

Psalm 96

“Sing to the Lord, All the Earth”

Imago Dei Church | 12/30/2018 | 2 Services | Sunday AM

INTRODUCTION

(ILL) In the Shaddix home these days it doesn't take much for something to be a big deal—that's the nature of having a 2 year-old and a 3 year-old, I guess. The simple things can become the biggest fads—and they take over. That's why I've listened to a few Wreck-it-Ralph songs a thousand times, and why I broke down and bought a whole season of Dora the Explorer.

But by far the biggest fad we've had has been Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood. If you're not familiar, Daniel Tiger is a cartoon tiger in a world that's an updated version of Fred Rogers' Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood. And Daniel is fine enough, as far as it goes. Seems like our kids pick up on more life lessons from Daniel than from us (that's why Jade will periodically exclaim, “It's very hard to wait!”).

Well, one Daniel Tiger book we have teaches kids what to do when they're scared. Daniel and his little friend Owl are outside playing, and thunder hits. So they go talk to Momma Tiger, and she tells them that when they're scared, all they need to do is close your eyes and think of something happy. So Daniel thinks of his stuffed animal and the Owl thinks of some books (my kind of

guy!). And then at the end it asks you as the reader, “What makes you happy?” so you can think about that when you’re scared and things aren’t looking so good.

So one night we’re reading this to our son Ezra and we read that last page: “What makes you happy?” And Ezra thinks about it for a second and says...”Queso.”

The Psalm we’re looking at today is situated in the Psalms to fill a similar kind of role as stuffed animals, books, and queso (apparently).

Psalm 96 is in Book 4 of the Psalms. Book 3 ends (Ps. 89) with a sort of question or lament as Israel has been sent into exile because of her unfaithfulness: **Will God remain faithful to his covenant with King David, even in the face of Israel’s betrayal?**

Psalm 89:49

[49] Lord, where is your steadfast love of old,
which by your faithfulness you swore to David? (ESV)

Things are looking bad for God’s people in exile, and the Psalms give voice to their lament. But they also try to provide an answer.

The early psalms in Book 4 give the people something to focus on that’s bigger and better than their state of disarray. They give Israel “something happy”.

What is their source of joy? What is it that they can hold on to in the midst of trial? A repeated truth: “the Lord reigns”

Psalm 93:1

[1] The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty;
the LORD is robed; he has put on strength as his belt.
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved. (ESV)

Psalm 95:3

[3] For the LORD is a great God,
and a great King above all gods. (ESV)

Psalm 96 echoes this same refrain—the God of Israel, YHWH, is king of all the earth. Neither David nor any other king is the source of Israel’s confidence and hope—only the Lord is.

Because the Lord reigns, not only are the people of God not to despair, but they are commanded to worship.

Main Idea: The Lord’s righteous reign over all things compels devoted worship, worldwide mission, and joyful anticipation.

Psalm 96 is loosely structured around 3 Cycles, with each cycle including a Summons to Worship and then the Reasons for Worship.

In each of these we see a different aspect of God’s rule and reign over all the earth, and in each of them the scope is expanding—widening circles of glory and praise.

Cycle 1: God’s people

Cycle 2: all nations

Cycle 3: all the earth

**CYCLE 1: THE LORD REIGNS OVER ALL GODS—WORSHIP HIM ONLY
(96:1-6)**

SUMMONS (1-3)

- [1] Oh sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth!
- [2] Sing to the LORD, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.
- [3] Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples!

The initial summons is given to all the earth—**sing to the Lord a new song...bless his name**. The scope is the whole world, and the Lord is the recipient of their praises.

This provides something of the theme of the whole psalm.

But it quickly **narrows in scope**—it becomes clear that the people of God are called to worship in a unique way, since they have experienced his salvation—**“tell of his salvation(2b) ... his marvelous works (3b)”**

(ILL) When we experience marvelous things, we naturally respond with wonder and witness. Story: Car rolling down the street.

Israel had experienced God’s salvation when he brought them out of slavery in Egypt and into the Promised Land. This was always a defining moment for the nation.

Psalm 96 beckons them to declare the grace of God in their salvation and the wonderful things he’s done.

But their salvation was always meant to point to a greater salvation in Jesus Christ, who by his own death made a way for those enslaved to sin and death to be forgiven and granted life! We join them!

(APP) His most marvelous act was to rescue and redeem his rebellious creation by atoning for their rebellion with his own blood. **The king himself died to forgive sin, defeat death, and save his subjects. Is there another king like this?**

“from day to day” (2b) — not a once-a-year or once-a-week thing, but a daily concern

(APP) For the Christian, we are here reminded that worship for the people of God is not a peripheral concern, but a whole-life response to the fact that God is good, and he has chosen to pour out his love on us through the grace of salvation in Jesus Christ.

To gaze on this king and his great salvation, his marvelous works, is to be compelled to worship in both our corporate and individual lives.

Individually — day-to-day

Publicly — as the gathered church

Is it not right to conclude that our failure to worship the Lord in our hearts has less to do with our spiritual disciplines, our music preferences, or our circumstances and more to do with our view of God himself and his salvation?

That’s what this Psalm is getting at for the people of God: Let your gaze at the glory of God drive your worship.

