

True Church (7)- A People Who Praise

(Psalm 149)

I. Introduction

- A. Years ago, the TV show Family Feud asked, “Name something that is boring”
1. Overwhelming #1 answer was “Church.” (Second answer wasn’t even close)
 - a. Why? Why is it the case that “church” and “boring” are synonyms?
 - b. The obvious answer may be the best answer—we’ve let it become boring
 2. There is a sense in which church architecture encourages non-involvement
 - a. We sit in rows, stare at the back of heads, and aren’t asked to do much
 - 1) Remember teacher who called you when you zoned out? *Let’s try that?*
 - 2) There always colonial times with the guys with the head-knockers
 - b. Would it help to arrange things in circle (like 1st century house church)
 3. **Problem:** I do see peoples faces in worship, and sometimes I see boredom
 - a. Sure, often that is my fault; guilty as charged. *But maybe not always!*
 - 1) Deacon “worshipped” with head back, eyes closed and mouth open
 - 2) I tried not to look at him; boredom can sometimes be contagious
 - b. Isn’t it supposed to be “love and good works” that are contagious?
- B. Maybe we have come to have fairly low expectations of worship experience
1. Some see church like taking medicine—it’s gotta taste bad to work
 - a. They don’t enjoy church, they don’t want anyone else to enjoy it
 - b. God likes it when we suffer; church is His way to ensuring we do!
 2. David, “I was glad when they said to me, let us go to house of Lord” **Why?**
 - a. **Old Story:** Guy wakes up Sunday says, “I’m not going to church”
 - 1) His wife asks him why, and he says, “No one ever speaks to me, the worship is always boring, it’s too cold, and they only want money”
 - 2) So his wife says, “But Honey, you have to go; you’re the preacher!”
 - b. Well, I’m glad you are here today; and I hope things aren’t boring
 3. We’ve been looking at characteristics of what makes up a “True Church”
 - a. To our growing list, this morning we add—“A People Who Praise”
 - b. Our text for this morning may seem a bit surprising—**Psalm 149**

II. First, We Must Sing A New Song (Psalm 149:1)

- A. So there you are— what we need to do to be a true church is sing new songs
1. OK, this isn't about new songs from Dennis Jernigan or Darlene Zschech
 - a. And its perfectly OK to sing old songs (“*I like my song writers good-n-dead*”)
 - b. Churches once sang psalms... until that kid Isaac Watts wrote new songs
 - c. “*Sing a new song*” isn't about the song as much as HOW we are to sing
 2. This expression is used in Psalms (6x), Isaiah (1x) and Revelation (2x)
 - a. Generally “*new song*” is the response of worship after being delivered
 - 1) We sing a new song when we recognize we are saved (Psa 96:1-3)
 - 2) God has done marvelous things, so you sing new song (Psa 98:1-2)
 - 3) When God delivers David, he sing a new song (Psa 144:9-10)
 - b. When you understand that God has delivered you, you sing a new song
 - c. In Revelation, the new song is what they sing in heaven (Rev 5:9, 14:3)
- B. A couple of these new songs of deliverance are quite dramatic—
1. What would you do if God pulled you out of a slimy pit? (Psalm 40:1-3)
 - a. The imagery of David patently waiting for God while in the mud and mire
 - 1) **Blog:** Girl texting while walking and fell through manhole in sewage
 - 2) Was she grateful when men pulled her out? *They left sewer open!*
 - b. David trusted God to get him out of the sewer—and God did
 - 1) And the result of salvation is singing a new song of praise to God
 - 2) Point isn't a new song, but a whole new way it was being sung!
 2. That's also the point of the new song of deliverance in Isaiah 42:1-4
 - a. Isaiah points past Israel's fall to a time of restoration and Messiah
 - 1) Text sounds familiar because it is applied to Jesus in Matt 12:18ff
 - 2) Messiah would restore bruised reeds & smoldering wicks (Isa 42:12)
 - b. The former things would be taken away and everything made new
 - c. What do you do with such a Messiah? Sing a new song! (Isa 42:10-12)
 - 1) Isaiah isn't focused on a contemporary style—wrote 8th century BC
 - 2) He's talking about HOW we sing— sing like we've been delivered
 3. Worship is transformed when you understand that you've been saved!

