

Session Seven: Public and Evangelistic Praise

Praising God for the Sake of Others

Lesson summary:

Praise and worship is often thought of today in very individual terms. We attend church with others, but we often regard our own experience of praise as an interior and private affair. **Psalm 96**, however, has a very different perspective on praise. This psalm teaches us to think of praise not as an optional and private activity, but rather as a duty that is both public and evangelistic, public pronouncements of good news to a world suffering under the effects of pain and injustice, the good news that the LORD reigns and that He is going to set all things right. (from the Leader's Guide)

1. After listening to the video and reading **Psalm 96**, what was one point from this lesson's teaching that stood out to you?

For me, the teaching on the evangelistic impact of public praise and worship helped me clarify that, like everything else in my Christian life, praise and worship is ultimately "for the sake of others," alerting me to my temptation to be self-referenced instead of God-referenced.

2. Describe a memorable experience you have had with praise and worship. What made that particular moment of praise stand out to you? How have your personal experiences influenced your thinking about the activity of praise in your own life?

How would you compare your most memorable experience with the story of David's dancing in 2 Samuel 6 and I Chronicles 15?

3. Why is it important that praise be done in public and not only in private? What are your thoughts about a Christian's responsibility to gather together with the people of God to praise and worship Him? If someone asked you why it is important to attend weekly worship, how would you respond?

4. What do you make of the claim that one of the best ways to share the good news of Jesus with someone is to bring them to church and let them experience its worship and liturgy? How has the liturgy of praise and worship deepened your awareness and understanding of the Gospel? (Think specifically of different parts of Anglican worship that have come to hold special meaning for you.)

5. What obstacles do you experience to participating in public praise and worship? What is helping you overcome these obstacles?

What impact has reading and praying the Psalms in private and/or in Psalms group had on your public praise and worship?

I'm glad we're starting this new chapter in our Psalms group's life together with a reminder that, not only our public praise and worship, but also our private praise and worship in our daily reading and praying of the Psalms and other Daily Office lectionary readings—all of this—is “for the sake of others.”

6. Read a few more (or all!) of these hymns of praise of divine kingship: **Psalms 29, 93, 95-99.**

Notice or underline all the “imperatives” in these psalms. (*Examples: 29:2, 95:1-2, 6 and 8; 96:1-3, 7-10a; 97:1, 6, 7, 10 and 12; 98:1 and 4-8, 99: 5,12*)

“Imperatives” in these psalms are the psalmist's expressed will to influence us, the readers, to change our behavior.

7. **List the “imperatives” that stand out to you** and talk to God and others you trust about how you want (or want to want!) to do these things more, both privately and publicly.

This may take you back to the obstacles you started noticing back in question 5.

Yes, it takes the power of God, the power that raised Jesus from the dead, to change us from the inside out and free us up to praise and give thanks “for the sake of others.” Fortunately, this power is available!

Ephesians 5:14b-21

“Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

One final plug for the Psalms: The Psalms give us words to express our joy in the Lord, and they also create joy in us. Let them do their work in you!