

Good evening church, it's good to see you all here tonight.

Last week Brad covered psalm 96 and 97 and we saw two psalms that pointed to the worship of God and his worthiness of being worshiped and then in 97 we saw the reverence and reign of God as well.

This week is similar that we will see psalm 98 point to the worthiness of God's worship and then in psalm 99 we will see the reverence and reign of God.

So lets get started with psalm 98.

Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The LORD has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises! Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody! With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD! Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it! Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

Lets Pray.

As we look at this psalm you can see three divisions each 3 verses long.

So the first 3 verses show us that God is Praised for His Salvation then the next 3 verses show us that God is praised by Our Song and lastly we see that God is praised by all creation.

So lets tackle the first 3 verses which show us that God is praised for his salvation.

God is Praised for His Salvation (1-3)

Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The LORD has made known his

salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

The first thing we read in verse 1 is for the reader to sing a new song, not a song of lament or petition, but a new song of victory for God has brought salvation. He has done marvelous things the psalmist tells us.

There is some disagreement between commentators as to which marvelous things the psalmist is writing about. Is it a psalm to remember the works of God in bring Israel out of Egypt and slavery, or is about the works done to bring Israel out of exile in Babylon?

I think this could be speaking to both, or it is a more comprehensive psalm to call us to praise God for his acts of salvation whenever and however they are done

So as believers on the other side of the cross we can connect with this psalm as well.

From God working salvation for Israel from Egypt or from Babylon to his work of salvation through his son for us, God should be praised for his salvation.

This psalm in verses 1-3 points out 3 main ideas about God's work of salvation as well.

First we see that salvation is wholly a work of God.¹

We see the phrases, "he has done marvelous things, His right hand, and His holy arm, he has revealed his righteousness, He has remembered."

¹ Egypt, Babylon, Christ paradigm adapted from Christ Centered Exposition, Psalm 98.

In all these phrases we are reminded of the initiation God takes in his salvation.

Just think of all that was put into motion to bring Israel out of Egypt. The plagues, the Passover, the parting the Red Sea, the provision in the desert of food and water, the protection from enemies.

Then God uses kings of enemy empires to bring about the ability for Israel to return from Babylonian exile and leaders like Ezra and Nehemiah.

And of course, think of his work in sending his son for us to purchase our salvation a work be began all the way back in Genesis 3:15 when he promised Adam and Eve that he would send someone to crush the work of the serpent.

In all of these instances we see that God is the initiator of salvation and he alone works all the parts together to accomplish salvation for his people.

Secondly, we see that God's Salvation is for all to see.

The psalmist points out over and over that God's works of salvation are on display for all to see.

He says, "the Lord has made known his salvation, he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations, all the ends of the earth have seen that salvation of God.

God's acts of salvation are grand displays of his power and rule. In the salvation from Egypt after God closes the red sea on the Egyptians.

Exodus 14:30-31 tells us, "Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses."

The Egyptians also saw this display of power as well and feared the God of Israel.

We also know when Israel returns from exile in Babylon, they rebuild the temple and the city to again establish a place for God to dwell with his people.

And of course we see the display of Christ on the cross for all to see as Jesus takes on the sins of mankind to only be raised three days later and seen by over 500 people show he had defeated sin and death.

And now because of the spirit, the saving work of God is on display in every follower of Jesus' life. In homes, places of work, towns, villages, cities, everywhere a follower of Jesus lives is personal display of the saving work of God.

Lastly we see God's salvation is motivated by love for his people and glory for himself.

Verse 3 points out that God had remembered his steadfast love, or hesed love in Hebrew. This was covenant keeping love toward Israel.

The psalmist connects this remembering of love to the salvation he is speaking about. **God loves his people and delights to save them and work on their behalf.**

But we also see who salvation is ultimately for in verse 1, **God himself**. The psalmist says that God has worked salvation for him.

The salvation of Israel from Egypt, or Babylonia, or even the salvation of our own souls through Jesus is all bring God glory.

Every time Moses goes to Pharaoh and speaks on behalf of God he tells him to let my people go and it is always for the same purpose, so they may worship God.

