Make a Joyful Noise

Bible Background • PSALM 95:1-7a
Printed Text • PSALM 95:1-7a | Devotional Reading • 1 KINGS 8:54-62

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: DISCERN that God is the Creator of the earth and the maker of humankind, and God is truly worthy of praise; EXPERIENCE the enthusiasm, power, and excitement that comes when believers praise God as their divine King; and SHED inhibitions in worship and praise God exuberantly.

In Focus

After months of indecision and trying to convince himself otherwise, David finally resigned from the praise and worship team. Sure, the new job promotion had him busier than before, but not to the point where he wouldn’t use his singing gift for God. But, that’s the excuse he gave to his pastor. He hoped one day he could be bold enough to be honest about his resignation.

Six months ago, a new minister of music was hired, and the church seemed livelier. Compliments poured in about the song choices and compositions. People no longer had to be told to get up and praise God because they were now doing it on their own. Everybody seemed pleased, except David. He desperately wanted to express himself like everyone else, but he felt a little jealous of the new music minister. He knew that he could not praise God the way he wanted to because of the condition of his heart. He knew he had to deal with that before he made any attempts at worshiping God during the service.
God is worthy of our praise and worship. How do we ensure that we worship Him in spirit and in truth?

**Keep in Mind**

“O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation” (Psalm 95:1).

**Focal Verses**

KJV Psalm 95:1 O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

3 For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

4 In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also.

5 The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land.

6 O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

7a For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

NLT Psalm 95:1 Come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.

2 Let us come to him with thanksgiving. Let us sing psalms of praise to him.

3 For the LORD is a great God, a great King above all gods.

4 He holds in his hands the depths of the earth and the mightiest mountains.

5 The sea belongs to him, for he made it. His hands formed the dry land, too.

6 Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the LORD our maker,

7a for he is our God. We are the people he watches over, the flock under his care.

**The People, Places, and Times**

**Gods.** These were idols worshiped by other nations and sometimes the Israelite people. In the ancient Near East, different nations worshiped a variety of gods. The Israelite worship of Yahweh was unique in that the people were commanded to worship only one God as opposed to the surrounding nations, who worshiped a roster of different deities dedicated to different aspects of life. Although the Israelites did not worship these deities, they often declared their one God to be supreme over the many other gods of the nations.

**Rock of Our Salvation.** Many times the Bible refers to God as a Rock or the Rock of our salvation. This may have been because during their trek in the wilderness God gave Israel water from a rock (Numbers 20:1–13). It also could have been due to the benefits of a rock as a shade during the heat
(Isaiah 32:2) and the safety of a rock when hiding from or fighting an enemy (Psalm 31:2, 3; 104:18).

**Pasture.** Shepherds would keep their sheep in a pen during the night and let them out into the pasture during the day. These were areas where they could find grass and vegetation to eat freely. In ancient Palestine, pasture was not necessarily an abundant field of greenery but the rocky bare hills. The shepherd led the sheep to eat just what they needed for that day. The best pasture was usually on the plateaus east of the Jordan and the mountains of Palestine and Syria.

**Background**

*Psalm 95* is an invitation to worship. Perhaps the crowd or congregation had grown weary. It seemed that they’d stopped believing, and were no longer expecting God to fulfill His promises. The author who tired of their passivity essentially said, “Don’t just stand there; do something!” Through the psalm, the psalmist exhorted the people to serve God.

One cannot worship God with a hardened heart, as this psalm warns. In verse 8 of the same psalm, the psalmist used the testing at Meribah (also known as Massah) as an example. At Meribah, the Israelites sinned against God (Exodus 17:1–7). “Is the Lord among us or not?” they complained. Not trusting God in the wilderness kept them out of the Promised Land. In our text, the psalmist admonished the congregation to not let the same happen to them. “Come, let us sing to the one who’ll save us,” he urged. The same testing is referenced in Hebrews 3:7 and 4:7 as a warning to believers.

