

Introduction

- Intro: Series Recap
 - How to Draw Near?
 - So far, our answer has been by creating distraction free spaces, in otherwise very distracted world, to listen to God's word, meditate on God's word, and respond to God's word.
 - Just like in any relationship, drawing near to God, cultivating intimacy with him, begins with creating space to encounter him. And in that space, we open our ears to his voice (through the wordless words of creation, but primarily through his written word)...we open our ears to his voice, we reflect deeply on what he's said, and then we respond to his voice in prayer
 - However, if we had stopped where we left off last week, this series could be dangerously lopsided because drawing near to God is not just something that's done in the comfort of my favorite chair at home with my Bible and a cup of coffee. That can be an important part. But drawing near to God, as much as it's a me and Jesus thing, it is equally a "we" and Jesus thing. It's something we do in community. And more than anything else, the ancient practice that forms what we do when we set out to draw near to God together is the practice of worshipping with God's people.
- Need: If you only draw near to God in the quiet of your study at home without learning how to worship with his people, you will incomplete too.
- Subject: How do we draw near to God through worship with his people?
- Text: Psalms 95
- Preview: The Essence of True Worship / The Context of True Worship / The Result of True Worship

Body

- The Essence of True Worship
 - What is worship?
 - Hebrew word for worship in verse 6 is "havah" and in the OT, havah is used to describe what people do when they encounter something or someone of great value
 - First use in OT is Genesis 18, when Abraham and Sarah are visited by three holy men. We're not told who they are, just that it was clear, they were people of great importance. Abraham bows down to them, he gets them water to wash their feet, he tells Sarah to make bread, slaughter a goat, make a great feast. The word is "havah". Worship.

- Definition: Worship is the way we respond to that which we greatly value
 - Examples: seahawks game, a great meal, a sunny day
- Main Point 95: In a world of worship, Yahweh is the only object worthy of our ultimate worship
 - Commands in verse 1-2
 - Why is Yahweh worthy of our ultimate worship? = Because he's a great God above every other god (verse 3)
 - First, he's a God of Comprehensive Power
 - In ancient times, people believed there were lots of gods, and each of these gods had some level of authority over their given domain.
 - A god of the land you'd worship if you wanted an abundant harvest
 - A god of the sea you'd worship if you wanted safe travel
 - But this psalmist says, Yahweh isn't just a god who has a limited amount of power over one domain of creation. He has comprehensive power over all things because he's the creator of all things. (4-5)
 - Second, he Uses His Power for his People (if he was just power, wouldn't be worthy)
 - God of salvation (deliverance)
 - He's a shepherd (he leads us in paths of life)
 - Illustration
 - Sheet of paper illustration
 - The God who created the known universe cares for you like a shepherd cares for his sheep.
 - Objection: I'm not really into this whole worship thing
 - The choice is not between being a worshipper or a non-worshipper. It's between worshipping Yahweh or worshipping another god. And the psalmist says worship God, because he's a one of one. He's unlike another other god, because he actually uses his power to set free. Every other god enslaves.
 - CONTROL
 - Becky Pippert: "The person who seeks power is controlled by power. The person who lives for acceptance by other people is controlled by the people he or she seeks to please. One thing is certain: we do not control ourselves. We're controlled by the lord of our lives." "Whatever controls us is our lord."
 - Any other god you worship besides Yahweh will do the opposite of bring you salvation. It will enslave you. Yahweh is the only God who has comprehensive power and uses that power for his people. It's why he only

is worthy of our ultimate worship. He's a great God above every other god.