Exodus 5:1 - Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.' "

7:16 - 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, "Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness."

Exodus - 8:8, 8:20, 9:1, 9:13, 10:3, - Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Let my people go, that they may serve me.

Over and over God seeks to save his people to bring them together to worship him.

Then we see that Ezra and Nehemiah go back from Babylon to rebuild the temple and city to again worship God.

And of course we see as followers of Jesus he was coming to pay for our sin and give us new hearts of flesh and not stone so we might love and worship God in spirit and in truth.

Even today, as the local church, we are gathered followers of Jesus coming together weekly to worship God, the author and perfecter of our faith and salvation.

Moldova Story

I can remember the first time I realized the magnitude and vastness of God in a way I had never thought of him and it was in a small eastern European country called Moldova.

My BSU director got me to go for a month to moldova the summer of my freshman year of college and JCJC down in south Mississippi. And for one of the weeks we were there we participated in a training that was done for church leaders in that area of eastern Europe.

So we had leaders from Moldova, Ukraine, Poland, and Russia. And I can remember the first worship service we had the first night there I sat in silence of most of it.

We began to sing song in three different languages. We would sing a song in English, then Romanian, then in Russian and to hear these songs you could not sing in Russian for instance so loudly and beautifully I realized the God that I sang to and who had saved me was much bigger than my church, or BSU, or small Bible studies, but that his work of salvation came to all these people in all kinds of ways.

And I saw in that moment that God is to be praised for a salvation that is done wholly by him, for all to see, and motivated by his love and glory of himself.

Next we see the psalmist call us to praise the Lord by our song. Lets take a look at verses 4-6.

God is Praised by Our Song (4-6)

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises! Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody! With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD!

Just to mention what Brad mentioned last week that instruments are not bad things. We see here specially that the psalmist calls us to make music with lyre, horn, and trumpet. All instrument that are put together with singing to bring a joyful noise to the Lord.

And the main thing I want us to see about this section is that God is deserving of this type of praise and fan fare.

These verses don't just connect with Israel and what God has done for them, verse 4 calls the earth, all those on the earth, all the people of the earth to praise in song.

The reason I want to point that out is that God deserves worship for all those on the earth.

Verse 6 reminds us that God is our King, now whether we have submitted to his rule in our lives or not does not change the fact that God is king of this world and he deserves worship from all who live on it.

There is something special about music. Some say that Music is the language of emotion.² It is easy to tell the type of emotion that is meant to be felt just by hearing the pace, structure, and volume of the music, even without words.

² <https://www.insidescience.org/video/why-does-music-make-us-emotional>

Music can sound sad, happy, scary, joyful, graceful, loving, and so on to cover a great range of emotion.

Also when I think of music I think of how music causes us to remember so many things.

I know the lyrics of so many 80 and 90s country music songs because that's what was on every time I got in my dad or brothers truck growing up.

There is something about music that allows us to recall a great amount of information. One article I found by the BBC gave some insight scientifically why this is the case. It says,

"The hippocampus and the frontal cortex are two large areas in the brain associated with memory and they take in a great deal of information every minute. Retrieving it is not always easy. It doesn't simply come when you ask it to. Music helps because it provides a rhythm and rhyme and sometimes alliteration which helps to unlock that information with cues. It is the structure of the song that helps us to remember it, as well as the melody and the images the words provoke. The technique remains important today. Neuroscientists have analysed the brain mechanisms related to memory, finding that words set to music are the easiest to remember. Just think of one of the first songs you could well have sung: "A,B,C,D,E,F,G, come along and sing with me." Text learnt to music is better remembered when it is heard as a song rather than speech. Try and remember anything set to a tune and your powers of recall will be stronger.³"

I can remember singing in nursing homes and hearing stories of others singing with those who were in their late 90s and even 100s singing hymns they grew up with word for word.

Many of them suffering from various types of memory loss but still able to recall those lyrics to hymns they always heard.

³ <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20140417-why-does-music-evoke-memories>

We praise God with our Song because he is worthy of it, but I also think when we praise God in song it does two things to us.

First, in singing our affections are stirred for God.

