

# A God who deserves our Praise

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, hopefully you've got your Psalm 96 still opened, or turn back to that Psalm, as that's what we'll be looking at. Well, it was 1989, the year I moved to Australia, and Michael Chang was playing Stéphane Adberg, you've got the slide there, in the French Open final.

Michael Chang, the Chinese-American teenager, who was also a committed Christian. I was living with my uncle that year, and I remember staying up to watch the match. It was the middle of winter, and I was a Singaporean kid experiencing his first Melbourne winter. Now, my uncle was a Michael Chang fan, naturally, because Chinese-Christian, got to support your own.

And so there he was, cheering each point Michael won. And he was getting noisier and noisier, the closer Michael's victory got. But then he soon noticed I wasn't cheering. And to be honest, he got a little annoyed. Like, why not? And what's wrong with me? And when he asked, I said, well, it's too cold for me to cheer.

[ 1 : 15 ] The truth, however, was that there was a girl that I liked at school, and she was a Stéphane Adberg fan. And so I felt I had to be loyal to her and support Adberg instead of Chang.

After all, who said that just because I was Chinese and Christian, that I had to support Michael Chang as well? Now, the reason I tell this story is because there's something about us, isn't there? That when we're passionate about something, and the more we are, the more we want others to get on board as well. And this is similar with our psalm tonight.

You see, there are other psalms. So take another example, Psalm 101, where the psalmist simply praises the Lord by saying, I will sing of your love and justice to you, Lord, I will sing praise. But then there are others, like the one that we're looking at tonight, where the psalmist doesn't simply praise the Lord, but he commands others to do as well. Just like my uncle did with me over Michael Chang.

[ 2 : 22 ] So verse 1 begins like this. Sing to the Lord, a new song. Sing to the Lord, all the earth. It's clearly a command for others, for the whole earth, to join in the praise.

Now, as it was read, this psalm is actually a pretty straightforward psalm. So tonight, what I'll do instead is to dig a little deeper, to reflect on how this psalm approaches praise.

In particular, I want to try and analyze the nature of praise. And so I've grouped things that we're going to talk about under three sections into what I call the A, B, and C of praise.

So let's look at A first, the audience of praise. Read again with me from verses 1 to 3, and notice who the audience is. Sing to the Lord, a new song.

Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, praise his name. Proclaim his salvation day by day. Declare his glory among the nations. His marvelous deeds among all people.

[ 3 : 29 ] Well, actually, it's not just one, but two audiences, aren't there? First, there is the Lord, to whom we sing a new song. But then the other audience are the nations, or all the peoples.

In other words, this is public praise to God, which other people overhear. Why? Well, so that this praise might be a powerful and persuasive witness, bringing others to that same praise.

In fact, the psalmist has a rather big ambition, doesn't he? Did you notice that nowhere in this psalm is his command to praise confined just to God's people?

Instead, all creation, all humanity, are called to praise the Lord. And so that's why, as believers, evangelism, getting others to believe what we believe, is always a natural outworking of our faith.

If we truly believe who God is, then it ought to translate into a desire for others to share in our belief, and ultimately then to share in our praise.

[ 4 : 42 ] Now this, of course, brings us to the B of praise, the basis for our praise. What is it about God that allows us to be so brazen, so audacious in our praise of Him?

Well, we've already seen in the first three verses that it's because of what the Lord has done, His marvelous deeds we have read. But this is intimately tied also to who He is, which is now what is declared to us in verses 4 to 6.

And so verse 4 begins with 4. 4, why are we to praise? Well, 4, great is the Lord and most worthy of praise. He is to be feared above all gods.

For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before Him. Strength and glory are in His sanctuary. Here the gods of the nations, of the other nations, are being mocked.

They are merely idols, stone and wood. Which is why the psalmist says, don't bother with them. You nations join in to praise the true God instead.

[ 5 : 51 ] This is the God that made the heavens. He is the one that is able to do marvelous deeds. He is the one which you can proclaim salvation day after day.

You see, the more spectacular a feat, the more famous it ought to be, shouldn't it? So take sports, for example. When something amazing happens, it's all over the news, isn't it?

Let me give you an example. I know it's from a biased Liverpool supporter, but go with me. Many of you would have heard, I'm sure, the famous victory that Liverpool won last year when they came from a 3-0 deficit to beat Barcelona 4-0 in the second leg.

Now, why was it so famous and praiseworthy? Well, because Barcelona was considered the best team in the world. It had Lionel Messi, the best player in the world.

And it had the most expensive lineup. Further, they were three goals down, so they had to win by four goals. But not only that, they couldn't concede an away goal along the way as well.

