Look again at who He is. He is the great God and King. He made us, and He redeemed us. We are the people of his pasture, the sheep of his hand. And through Jesus Christ, He invites us to enter his rest.

So, will you hear his voice today? Will you trust his Word? Will you bow before your King? Will you rest in the finished work of Christ?

May we never come into God's presence merely out of duty. May we come because we have seen his worth, experienced his grace, trusted his promises, and found our rest in Christ. Amen.

Questions For Personal Reflection

Understanding the Message

1. **What does it mean to worship God?** How is biblical worship more than simply singing songs on Sunday?

2. Psalm 95 gives several reasons why we should worship God. **What do verses 1–7 teach us about who God is and why He is worthy of our worship?**

3. The sermon emphasized that **genuine worship begins when we see God as He truly is and recognize what He has done for us.** Why does our understanding of God affect the way we worship Him?

4. Psalm 95 moves from joyful worship to a serious warning in verses 7–11. **Why do you think the psalm connects worship with listening and responding to God's voice?**

Personal Reflection

5. **What aspect of God's character most moves you to worship Him?** His holiness? Greatness? Faithfulness? Mercy? Sovereignty? Redemption? Why?

6. Think about the last week. **When did you most clearly recognize God's greatness, goodness, or grace toward you?** How did you respond?

7. The sermon spoke about resting in Christ's redemption. **What does it look like practically to rest in what Christ has done rather than trying to earn God's acceptance through our own efforts?**

Application

9. **How can we cultivate a heart of worship throughout the week, not just during Sunday worship?**

10. What is one specific change you could make this week that would help you **see God more clearly, treasure Christ more deeply, and respond to Him in worship?**

Closing Question

13. **If you had to summarize today's sermon in one sentence, what would you say?** And how would you like that truth to change the way you live this week?