The Psalmist calls us to sing and make a joyful noise or a joyous song.

I think whatever it is that brings you joy that is where your affections are.

I think of joy of coming home from work and Madi running straight to me calling out daddy and I have immense joy because I have great affection for her.

In the same way as we sing joyful songs to God our affections should be stirred for him.

Secondly, singing praise to God should remind us of the awe we should have toward God.

He is worthy of praise from all on the earth with voices and instruments because of his great salvation. We should sing praises to be reminded of his greatness and glory and be left in Awe of God.

So I think when we praise God with our song we do so because he deserves it and is worthy of that praise and it can help to stir up affections for God and leaves us in awe of him.

Lastly, we see that the psalmist calls not only those who live on the earth to praise God but that God is to be praised by all creation.

Lets look at verses 7-9

God is Praised by All Creation (7-9)

Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it! Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

This section the psalmist points out that all creation itself praises God. He speaks of the sea roaring and all that fills the sea praising God. He mentions the rivers clap their hand and the hill sing in praise to God.

But why?

Verse 9 tell us that creation does this in response to the second coming when God will come to the earth and judge the earth with righteousness and equity.

In a sense creation does display the glory of God and give praise to God currently, but creation has been marred by the sin of man. Paul points this out in **Romans 8 when he says,**

²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope

²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

²²For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

²³And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

This section points us to the coming day when Christ will return and not only will those in Christ have redeemed bodies, but we will live in a redeemed creation unmarked by sin and brokenness.

And I think of just how amazing creation is already.

Seeing mountain ranges, or rivers and creeks, the beach and oceans and thinking that all that we see currently is imperfect and broken, but one day it will be even more glorious than we can imagine. **And it will be like a song written by Issac Watts when he says,**

“No more let sins and sorrows grow nor thorns infest the ground; he comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.

4 He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.⁴”

We patiently await that glorious day.

Psalm 99

So moving on to Psalm 99 we see this psalm divided into two sections.

Verses 1-5 we see we should **worship God because he is set apart** and in verses 6-9 we should **worship God because he is near.**

This passage creates a type of paradox for us to think about.

The first section points us to the holiness, sovereignty, and rule of God. The things God does that is not like us and make us vividly aware that we are not God.

But then in verses 6-9 we see how this holy set apart God has relationships with unholy humanity.

We are shown God’s love and forgiveness.

⁴ Adapted by Christ Centered Exposition, Psalms 50-100, 431.

This is a great psalm for us to see that even though God is set apart and distinct from us in an infinite number of ways he still desires a relationship with us and forgives us and extend grace day after day to have that relationship with us.

So lets jump into to verse 1-5 where we see we should worship God because he is set apart.

Worship God Because He is Set Apart (1-5)

The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake! The LORD is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples. Let them praise your great and awesome name! Holy is he! The King in his might loves justice. You have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. Exalt the LORD our God; worship at his footstool! Holy is he!

Natchez/Cathedral Story

I remember a few years ago Amber and I went to visited Natchez for a little vacation. I don't think either of us had been and we went to explore what the little city had to offer. While we were there we were encouraged to go visit the Catholic church St. Mary Basilica to see its artwork and architecture. Here is a picture right here.

As soon as you walk in there is a sense of being small. Of being overwhelmed. The arches are huge and go high, drawing your eyes upward.

That is the whole purpose of steeples to draw our eyes upward to be reminded of God and have reverence for him. There is a sense of awe and reverence when you are in there.

There are much bigger cathedrals as well. Here is a picture of Notre Dame in Paris before the fire that damaged it so badly. And here is St. Paul's Cathedral as well in London.

Churches are built in these ways to set themselves apart architecturally and cause us to think of the holiness and reverence that should be given to God.

This is what this passage should do in our minds and hearts as well. We see three main ways God is set part in this section.

God is Sovereign

We see the psalmist point out that God reigns, he sits enthroned, he is exalted over all peoples, he is the King, he is to be exalted.

In all things that happen God is in control, in times where everything seems to be in chaos, like the days we are living in now, God is still reigning, he still sits enthroned.