**At-A-Glance**

1. Praise Him (*Psalm 95:1–2*)
2. Adore Him (vv. 3–5)
3. Worship Him (vv. 6–7)

**In Depth**

1. **Praise Him (*Psalm 95:1–2*)**

Praising God was as natural to the psalmist as breathing. Psalms is full of praises, adoration, and worship to God. Even when things were bad, the psalmist poured out his heart to the Rock of his salvation. The “Rock” is a recurrent metaphor for God in Psalms, used over 20 times.

The psalmist sees the worship of God as something to be done corporately. He exhorts the congregation with the words “Come, let us sing together.” It is an invitation to praise the Rock of our salvation, but at the same time the psalmist is also leading the way by including himself in the invitation. He says “us” so that the call is personal as well as corporate.

The psalmist says, “Let’s shout joyfully.” Praising God should be joyful and exuberant, not a solemn and sad occasion. Our deepest joy is to be found in God, and this joy must have full expression. Shouting joyfully was a way of celebrating God and all that He had done for His people.

The tools that the psalmist prescribes to be used in worship are thanksgiving and psalms of praise. Our worship of God is to be permeated by thanksgiving. We have received nothing outside of what God has given us. This is enough motivation for thanks. Psalms of praise were songs written for the express purpose of praising and adoring God in small and large settings.
2. Adore Him (vv. 3–5)

As if the people had asked why they should praise the Lord, the psalmist answered. “Because He is great.” Then, he gave evidence of God’s greatness by recalling that He held the deep places of the earth in His hand. Essentially he challenged, “If things that are out of sight and out of reach are in His hands, how much more so are your problems?”

Scripture often used Creation as evidence of God’s power. The Lord made the sea and dry land, and both are under His control. No matter how much an angry sea rages, it can go no farther than the boundary the Lord sets. It’s as if the psalmist set a challenge: “If the Lord set an end to something seemingly uncontrollable, would He not have an end to this?”

3. Worship Him (vv. 6–7)

The psalmist recognized pride can hinder our relationship with God. The antidote to pridefulness is worship. By showing God how much He is worth to us, we realize our true worth in relationship to Him. This is a surefire cure for pride: “Bow down and worship the Lord who made us.” Psalm 100:3 also points to God as our Creator, saying, “… it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.”

Who tells the maker what to do? Isaiah 45:9 echoes, “Does the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you making?’” (NIV). Further, in verse 7, the psalmist challenged the reader to know that He is their God, not the other way around. We are His sheep, in His pasture, and cannot be plucked out of His hand.

Jesus further illustrated the sheep-shepherd relationship when He proclaimed Himself the Good Shepherd (John 10). There, Jesus confronted the Pharisees who had set themselves up as shepherds of the people.

Search the Scriptures

1. How should we come into His presence (Psalm 95:2)?

2. What is the posture for worship (v. 6)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. Why did the psalmist refer to God as a Rock?

2. How does Scripture point to Creation as evidence of God’s power?

Lesson in Our Society

Our society promotes pridefulness, often concealing it as self-confidence. Bestseller lists tout titles that reveal seven or ten steps to self-promotion. The Bible shows us that promotion comes from the Lord (Psalm 75:6). Our text reminds us that one must come before the Lord humbly and with thanksgiving—certainly not positions of pride, especially while on bended knee.

Make It Happen

This week, practice joyfulness. No matter how challenging your days get, sing songs of praise to God. Remember that you belong to God, not the other way around. Instead of standing, complaining, and
prolonging your pain, get on your knees and worship. Bow down and thank Him for the things that are good and right.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

**Psalm 95:1-7a**

This passage is filled with commands and exhortations about praise and worship. In ancient Israel, many of the psalms were part of the worship services, especially psalms of praise such as this one. Imperative forms are used twice inviting the people to worship (vv. 1, 6). These commands to come to worship are followed by numerous exhortations for the people to rejoice, exult, come into God’s presence, and shout with songs (vv. 1–2), as well as to bow down in worship and kneel before God (v. 6). The quantity of verbs calling the people to worship must have overwhelmed the worshipers. Accompanied by these exhortations are repeated reminders of who they are called to worship—the Lord (v. 1), the Rock of our salvation (v. 1), the great God (v. 3), the great Ring over all divine things (v. 3), and our God (v. 7a). Again and again the psalm impresses on the people how, why, and who they should worship. We all need reminders from time to time of the many ways God shows His power in our lives so we can worship with awe and joy, and this psalm serves to do just that.

