

Psalm 96 "What Truly Drives Us?"

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: 12 November 2017

Preacher: Will Spink

[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Amen. I love that song. We had it sung to us in India. It's true there too. He's the God of that city and of that nation and great things because of who he is.

Thank you once again for praying for us and for caring for my family while Skeets and I were in India for a couple of weeks. This particular Sunday, this particular sermon I had marked as a sermon on giving.

It's the right time of year for that and seemed like an appropriate thing. And our passage is still going to address that a bit this morning. But God began writing a bit of a different sermon while I was in India.

And especially while I was not sleeping on the plane on the way back. Because of all the things that my heart was full of from my time there.

[1 : 07] So I'm excited to share with you some things that God has been teaching me. Some burdens that he's given me for us. So let's pray.

And in a few minutes I'll read Psalm 96 for us. Join me in prayer. Father those words are true. They're straight out of your word.

There is no one like you. There is no other God besides you. Father show us what that must mean for us.

Show us how that changes everything. You alone are worthy of our praise. Holy Spirit would you come and inflame our hearts this morning for you.

Might we meet with God and be like all those who meet with him that don't leave unchanged. Holy Spirit speak through your word. We might know you and love you and serve you more.

[2 : 09] We ask in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Baba Tu was one of the students in our seminary class while we were in India.

He's 23 years old. He comes from a Hindu family. Five children. And just a couple of years ago he came to faith in Christ through his uncle.

When he did, adding him to his uncle, that made for two Christians in the entire extended family. Dozens of family members in a very tight knit family. He became the second.

And the rest of his family ran him off. They didn't want him around anymore. They sent him away out of the home. It was over a year before his parents or any of his siblings would speak with him.

He can talk to them by phone now. They'll answer. But he's not welcome at home. Despite this, Baba Tu is the life of the party on the seminary campus.

[3 : 10] Everyone loves him. You'd think he'd want to stay right there where he has so much fun and everybody loves being with him. But Baba Tu can't wait to leave. He can't wait to finish his training so that he can get back home to his village.

To tell people about Jesus. To evangelize his village. He wants to start a church there. Even though he knows that he may well suffer harm from his family.

From others. That's his vision. That's his heart. That vision is what drives him every day. He likes cricket. He's really good at it.

But if he's getting excited as you talk to him, it's probably because he's telling you the story of his conversion and coming to meet Jesus. Or he's telling you some glimpses of hope that he's had from conversations with family members or friends sharing with them about Jesus.

That's what gets him excited. And I could tell you story after story, dozens of times over, of people we met in India just like that. And every time I tell him or think about him, it challenges me.

[4 : 23] It challenges me to consider what truly drives me. I mean, I'm a pastor, right? So being all about Jesus and the kingdom of God on the books, that's what I'm supposed to be about, right?

By occupation, I'm all about the kingdom of God. But outside of my preaching and teaching, Babatoo has probably shared about Jesus with more people this year than I have in my 35. I'm pretty confident of that. I'm pretty passionate about a lot of things, about my reputation. Passionate about my family and going on vacation together and telling people about our times together.

I can get passionate about Clemson football. But practically speaking, in my life, in my relationships, when you talk to me, when I'm excited about something, is it likely to be about the kingdom and Jesus?

Is that what it's going to be? On a corporate level, Mission India, the group we were there with, has a vision.

[5 : 31] You can see it just barely on this tower right as you walk into their campus. You can't miss it. 100,000 Christ-like global leaders. These people, they want to raise up and send out to plant churches, to run orphanages.

I'll have to practice that word. To teach children, to teach youth, to evangelize in every village in India. And everything they do is driven by that commitment.

To reach India and beyond for Jesus, they will say. It's really crazy. In India alone, there are twice as many unbelievers as there are people in America, Canada, and Mexico combined.

You'd think that'd be a big enough vision for them, right? Maybe we can just get into all of India. And yet, what do they want to do? They want to dream about reaching every village in India and then the whole world for the kingdom of Jesus.

They talk about 1.3 billion people as a missionary force that the world has never seen before. That's how they think about India. But they don't just talk.

[6 : 43] They pray. They pray about that all the time. They wake up talking about it when they're exercising at 5 in the morning. They fundraise for it.

They prioritize the worship of God and the word of God. Many of the people we were with for the week of the conference were spending their only two weeks of the year that they and their families would be on vacation.

The only times they'd be outside of their village the whole year. Traveling two, three days each way for many of them. And then participating in a conference about worship and preaching.

And they loved it. It was the only thing they wanted to do with that time. With their families sitting for four hours at a time in a crowded room with no AC to hear God's word and to praise his name.