[ 7 : 00 ] And what's more, for that match, poor Liverpool were without their first team strikers. Two of them were out because of injury. But then to top it off, look at the manner in which the winning fourth goal was scored.

So take a look at this. The colours are totally rattled. Take it quickly. Oh, wonderful thinking, Origi. Brilliant. Absolutely brilliant from Liverpool. And for Barcelona, chaotic. Catastrophic. And it's four. And they do lead now.

Not just on the night, but on aggregate. Well, have you ever seen anything like that from a top team like Barcelona? He can't believe it.

I mean, Trent Alexander-Arnold. Top marksman, the youngster, to see the possibility. Well, fantastic, wasn't it? Such a cheeky goal. And what's more, this clip in particular has been watched 10 millions of times over.

[ 8 : 06 ] I think I myself have watched it 10 times or more myself. In fact, I'm just wondering whether we should replay it again or not. That's fine. We're not. But here's the point I'm making, though.

The more spectacular a feat, the more famous it ought to be, right? And so it is with God. If He's that great, and He is, and His salvation is so amazing, then He deserves to be praised far and wide by millions, if not tens of millions of people.

And you know, as humans, we're good at exaggerating, aren't we? So you often see, people say, oh, I caught, you know, you should have seen the fish that I caught that got away.

It was this big when really it was only that big. Or how about when we write up our CVs, you know? Mark Chu is responsible for bringing in more than, you know, X million dollars in client business every year.

But of course, we don't mention that half of those millions was actually just simply reimbursement for travel expenses. But the opposite is true of God, isn't it?

[ 9 : 18 ] We may say that He's this great, but actually, He's, we've understood Him, right? I mean, my arms can't go any further. He's actually much, much greater than even I or you can describe Him.

And no matter how much we praise His salvation, it's actually greater than that. His marvelous deeds are more marvelous than we can describe. And in the New Testament, after the Spirit was poured out on the apostles, that's, whether it's Peter or Paul, we find that time and time again, these once timid disciples they became so bold as to stand up at the temple or in the synagogues to sing the praise of their God, to declare the glory of His salvation.

And now here in this psalm, we can see the basis for this praise. Already here in these six verses, first six verses, we see that there is praise for who God is.

He's the maker of the heavens, verse five. But then as we read further on, verse 10, we'll jump to that. He is the sovereign Lord. He reigns over all creation.

And that's why the world is firmly established. It cannot be moved because the whole universe is being held together by the Lord. But then notice what the psalmist says in the very next line.

[10:49] He declares that He will judge the people with equity. It's the same in the final verse of verse 13. Let all creation rejoice before the Lord for He comes.

He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness. And so, the psalmist not only praises God's salvation, He also praises God's judgment. And you see, in this psalm, but throughout the Bible as well, God's salvation always goes hand in hand with God's judgment. Salvation is God's rescuing of His people from all that is wrong in this world.

But that requires that the wrong be put to right, doesn't it? And that involves judging evil. But you see, God isn't just motivated by compassion for the weak or the oppressed.

As it says in that verse, He's motivated by His righteousness and faithfulness. His acts of salvation and judgment are an outworking of who He is, His character.

[11:57] Evil and injustice when He sees it is an affront to Him because of His character. And that's the link I think we're meant to draw in verse 10. Just as the physical world is ordered the way God intends and cannot be moved, so the moral world is ordered the way God desires.

except it isn't at the moment. We do see evil. But God will make it happen one day. He will put all the wrongs to right because any evil is an affront to His character.

It's rather like some of you have parents who can't stand the house, including your rooms, being untidy. And at first, they'll ask you to go tidy it. But if in the end you still don't do it, then they'll take action, won't they?

There will be consequences. One way or another, that room of yours will be tidied because it's an affront to their standards of cleanliness. And so with God, the way He does that, the way He rights the wrongs is first of all to send His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross so that God's judgment, the things that offends His character, that falls on Jesus rather than us.

It falls on Jesus because otherwise no one else will be able to be saved because we too will fall under God's judgment. But we mustn't forget that if we then reject what Jesus has done to save us, then as we've heard in our reading from Rihanna from Acts, we too will face Jesus Himself as our judge.

[13:43] That is, if we refuse Jesus as Messiah and Lord or Messiah and Savior, then He will come to us as our judge. So look again at Peter's precise words in Acts chapter 10.

So he starts off with the Gospel. We are witnesses of everything He did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed Him, Jesus, by hanging Him on the cross, but God raised Him from the dead on the third day and caused Him to be seen.

He was not seen by all the people but by witnesses whom God had already chosen, by us who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that He is the one whom God appointed not only as Savior but as judge of the living and the dead.

All the prophets testify about Him that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name. That's the salvation He brings. But if we reject that, then He's the judge of the living and the dead.