Because a call to worship appears twice (vv. 1–2 and v. 6), it is possible that the psalm was originally part of a processional that concluded with the prophetic exhortation of vv. 7b–11. There is no explicit historical evidence for the original setting, but the psalm was a part of Jewish Sabbath worship during the Roman period, and as a result it became a call to worship in Christian services as well. Since antiquity, its words have charged the faithful to glorify God.

1 O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. 2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

The psalm begins the call to worship with an imperative (come), followed by four verbs exhorting the people to sing and rejoice in God’s presence. It is more than an invitation to worship the Lord, the Rock our salvation; it is a powerful summons to “make a joyful noise” or to worship God with a joy that compels His people to shout. The psalmist is filled with such jubilation at God’s power that words are not enough. Music is necessary to express such wonderment.

The people are urged to enter God’s presence. In the Old Testament, God’s presence is described as His very face. God is not just a transcendent Creator and Ruler who is not involved personally with His creation. God interacts face to face with those who worship Him, and since their worship brings them face to face with their Creator, they must sing!

3 For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

The psalm begins the explanation of the reasons for worshiping God. Not only is the Lord a great God, but He is also greater than all other gods. In antiquity, the Israelites always had neighbors who
worshiped other gods, and the Old Testament narrates many times when the Israelites were tempted to, and sometimes did, worship those false deities. Here the psalm contains a metaphor the people would comprehend because they were ruled by kings and understood the authority and power that a king had. Just as David, Solomon, and the other Israelite kings had authority and power over the people, so the Lord has authority and power over all gods. For anyone tempted to worship other gods, this psalm reminds them that their God is the one with power over everything.

4 In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. 5 The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land.

God is the Creator of all things. The deep places and the hills represent creation from top to bottom. Similarly, v. 5 mentions water and dry land. These opposite pictures of the depths and the hills, as well as water and dry land, form an all-encompassing picture of God’s creation. In addition, the reference to the sea and the dry land echoes the Exodus, reminding the people of the miraculous ways in which God saves those of faith. Bookending these verses with God’s hands also creates an image of His hands encompassing all of creation. God created everything and cares for everything.

In the Old Testament, God’s hand represents not only the things He touches and tends to, but also His power and strength. Literally, God’s hand touches all parts of the earth, including the heights of the mountains. Metaphorically, God’s power and strength as Creator are reflected in the very foundations and heights of creation. God’s hand is both powerful and caring, and tends to all of His creation.

6 O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

Parallel to verse 1 in structure, this verse once again commands the people to worship God, adding new forms of worship to the noisy singing and rejoicing of vv. 1–2. Although the first exhortative verb, shakhah (Heb. shah-KHAH), is translated “worship,” it also means to bow down because it carries the connotation of submitting to someone in authority. As a result, all three verbs describing worship in this verse indicate physical bowing before God the Creator. The final verb for kneeling, barak (Heb. bah-RAHK), can also indicate blessing in other contexts where God blesses the faithful, establishing a relationship between God as the one who blesses and the people as worshipers. In addition, the epithet for God as our Maker reminds the people that God has created not only the earth and the sea but also the people, and they should worship Him by surrendering to Him.

7a For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

Similar to v. 3, 7a explains why the people should worship with submission. Quite simply, the Lord is our God. The metaphor shifts from God as Creator to God as Shepherd. Now God’s hand of care and power is involved in tending to His flock. The remainder of the psalm carries out this metaphor by reminding the people that their ancestors did not always follow God, even though they knew about His works. Amid a psalm of praise and worship, the final verses serve as a reminder of the need for such psalms. Even God’s faithful can forget how to worship God, so the psalm calls the people to keep worshiping God with song and submission lest they too forget His power and mighty deeds.