III. The New Song Is One of Exuberance (Psalm 149:2,3,5)

- A. Singing this new song of God's deliverance is an worship filled with joy
1. What do you do if you really believe that you about to die and then don't
 - a. Tears? Shouts of exuberance? Pensive meditation? Get up and dance?
 - b. *All of the above?* But the one thing that you won't be is BORED!
 - c. Sing a new song when we have been delivered out of the pit. Emotion.
 2. And these reactions of emotion is exactly what the Psalmist reflects here
 - a. They “*rejoice in their Maker*” and “*be glad in their King*” (2)
 - b. It's not just church, “*rejoice in this honor and sing for joy on their beds*” (5)
 - c. Even praise in music and dance (3) *One of my favorites songs is from this text*
I will sing to the Lord / and I will lift my voice / for You have heard my cry
I will sing to the Lord / and I will lift my hands/ for You have brought me out of the pit
And I'll sing glory, hallelujah / I lift Your name on high
And I'll sing holy, 'cause You're worthy / I'll praise You with the dance
 - 1) An old *Casting Crowns* song; we sang it a cappella at Pepperdine
 - 2) I'd love us to sing that, but I'm not sure what we would do if we did!
- B. Psalms is a primer on worship; it shows us what worship is all about
1. If Psalms teaches **anything** about worship, it teaches **joy!**
 - a. Psalms uses the 3 words used here (*rejoice, glad, joy*) about **105 times**
 - b. Why do the Biblical songwriters use this imagery of joy so much?
 - 1) Is it because “*joy*” and “*be glad*” rhyme with lots of neat words?
 - 2) Or do they expect worship to be an exercise of joyful thanksgiving?
 2. Tony Campalo spoke at a rally and preached on Sunday at a nearby church
 - a. Kids also visited—a rather more high church experience than the retreat
 - 1) Preacher ascend pulpit and gave formal call to worship (Psa 100:1)
 - 2) He said, “*Make a joyful noise*” and some kid whooped “*All right*”
 - b. **Campolo**: “*Someone making a joyful noise was last thing he expected!*”
- C. Point isn't we need more shouting, dancing, crying, or falling on our knees
1. **Point**: If we know we've been saved from slimy pit—**we won't be bored**
 - a. Worship isn't about orchestrating emotion; certainly not about faking it
 - b. Worship must be a safe place to feel emotion and to express that emotion
 2. If we see worship as flowing from God's salvation— it'll touch our hearts

IV. Worship Celebrates a Relationship (Psalm 149:4)

- A. When we “*sing a new song*” when we delight in the God who delights in us!
 - 1. God delights in us and crowns us with salvation— *a great reason to sing!*
 - a. Worship doesn’t give God anything (“*cattle on a thousand hills*”)
 - b. Worship rather acknowledges and responds to what God has done
 - c. It is **celebration** of our saving relationship with God given us by God
 - 1) God takes delight in His people, so His people take delight in Him.
 - 2) And the expression of that delight is what we call “**worship**”
 - 2. Worship isn’t about a religious duty; it’s a celebration of relationship
 - a. What Adam/Eve lost was face-2-face, walk-n-talk relationship w/ God
 - b. And that is the relationship that Jesus gave back at the cross (2 Cor 6:16)
 - c. Worship is one way that we celebrate our relationship, our delight in God
 - 3. A true church is worshipping church because of relationship with God
- B. But we must understand relationship works both ways (Psalm 149:6-9)
 - 1. Part of being God’s people was executing God’s judgment on the nations
 - a. In the OT, God called his people to punish wicked, pagan nations
 - b. You also need to remember that God used pagan nations to punish Israel
 - 2. Don’t get so bogged down in details that you miss the point— **SERVICE**.
“*May the Praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands*”
 - a. Worship was not their service to God but rather an expression of gratitude
 - 1) God lifted them out of the slimy pit and put them on solid ground
 - 2) All they can do is say “Thank You,” and that is essence of worship
 - b. But that “thank you” also leads them to serve, to obey, to follow God
 - 1) Worship prepare us to obey and serve God with the rest of our life
 - 2) Isn’t that why we shouldn’t give up meeting together (Heb 10:24-25)
 - 3. You not serving God this morning—you’re getting ready to serve Him
- C. What does it mean to be a true church? A true church is a worshipping church
 - 1. True worship is not just not singing with a piano (has nothing to do with it)
 - 2. True worship begins with knowing that God has lifted us from slimy pit
 - 3. True worship leads us to take sword of Spirit into the world to serve Him