One of the pastors we met there was so excited to send me pictures of his new church building this week. He sent me 50 pictures of this building.

[7 : 51] 50 pictures of that. How many different things can you show? 50 pictures. He's excited because the church is being built. The kingdom of God is advancing.

And he wanted to share the joy of that. Now on the books, our corporate vision is exactly the same. To advance the kingdom of God.

Right? But is it truly our driving passion the way I'm describing it is for them? Is everything else in our lives scheduled and shaped around the worship of God?

Do we hunger for God's word? How often do we sacrifice our own comfort to see the vision of God's kingdom advancing? Is that a regular thing for us?

I really wrestled with this while we were there. It was challenging for me to think about us corporately. I told Skeets we had basically two options as I saw it.

[8 : 54] Being really honest, option one is that we shut these doors and send all our money over there to them.

Where they really do need the money. Where they really are committed to seeing God's kingdom advance. And where a little bit of money goes a long way.

And that seems like a viable option. Option two is that we truly begin to share that tangible passion for everyone in our villages.

In the village of Huntsville and beyond. To know King Jesus. To see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And to live like that.

Now please hear me. I love y'all. My preference is option number two. I've told you I want to storm the gates of hell with y'all.

[9 : 55] I want to be about God doing great things in this city and around the world. I'm just saying that there's no longer for me this option three. Where we say all of those things.

But really it doesn't make a lot of difference. That doesn't seem like a viable option anymore. Where intellectually we have a lot of right answers.

But really advancing the kingdom is down the list of what truly drives us and shapes our lives. It doesn't seem viable for me. Or for us.

And I've thought again as I've wrestled with that. I've thought it myself. I've heard other people say it. Well they're just zealous for Jesus because they don't have anything else.

Maybe you've thought that. I've got to tell you. If that's all it takes to be zealous for Jesus like that. Then take away these walls and these padded seats and the AC.

[11 : 00] And all of these wonderful things that I call blessings. But if what it takes for me to treasure Jesus the way they do is just not to have some of that. That's a great place to start. Some of you are thinking that Pastor has a bit of heartburn.

Maybe he had a bit too much of the spicy curry while he was in India. And this is just something he's got to get out of his system. I did have a lot of it. I really like it.

But I wouldn't preach this to you if it was just what I felt. It's all over. Every page of this book. From beginning to end.

It's what it says we're to be about. Psalm 96 reminds us this morning that God's glory here and everywhere must be the driving, formative, energizing passion of our lives and our church.

There are three words. I think they mean basically the same thing. What I'm trying to say is it has to be the experiential reality. Not just something we write down in a book. It must actually shape our individual lives and our corporate lives together.

[12 : 20] Let's read the first few verses. Psalm 96. Oh sing to the Lord a new song. Sing to the Lord all the earth. Sing to the Lord. Bless his name. Tell of his salvation from day to day.

Declare his glory among the nations. He says, marvelous works among all peoples. For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. He is to be feared above all gods.

For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols. But the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him. Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

Yahweh alone is glorious. There is none like him. All the other so-called gods are over one nation or one arena of life.

But Yahweh owns it all. That's what he's saying. Splendor. Majesty. Strength. Beauty. They all belong to him.

[13 : 22] And the purpose of our lives then is to declare this unparalleled glory everywhere. First, upward. To God himself.

Worshipping the one who is greatly to be praised. It must be central to everything we do. Because, y'all know how God has made us.

We're always ascribing worth to something, aren't we? That's what it means to worship. We're always seeking for strength. For beauty.

For value in something. And if it's not in the one true God, our lives are out of whack. We're chasing worthless idols.

The psalmist says. Then we also declare God's glory, his great worth to each other. Inward. Among the family of God.

[14 : 23] Right here. This psalm is a song for the worship of God's people, right? So day after day, what are they doing as they sing this? We remind ourselves of his salvation day after day.

We tell each other about it. Of the grace we have experienced from this glorious God. And we gather to do that. But it must never stop there.

We worship God, yes. We remind each other of his greatness, yes. But we must declare God's glory outward. To every nation.

Verse three. We're going to see in the rest of the psalm that what we're actually doing is we're inviting them in to this worship of God and fellowship with each other, saying among the nations, Yahweh reigns.

Verse 10. I love the way Charles Spurgeon says it. Each day brings us deeper experience of our saving God.

[15 : 26] Each day shows us anew how deeply men need his salvation. Boy, isn't that the truth? Don't you realize that every day? How much people need salvation?

Each day reveals the power of the gospel, that that's where our hope is. Each day the Spirit strives with the sons of men. And so what? Therefore, never pausing, be it ours to tell out the glorious message of free grace.

