

of Discipleship

December 26, 2021

Day 1: Psalm 96:1-2

O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.

The Psalm invites us to sing (see Psalms 27:6, 33:3, 104:33) because our response to God's salvation must involve more than speech. The new song builds upon other songs of gratitude in the Bible (Exodus 15:1-21). Salvation is an objective reality that is lived out each day. Our singing is the joyful attitude we bring to each day because God has saved us. We need not fear death for even death is under the dominion of God. The "new" in the song is that in Christ we are part of God's family.

Question: What kind of music helps you express happiness? What song brings back your best memories?

Challenge: Take the words to "Jesus Loves Me" and put it to a different tune. (*Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so, little ones to him belong, they are weak but He is strong ...*)

Scripture: Revelation 5:6-14

Day 2: Psalm 96:3-5

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 revered above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.

Now the Psalmist tells us to crank up the volume on our song. We should be loud enough for the whole world to hear. At Christmas we learn that the greatness of God is because in creation God made love the most powerful force in the universe. Praying to idols is like trying to use magic. In magic one uses correct words and actions to force the result they want. In prayer we humbly lay before God our needs for ourselves and others so that comfort and a closer relationship with God may be given to others. We may not fully understand all that God is but we know that God created all there is.

Question: What are some of the "marvelous" works that everybody can see?

Challenge: Each day from now until Christmas day, in the evening before bed write down three things you are thankful for in that day. They do not have to be different from day to day. Each day you might be thankful for the same things.

Scripture: Colossians 1:1-29

Day 3: Psalm 96:6

Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary

The "idols and gods" were human traits that were mystified and given great power. The gods acted in the worst and best ways just as humans did. God, who created the heavens and the earth, was not a human creation. The majesty of God was seen in the fairness and selflessness of God's acts. The sanctuary is where the people of God gathered for worship. The strength of God is felt as the community worships and the beauty of God is seen in the diverse people that have called upon the name of the Lord.

Question: What would you consider the best and worst human traits?

Challenge: Coming to worship is more about my attitude than the order of worship. Before you worship this month (at church or quiet Bible reading or Bible study) pause for a moment and ask God to prepare you for worship.

Scripture: Psalm 150:1-6

Day 4: Psalm 96:7-8

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.

"Ascribe to the Lord" means to give credit to the Lord. Who is to give the credit? It is all the people of the earth. The psalms were written for the people of the time but also for all time. The glory of God is to be declared until all the peoples of the earth join in the song of praise. We offer ourselves (Romans 12:1-2) and come together to offer praise. Worship can be done on an individual basis but worship that is heard by those without hope comes from the community.

Question: Why do you come to worship?

Challenge: For the rest of Advent spend some time in the worship service praying for the people around you.

Scripture: Psalm 68:1-35

Day 5: Psalm 96:9-10

Worship the Lord in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth. Say among the nations, "The Lord is king! The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity."

Holy splendor has nothing to do with what we are wearing to worship (see Matthew 5:28-30). It has to do with our attitude. We do not tremble because we are scared of God but because of the awesome privilege to join with God in giving hope. The cosmos is firmly established by God, something the "gods" did not and could not do. God's judging means that God sets the standard of what justice is. The world's standard of justice is that if you have done wrong you are condemned. God's standard is seen in John 3:17. The birth of Jesus was God showing His justice.

Question: What images come to mind when you think of God?

Challenge: How would you explain "the world is firmly established" to someone who has had a serious loss.

Scripture: Psalm 29:1-11

Day 6: Psalm 96:11

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it;

When we worship God not only do we worship with all those who have gone before and are with God in heaven but according to the psalm we worship with all the earth and the seas. It has been said that we give voice to all creation, in praise of being alive.

Question: If you could not speak how would you give praise to God?

Challenge: Write a prayer of praise for the whole earth.

Scripture: Psalm 33:1-22