

The Venite

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 March 1979

Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] Good morning. And there is an awareness of the presence of God himself. O come, let us worship and fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker, for he is the Lord our God and we are the people of his pasture.

And the experience of worship comes to its focus when we in our hearts and in our minds fall down before the Lord in worship. As many of the men of the Old Testament did.

They prostrated themselves on the ground because they recognized that they stood in the presence of God. And part of worship is that we come to that place in our hearts and in our lives. Not where we do sort of formal acknowledgement of the presence of God, but where in our hearts we fall down and worship him because of his majesty and his glory and his power revealed to us. O come, let us worship and fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker. And we, if we in our pride, walk all the time with our heads held high, and walk all the time in the knowledge of our self-sufficiency, and walk all the time in the pride of our technological ability, and never have any place in our life where we fall down to worship God.

[1 : 23] We are poverty-stricken human beings because we think that all that there is is what we possess. And God has for us far more than we can possess.

And we need to acknowledge him and to worship him. Now, come back with me a minute and look at it again. The first part that the choir said, what are they saying to us?

They say that we are to make a joyful noise unto the Lord, to give thanks and to praise him. Why? And it gives you the reason why you're supposed to do this. You're supposed to do it because the Lord is a great God and a great King above all God.

In his hands are all the corners of the earth, and the strength of the hills is his also. And what they're trying to get at, and remember this is written in Jerusalem or nearby, and it's talking about the corners of the earth or the deep, deep places.

I don't know where Deep Cove is, I've just heard of it. But presumably it's one of the deep places along the Pacific coast. But not only do you have the opportunity of doing this in British Columbia, as few other people do in the world, because you see the deep places and the mountaintops.

[2 : 39] And it says of our God, the one we are called to worship with songs and thanksgiving, in his hands are all the deep places of the earth, and the strength of the mountaintop is his also.

We drove up to Whistler this week, and it's an absolutely amazing experience when you do it for the first time. Mind you, the thought of falling off tends to keep you sober most of the way up, but the magnificence of the scenery is there.

And so we are to worship God on that account. And then you get that lovely line, The sea is his and he made it, and his hands prepared the dry land.

I love this because the sea is often regarded as the stew pot out of which life comes, if you have a highly evolutionary view of where life comes from.

But it's nice to read the Venni that if you believe that, you also are called upon to believe that the sea is his and he made it. And many people in those days thought that the sea represented the dwelling place of evil spirits and its terrible power.

[3 : 51] The power and the strength of the sea represented something evil. But for the people of Israel it didn't. The sea was something which he made, which our God made, and his hands prepared the dry land.

So that's the reason that we should come and worship and rejoice and give thanks and sing. But then you come to the second thing, the reason that we're to worship and bow down before him. And why is that? It's because he to whom the mountaintops and the deep places of the earth belong, he who made the seas, and he who prepared the dry land with his hands.

Look who he is in the second section of the Venni. He is the Lord our God. He is our God. He's our God because he has covenanted to be our God.

He has promised, I will be your God and you will be my people. God has particularly and personally covenanted himself to us.

[5 : 03] And we enjoy that covenant when we come before him to worship on the Lord's day. To acknowledge that he is the Lord and he is our God and we are his people.

And that's what we're asked to do. He is the Lord our God. We are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hands. He cares for us individually.

He is your God in a very deeply personal way. He's prepared to be far more personal with you than you're prepared to be with him, it seems likely.

He is our God. He is the... And we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. And that's the God that we fall down and worship.

And that's why when you're bowing down and when you're acknowledging, one of the things that you should be careful to do is to acknowledge one another. Because in acknowledging one another, you're acknowledging someone who is created in the image of God.

[6 : 19] And it's terribly important that you don't lose that perspective. And then you come to what this God whom we are to fall down and worship is able to do.

He's able to speak to us. Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Well, that's...

That word of God is always a today kind of word. What happened yesterday? It's failures. It's sin. It's anguish.

It's accumulated guilt. The anxieties, which are part of yesterday, they're part of yesterday. But today, he speaks to us with love and mercy and forgiveness and renewal.

And all the days that are gone by don't change the fact that today he speaks to us and we have the right to hear him today in all the fullness of his covenanted mercy towards us.

[7 : 22] Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your heart. And so he's a God who speaks. And we said at the beginning, Canon Robinson told you that we're here to hear his most holy word.

And it's not just a matter of hearing it, but it's hearing it and responding to it and obeying. That's what we're called upon to do. And then, the whole psalm changes.

And if you look in the prayer book, you'll see that quotation marks begin as though the Lord himself has a message for us right here and right now. And what is his message for us right here and right now?

Well, it's first that we don't harden our hearts as in the provocation and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness.

And if you look in the Revised Standard Version, it'll give you the names of those places in the wilderness. And if you look in Exodus chapter 7, verse, sorry, Exodus chapter 17, verse 1, you can read about the very places that are referred to, the event in history that the Veneti refers to.