REASONS (4-6)

In some sense, the Psalm has already begun to tell us: **“bless his name (2a) ... tell of his salvation (2b) ... declare his glory (3a) ... his marvelous works (3b).”**

Each of these are reasons to praise the Lord. But the Psalmist wants to draw special attention to YHWH’s superiority over all the gods of other nations.

[4] For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be feared above all gods.

We’ve already been told in verse 3 that the worship of God’s people is to be done “among the nations.”

Perhaps as Israel finds herself in exile, surrounded by foreign gods who seem more successful at the moment,

this psalm reminds Israel that their God is supreme over all gods.

- [5] For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols,
but the LORD made the heavens.
[6] Splendor and majesty are before him;
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

These verses make 3 main points:

- 1) They aren't real — they are manmade idols (5a)
(ILL — S. Asian idols)
- 2) In contrast to being made by human hands, God made all things (5b) — “the Lord made the heavens” (cf. Ps. 115)
- 3) In contrast to being worthless, the Lord is infinitely worthy (6) — “splendor, majesty, strength, and beauty”

Though we aren't in exile and we may not be surrounded by literal idols, we would do well to keep these truths in mind.

We are no less drawn to worship the gods of success, status, acceptance, family, money, and a host of other lesser deities. They may seem shinier, and at times more successful, than a crucified Jew who walked the earth 2000 years ago, but we must not be led astray.

The psalmist here reminds us that **there is one and only one true God**. If we will only look on his beauty, gaze at his goodness, then we will see that **he and he alone is worthy** of our worship and praise.

The Lord reigns over all gods: Worship him only.

CYCLE 2: THE LORD REIGNS OVER ALL NATIONS—JOIN HIS MISSION. (96:7-10)

SUMMONS (7-9)

- [7] Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,
ascribe to the LORD **glory and strength!**
- [8] Ascribe to the LORD the **glory** due his name;
bring an offering, and come into his courts!
- [9] Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness;
tremble before him, all the earth!

These verses shift who is being addressed—the nations (who have already been exposed to the worship of YHWH)

In at least 2 ways:

- 1) Vv. 7-8a they are being **summoned** — ‘Come. Ascribe to the Lord what is his due (glory, strength) (ILL: jury summons)
- 2) Vv. 8b-9 they are being **invited** — it’s not only a declaration of the Lord’s worth, but an invitation to identify with him

- a. Inconceivable grace
- b. Unimaginable power (“**tremble before him**”)

REASONS (10)

[10] Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns!
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved;
he will judge the peoples with equity.”

The nations are summoned and invited in because the Lord is sovereign over them.

He rightly rules all peoples, and therefore they *ought* to worship him. He lovingly cares for all people, and therefore they are *invited* to worship him.

Just as the world is established and shall never be moved (v. 10), so the Lord’s reign is fixed, final, and everlasting.

Therefore, he will judge all peoples according to his righteous character. That’s what the king does.

(APP) These verses show both the prophetic and the evangelistic impulse of God’s people’s worship: we **extol God’s goodness**; we **invite others** to join in; and we **warn** them of his ultimate and fair judgement.

This is the Christian’s role in the mission of God.

We proclaim him first and foremost because **our God is worthy** of the praise and glory of all people.

We proclaim him also because **the compassion that we have received extends to all people**, and we want to see them taste his goodness as well.

We **proclaim** and we **present**. We announce and we invite.

(further practical APP to IDC)

The Lord reigns over all the nations: let’s join in his mission to see his name be praised in every tongue, tribe, people, and nation.

CYCLE 3: THE LORD REIGNS OVER ALL THE EARTH—ANTICIPATE HIS COMING. (96:11-13)

SUMMONS (11-13A)

Once again, the addressee shifts—from the people of God, to the nations, and now to the creation itself.

- [11] Let the heavens be **glad**, and let the earth **rejoice**;
 let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
 [12] let the field **exult**, and everything in it!
 Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for **joy**
 [13] before the LORD, for he comes,

Everybody’s getting in on this: the heavens, the earth, the sea, the sea creatures, the fields, the land creatures, the trees, the forest

Because the Lord is king over all, even creation has a role to play. The world itself longs to see it’s king exalted and everything that’s wrong with the world be set right.

2 things to note in these verses:

- 1) The joy of the Lord’s reign
- 2) The anticipated future (v. 13 – “for he comes”)

REASONS (13)

for he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness,
and the peoples in his faithfulness.

We, like the creation itself, are called to anticipate the coming of the King, who when he comes will set all things right by the power of his might.

He will judge the whole creation rightly, and all people fairly.

This is the promise of Psalm 96, and it is the promise of the gospel story. The king who came—Jesus Christ—ascended into heaven and promised to one day return. But when he returns, the Scriptures tell us, he will come **not as an atoning sacrifice but as a righteous judge**. And every ounce of evil and sin and rebellion and idol-worship in his once-perfect creation will be fully and finally dealt with.

Every wrong that you and I have **seen, heard of, or experienced** will come before the all-powerful king of the earth.

What should be our response to this king? It is to rejoice! Be glad! Anticipate the day when he completes his work.

And in the meantime, we worship, and we testify. We worship him because he is worthy, and we proclaim that worth to the billions of people whose worship he is still worthy of.

The Lord's reigns. Brothers & sisters, let our reverence for this king compel devoted worship, worldwide mission, and joyful anticipation.