- What is the essence of true worship?
 - Answer: The lifelong journey of learning to value the one true God more than any other god ("Worship is the journey from the many to the One, from idols to the true God." A.W. Tozer)
- (How do you do that? Better to ask, what's the best environment or context for that?)
- The Context of True Worship
 - The best context for growing in worship is the community of God's people
 - This psalm is a psalm of plurals. In fact, every pronoun in this psalm that refers to humans is plural. There are no singulars. Why?
 - Because the main context for drawing near to God in the scriptures is "we" not "me." Drawing near to God is not just a "me" thing, it's also a "we" thing. In fact, I think the scriptures would say the community of God's people isn't just an important context to draw near to God, but actually the primary context.
 - This is assumption of all the psalms. There are some psalms written in the singular. "I" "me" "my". But we can't forget that while the Psalms are prayers. And while the many of them were certainly written in the place of silence and solitude before the Lord, they come to us in the form of a hymn book for public worship. These prayers are the prayers of the community of God's people in worship together before God. Not the private journal entries of one man or woman.
 - This is radically counter-cultural
 - We live in a time that Robert Bellah called radical individualism. Means that we consider the individual to be more important than the community. My experience, my wants, my dreams, my desires are ultimate.
 - This effects the church in a hundred ways. But one way is that we think the main context we grow in enjoying the Lord is alone with God and a cup of coffee. But the Bible says it's the opposite.
 - The deep work of transformation can certainly happen alone before God in the silence, but if that's the only place it happens, you're missing out. There's a very real sense in which our individual drawing near to God is almost a preparation for our corporate drawing near to God. That's where the real transforming power is.
 - Why is this the case?
 - Community enables us to **know** God's greatness
 - The call and response nature of the Psalm
 - There's a conversation going on here about the greatness of God (I value this - I value that)
 - C.S. Lewis and the inklings
 - How much more true of an infinite being like God. It takes a community to see more of his greatness.

- Only if you're deeply connected in a worshipping community will you be growing in your understanding of the value and beauty of God (Growing together in Christ)
 - Community enables us to **remember** God's greatness
 - 7d-11
 - Give the story context (Israel delivered / First worship song / right after, a series of grumbling). What happened? They forgot the beauty of God.
 - What's the solution to forgetting? Worship in community.
 - Hebrews passage
 - Dietrich Bonhoeffer purpose of community quote
 - Dial knob illustration
 - "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst."
 - Community enables us to **experience** God's greatness
 - The community in this psalm is experiencing the value of God in a profound way
 - What's happening? There's a difference in worshipping God alone and in the assembly of God's people. In fact, the Hebrew conception of worshipping God in the quiet of your car wasn't really a category. Worship was incomplete until it was expressed in the congregation. My most profound moments of experiencing the beauty of God have happened in community.
 - It's hard to explain. It's one thing to sense God's beauty in ourselves, but when we express that beauty in praise or worship, it actually enables us to sense even more of the beauty.
 - Compare worshipping in my house alone w. worshipping on a Sunday morning
- The Result of True Worship
 - 7d-11 tells us the opposite of worshipping, which is hardening our hearts. Failing to believe God is the most valuable thing and therefore worthy of our worship. Those who harden their hearts give up God's rest, just like Israel did when they failed to value God
 - But this means, those who practice worshipping with God's people find God's rest
 - The author of Hebrews meditates on this psalm for two chapters and asks why David offers this rest to those who worship if Joshua eventually did lead the people into the promised land
 - The answer is that the rest here isn't just the rest from the desert. It's the rest of God himself.
 - Hebrews says this is actually the rest God experienced on the seventh day of creation when after making everything, he stepped back and said, it is very good.

- But how can worship do that? Our lives are a mess. How does worshipping God allows us to say, there's no more work to be done. I'm good!
- Hebrews says, the answer is "Our Great High Priest", Jesus.
- In the OT, the high priest were the leaders of worship. They showed the people how to value Yahweh above every other god. They failed often though. But Jesus was the perfect high priest. He was always worshipping God. Always holding his as the most valuable thing in his heart, and yet at the end of his life, does he experience the rest of God? Not at all.
- Jesus lived a life of perfect work. There was nothing more for him to do. There was no regrets. Which means he should have been able to say, "it is very good" and find the perfect rest of God. But on the cross, he experienced a cosmic restlessness. Why? So that you and I could have the rest of God. He got the wrath of God, the same wrath poured on Israel in the desert. He got the wrath of God in his perfection, so that we could have the rest of God in our imperfection.
- And when he is our vision. When he is the thing we behold as we worship together in community, it enables us to experience seventh day rest. Sabbath rest.