[8 : 35] Listen, this is people hardening their hearts as in the provocation and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness. Exodus 17, verse 1, the whole community of Israel set out from the wilderness of sin and traveled by stages as the Lord told them.

They encamped at Rephidim where there was no water for the people to drink. And a dispute arose between them and Moses. And when they said, give us water to drink, Moses said, why do you dispute with me?

Why do you challenge the Lord? There the people became so thirsty that they raised an outcry against Moses. Why have you brought us out of Egypt with our children and our herd to let us all die of thirst?

Moses cried to the Lord, what shall I do with these people? In a moment they will be stoning me.

The Lord answered, go forward ahead of the people, take with you some of the elders of Israel and the staff with which you struck the Nile and go, and you will find me waiting for you there by a rock in Horeb.

Strike the rock, water will pour out of it and the people shall drink. Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. He named the places Massa and Merib.

[10 : 08] Those are the words, temptation and provocation in the wilderness. Massa and Merib. Because the Israelites had disputed with him and then challenged the Lord with their question, is the Lord in our midst or not?

And do you see what they're saying? The psalm is saying that, and that's why I put in that word disgusted. I did it because one of the commentators whom I very much respect says that's what lies behind it.

When it says 40 years long was I grieved with that generation. He said it would be more accurate to say 40 years long was I disgusted with that generation. And why was the Lord disgusted?

Because he had identified them as a people. He had sent them a leader in Moses. He had led them out of Egypt. He had led them through the Red Sea.

He had brought them into the Promised Land. He had provided them with food to drink and water to eat. And he had never failed them day or night to be with them. And they said, is God in our midst?

[11:20] And that's not the spirit of worship. And that's not the spirit that's to take possession of us. We are to recognize as the as the the 90 says Psalm 95 they they do they have not known my way.

Though I have led them all the way along. Now they ask me if I'm in their midst. that's why God was disgusted with them. And he said he didn't want to let them enter into his rest.

So that this word is a is a terrible word of condemnation because people having every reason to worship fail to worship.

And we as a community in Vancouver have every reason to worship but it doesn't come very high on our priority. We don't spend very much time looking each other in the eye and saying oh come let us worship.

Come let us fall down and worship. Let us sing. Let us make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Even though we should. We're much more in the position of the children of Israel saying is the Lord in our midst or not?

[12:39] Maybe he's not. Maybe all there is in life is what I can get out of. Maybe I ought to concentrate on that. It was for that reason that the Lord was for forty years disgusted with that generation and they wandered aimlessly and hopelessly never coming into the promise which God had made to them.

And so the Psalm 95 ends on a very sober note when he says I have sworn in my wrath that they shall not enter into my rest.

That whole idea is taken up in the epistle to the Hebrews in chapter four verses eight to twelve part of which I read you as the introduction to this service today.

The rest which God has prepared for his people and I want you just to see what it says. chapter four verse eight picks up the words of the vanity.

Today if you hear his voice do not grow stubborn in the New English Bible translation. If Joshua had given them rest because it was Joshua that led them into the promised land finally God would not have thus spoken of another day.

[14:04] Therefore a Sabbath rest still awaits the people of God. For anyone who enters God's rest rests from his own work as God did from his.

Let us then make every effort to enter that rest so that none may fall by following this example of unbelief. And you see what the writer of the Hebrews does and what I think I have authority to do on the basis of the prayer book is to say Joshua didn't lead them to that rest which God had prepared for them.

It wasn't just that. It wasn't just the rest that the writer of the Hebrews spoke about in the finished work of Christ on the cross. There is a reality which remains for us as Christians to enter into the rest which God has provided for us.

And you notice what it is a rest from anyone who enters the rest from his own work.

It's a rest from trying to achieve by ourselves what God has prepared for us. It's a rest from trying to find our own way through the wilderness.

[15:25] It's a rest from our unbelief and stubbornness of heart. And that's the business that we're in. That's the business that we summons each other to every Sunday morning when we say oh come let us sing unto the Lord let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation.

That's the bidding that we're making to one another. That's the invitation that we're extending to one another to worship to rejoice to give thanks to bow down to worship to hear his holy word to harden not our hearts to recognize that today he speaks to us and to recognize that he has prepared for us in Christ what we never can achieve by ourselves.

That's the business of worship that's the business that we are called to take part in. And I want very much that we would be renewed in the spirit of worship.

During this psalm I went and stood at the back of the church to see how infectious our worship was. And it's not very infectious. And I think God has to deal with us so that we won't be stubborn of heart and that we won't lose because of unbelief.

And that we won't refuse to hear and obey the word that God is speaking to us today. I beseech you brethren by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice holy acceptable under God which is your reasonable worship.

[17:16] Be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you might know what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

it for me and you as well you're and what do