This is hard to realize because we live in the already but not yet. The time between Jesus coming to pay for our sin and deliver us from sin and death's power, but has not yet come to rule and reign forever.

During this time, God is extended mercy for those who are far off to come near to him, but one day everyone on earth will see God's sovereign rule.

The question we need to deal with is do I really believe God is king?

Do I believe he is reigning? Do I believe he is enthroned?

And does my life look like I believe it? Is there trust and confidence in God's rule, or do I live in a constant state of pessimism and questioning of God?

We must remember just as the psalmist does that just as God was reigning and enthroned during this time in the OT he is also ruling and reigning now.

Next we see that God is perfect in his ways.

God is Perfect in His Ways

The psalmist points out how God loves justice, equity, and righteousness. God operates in perfection of all of these things.

Perfect justice, perfect equity, and perfect righteousness. There is nothing that God will do that is not perfect in justice, equity, and righteousness.

We can trust that again in the midst of times that are confusing or don't make sense, we should never blame God for being unfair or wrong in how he handled something.

It is easy for us to have those feelings because we want God's perfect justice and equity right now, right when we think we should see it, but God is not controlled by time and he will execute his perfect justice when he sees fit.

But one day all that is unjust in the world and broken will be undone. All that is sad and wrong will become untrue as Sam says in Lord of the Rings: Return of the King. He says,

*"Gandalf! I thought you were dead! But then I thought I was dead myself. Is everything sad going to come untrue? What's happened to the world?"
A great Shadow has departed," said Gandalf, and then he laughed and the sound was like music, or like water in a parched land; and as he listened the thought came to Sam that he had not heard laughter, the pure sound of merriment, for days upon days without count."*⁵

Because God's ways are perfect, we look forward to when his perfect justice and righteousness is brought to bear in every way on earth and everything that was once sad will become untrue.

Lastly, we see that God is holy

God is Holy

The psalmist uses verse 3, 5, and 9 all to point out that God is holy. He is set apart. He is totally pure in all his ways.

This is a great thing for those of us who follow this God. We follow a God who is incapable of being corrupted, or having evil motives, or seeking to do evil things.

But this aspect of God makes it challenging for us to see how and why a holy God, pure in all his ways, could be involved with humanity who are not holy and seek evil in all their ways.

⁵ <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/56736-gandalf-i-thought-you-were-dead-but-then-i-thought>

The psalmist addresses this issue in verses 6-9, and shows us that we should not only worship God for being set apart but also for being near.

Worship God Because He is Near (6-9)

Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel also was among those who called upon his name. They called to the LORD, and he answered them. In the pillar of the cloud he spoke to them; they kept his testimonies and the statute that he gave them. O LORD our God, you answered them; you were a forgiving God to them, but an avenger of their wrongdoings. Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for the LORD our God is holy!

The psalmist uses the examples of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel to show that God, even in his holiness can commune with mankind. He points out the fact that these men called out to him and he answered.

He lead them in a pillar of cloud and spoke to them. God did not elevate himself outside of being in relationship with them, and instead forgives them and uses them for their good and his glory.

But this nearness of God reaches a new level when God not only is willing to have a relationship with mankind, **but when God himself becomes a man**. He is as near to us as possible.

In Jesus, God comes near to us to know our experience and to create a way for us to be near to him by paying for our unholiness and making us holy by his blood.

Then in his resurrection he strips unholiness of its power to separate us from himself and cleanses us and makes us pure.

This psalm helps us see how God is wholly different and separate from us,

but at the same time it causes us as believers to look at the cross and see how God came to us and instead of our unholiness and uncleanness pushing God away,

his holiness and his blood overcame our uncleanness and makes us whiter than snow as the hymn says,

Oh! precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus⁶

Lets pray.

Bibliography

James Hamilton, Psalms 73-150, Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary.

Steven Lawson, Psalm 76-150, Holman Old Testament Commentary.

Jim Shaddix, Psalm 50-100, Christ Centered Exposition.

Longman, Tremper, III, and David E. Garland, eds. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms (Revised Edition)*. Vol. 5. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008.

⁶ https://library.timelesstruths.org/music/Nothing_but_the_Blood/