Peter, doesn't he, presents Jesus both as Savior and Lord and Judge. And it's the same here in Psalm 96. In fact, you notice at the very end that this very coming of Jesus is foreshadowed in verse 13.

[15:05] In verse 13, it says that the Lord Himself will come. See, judgment is not going to be meted out by God from afar but in person, in the coming of the person of Jesus.

So let's just pause a little reflect on this because we don't often appreciate that, do we? We don't appreciate that if Jesus has the power to forgive sin, then He also has the power to withhold forgiveness of sin and that essentially is what judgment is all about.

But He will only withhold His forgiveness if we are not willing to come to Him in humble repentance. And so if there's any of you there out there listening and you haven't quite come to Jesus to receive forgiveness of sins, perhaps you have not reckoned with your own sinfulness, your own need for salvation, then can I urge you to do that?

Can you talk to me or contact me in the email details at the end of the service or talk to the friend that you may have come with and find out how it is to find forgiveness in Christ Jesus.

But let's turn now to the third point and to the rest of the psalm. I sort of struggled to find a C to this last point and so I actually I haven't even updated the slide.

[ 16 : 36 ] I had components for a while but actually in the end I settled on the composition of praise because you see there are different elements aren't there that combine to form our praise to God.

The components combine to form the composition if you like. So that's my two C's and so these are the elements then now that I want to explore in the last few verses. But before we do just notice how the psalm is structured stylistically.

If you can look back at the psalm on your page in verse 1 to 6 we see that the psalm is addressed to all the earth all creation whether inanimate or animate and then all creatures whether human or otherwise.

It's all the earth all creation. But then in verses 7 to 10 the focus turns to humanity ascribe to the Lord glory do his name ascribe to the the old families of nations is who is being asked to ascribe. It's to humans isn't it? We who can speak we who are able to worship intelligibly and in their day they would also be able to come to the temple to offer sacrifices.

[ 17 : 45 ] But then in verses 11 to 13 it zooms out again doesn't it? because then the psalmist enjoins nature all of nature to join in praise. This time of course the heavens and the earth and the seas and the fields and the trees are to rejoice.

And of course this is figurative language you know the trees themselves can't literally do all that. And yet they celebrate the same things of God that humans are meant to celebrate his character and deeds his salvation and judgment.

but what are we to make then of these different elements that together make up the composition that is praise? Well to begin with the psalmist talks of ascribing to the Lord that's the first component that means attributing to the Lord what is true of him that's what praise entails give God the credit that is due to him and as we look at our lives and see the things happening around us praise is one aspect of life that we ought to learn because we need to learn the habit of giving God credit not just saying that God is great but saying why he's great giving him the credit for his greatness and now at the moment as we see what's going on in the world the presidential elections in the US or our situation here in Victoria it can always it can often fill us I guess with a bit of despair or worry what's wrong with this world we ask and while it's right to have that sense of lament we mustn't allow that to be our all-consuming narrative because for us the biggest story the bigger truth is that God is in control still and he's to be praised for that we need to give him credit for that we look back at the cross and see what

God has already done for us we read in the Bible of the things that God has done and it ought to move us to ascribe glory and strength to the Lord it ought to fill us with confidence that God is still in control that he knows what he's doing it ought to build our trust in him even as we praise him we grow in trust for him because we are assured that he knows what's going on and so as a consequence we can sing to the Lord can't we and we can sing a new song as it says all the way back in verse 1 now have you ever wondered why a new song why don't just sing an existing song why does the psalmist say it's a new song well because it's the fact that God is continuing to work in the world so there are new things to be praising God for yes the all important salvation by his son that's been done and dusted and we should keep praising

God for that but he also continues to apply his salvation into our lives he continues to sustain us day by day he's maturing us by his spirit as a church we continue to grow in love for one another these are the things these are the marvelous deeds that God is still doing among us that every day as we wake up and we see it and we experience it we ought to be praising God with new things with new songs and we're prompted to make a habit of praising God for them in the past in verse 8 the people are called to bring an offering and come into his courts to worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness for us today we can do it anywhere can't we even right now in our own lounge rooms each Sunday through the live stream as we sing together as we pray together we are praising God anew together and as many of you know from Romans chapter 12 our offering now is no longer with animals but with our own lives so it says in verse 1 therefore I urge you brothers and sisters in view of

[ 21 : 56 ] God's mercy to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and pleasing to God this is your true and proper worship Romans chapter 12 verse 1 that is praise is composed not simply with

words on our lips but also with worship with our whole lives it simply isn't songs we sing on Sunday but actions and words throughout the week and part of those actions and words come in the form of witness which I alluded to at the start we don't just keep God's glory to ourselves or even among Christians rather as it says in verse 10 say among the nations declare it the Lord reigns the world is firmly established it cannot be moved he will judge the peoples with equity so another component of our praise ought to be witness a declaration of our faith in God to others because we're so sure of who

God is and what he's doing that we want this reality we don't want to just keep it to ourselves or to just fellow believers we want to impress it on others as well the nations often we think of witness simply as evangelism that is announcing and telling people about the good news of Jesus and what he's done on the cross now that's very important to do but here witness also involves simply declaring our praise and our faith in God saying aloud what we know is true saying aloud that God reigns saying that he's sovereign saying that he will judge with equity and you know we can do it quite easily actually with our everyday conversations suppose for example we're worried and we're talking to our colleagues we could say you know things don't look good now but I trust that God knows what he's doing we can say that we don't have to tell them about

Jesus and the cross and all that we can just declare our faith in God or even just using the phrase God willing as we talk to others God willing I hope I will study medicine next year perhaps we don't need to say much more than that do we but that declaration you know actually signals to others that we believe and we know that the Lord reigns not only in our lives but in the world and finally praise ought to spill over into our emotions that's the final component it's not just an intellectual declaration of God and his deeds but no we bring our God given emotions to the task of praise as well thus the psalm closes with a call for all creation to rejoice let the heavens rejoice he says let the earth be glad let the sea resound and all that is in it let the fields be jubilant and everything in them let all the trees of the forest sing for joy let all creation rejoice before the

Lord now of course the fields as I said earlier and the trees can't really sing for joy but even they are called to do so then how much more us those of us who can we've got a brain and we've got lips how much more should we be declaring God's greatness with joy and jubilation now I know that it's been hard hasn't it for the last six months trying to praise God in song through this TV screen through this live stream and yes even though the singers have done a great job we are getting a bit tired with those same 40 song playlists and on that front we're going to try and do something about it but in the meantime perhaps I could encourage you in this perhaps I could get you to think like that that you see at the end of the day these songs they're merely aids for us aren't they even when we're in a church in person the live band they're simply instruments aren't they to help us express what we should already be believing what should already be in our hearts and therefore springing from within us because as we see tonight what is the font of our praise is actually the knowledge of who

God is and what he's done for us it's our faith and trust in his son Jesus these are the source of our motivation the words on the screen the songs that the writers write the band and their music these are just things that help us to express what should already be there and so can I suggest that if you're struggling to do that each Sunday and I know it's hard here's something practical that perhaps you could try instead of maybe just tuning in straight on 5pm sharp or on to zoom 15 minutes earlier why why not take the chance just 5 minutes before that before you come in to write down a list of what you want to praise God for practical lists as many as you can or as few as you can remember what has been his marvelous deeds to you this week how have you seen his glory and strength at work write it down and then take that list have it in front as your motivation when the songs come up when the prayers come up to praise with your lips and your minds but also with your hearts well

[ 27 : 42 ] I couldn't help myself but let me end with an example of what jubilant praise really looks like so you remember that Liverpool Barcelona match I talked about earlier well take a look at what it was like in the commentary box now warning you might have to but have a look good evening everybody a pleasure and a privilege as always to be at Anfield where we are hoping for another miracle like Istanbul Shaqiri in his own half rolls it square towards Matip Virgil van Dijk he's just coming back now he'd stay forward Matip up to Mane mistake Mane entered the area great skill Henderson's in the box Henderson saved to Ria Shaqiri at the back post has just gone outside the box Liverpool keep it going lovely reverse ball Shaqiri on the left brilliant cross it's gone this is

unbelievable this is delirium

Anfield have you ever heard noise like this out again to Alexander Arnold 12 minutes to go in normal time Liverpool 3-0 call it take it quickly Origi yes unbelievable Steve Arrigi oh my word yes this is extraordinary last night we were all feeling so down weren't we let's be honest but well listen to that I don't need words to tell you what that means it's music to my ears Steve Milner trying to win a corner but Milner's been pushed to the ground yes we got it we got it yes Liverpool yes the Champions League final in the trade well I hope you enjoyed that sorry if you're a Barcelona fan but put aside the fact that I'm a Liverpool fan the thing is friends that was just a football match wasn't it that was all it was and yet the amount of praise and jubilation emotion that went into it how much more for us how much more because our praise is not for a football team is it it's for the Lord who reigns it's for his salvation and his marvelous deeds which is way better than anything that that match could produce far more glorious and splendid isn't it friends brothers and sisters the Lord deserves our praise and that's probably an understatement isn't it he deserves the praise of all creation he is our faithful savior he is our righteous judge so please join with me now as we praise him with the next song and let me encourage you to keep praising him in the days and weeks to come let's sing together how great is our God amen po is our desta