Amen. Amen. That's good stuff. We do this or we shut the doors. Right? We do this with every breath that God gives us.

It's why we're here. Y'all know this is not the focus of Psalm 96 only. Remember in Ephesians, when we walked together through that book during the last senior pastor transition?

We learned what Southwood needed was not a new senior pastor. What we need, what this community needs, what the next generation needs, is an exalted vision of God.

[16:35] A grand view of his immeasurable love for us. How wide and how long and how high and how deep. And Ephesians says that's where the power comes from.

That's where his power shows up when we see him as glorious as he is. God's glory everywhere, filling the nations, filling the earth, is the story of all of the Bible.

Of all of history. God creates mankind in his image to reflect his glory and sends us out to fill the earth, right?

Except that we don't. Not only do we fail to reflect his image, we actually decide we're not filling the earth. At the Tower of Babel, mankind decides to gather together into one place.

The opposite of what God has created them and told them to do. And God is so committed that he confuses their language and it says scatters them over the whole earth because he will see it filled with his glory.

[17:40] And then he blesses Abraham and Abraham's descendants. Why? That they might be a blessing to the nations. The nation of Israel he establishes as a light for the nations.

But because they too fail to shine his glory everywhere, he sends the Messiah, Isaiah chapter 49, as a light for the nations that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

You see what he's doing? He sends the Messiah that this vision of his glory being everywhere and every nation knowing might come to fruition.

And that's what happens. He sends him and redeems us and sends us on the same mission. Why is it that we're here? What are we to be doing? 1 Peter chapter 2, you're a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light that we might declare his glory among the nations.

That's what we're here for. It's the whole story. It's what's going on cover to cover. It's why God has us here.

[19:00] And the best part is that we know how the story ends. It ends with what we read a couple weeks ago in Habakkuk chapter 2, that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the seas.

The earth full of God's glory. That's where it's going. And a multitude gathered around the throne of the Lamb that is from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, worshiping him.

That's where it's going. It's headed there. God's going to do that. So if we want to be a part of that, if we want to be a part of something eternally glorious, greater than ourselves, that's what we have to be about.

That's what he's doing. This is where we must focus our energies. The word of God must actually be our daily bread. Prayer must be our native language.

The kingdom of God must become our primary homeland. The glory of God must be our chief delight. And that's got to change everything. We were created and we were redeemed to declare God's glory here and everywhere.

[20:09] Not just to make it a slogan. Not just to go to a church that says that's what we're doing. But to shape our lives around it in everything that we do.

Now because this is our driving passion, of course we give to it. Here's the giving part. Look at verses 7 through 9. Ascribe to the Lord O families of the peoples.

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name. Bring an offering and come into His courts. Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness.

Tremble before Him all the earth. God is so worthy of worship that as the peoples come to worship Him they bring offerings to Him.

All sorts of offerings. The offerings in verse 8 are interesting because they aren't the kinds for a specific sin or a particular celebration in the life of God's people.

[21 : 09] If you've read the Old Testament you know there are lots of offerings, right? A lot of reasons for sacrifices to be brought at particular times and to atone for particular sins. That's not what this word means.

Rather these are our free will thank offerings. Offerings you bring to Yahweh merely because He's worthy and because you delight to honor Him.

Offerings you bring to declare His glory and proclaim that He owns everything including you. So when we talk about giving people want to know numbers.

You know, pastor is 10% enough? Is that the right thing? Gross or net? Help me know what am I supposed to do? Listen, the Old Testament talks about the 10% tithe and even these thank offerings to the glory of God in the Old Testament go well beyond that.

But then the New Testament emphasis is not on numbers but it's on the God who says give it all. Leave 10% in the dust because what you're doing is you owe everything to me.

[22 : 23] I want your life given to my glory and my kingdom. It's interesting to watch people in India give. They don't have much money most of them but they have a lot of needs around and they love to give whatever they have when they see those needs.

And when they run out of money they'll offer themselves to help in any way that they can. And I think they're open handed with their money and their time because they trust that God is worth it and that God will actually care for them.

They have seen Him care for them when they have nothing. They're not afraid of that. This water tower right here stands in the middle of the campus there at Mission India as a testament to this. When they bought this 25 acre field way outside of town in the middle of nowhere 20 some years ago it was too far away from the city to have any water lines to it at all.

So they purchased the field but really didn't know how they were going to get water on the property of their new campus. And so they prayed that God would provide in some way they didn't have in their plans and pretty soon they found a water source in the middle of the property.

[23 : 46] It became a large well that's now connected to this water tower that for 20 plus years has provided all the water for 200 plus residents on the campus for 20 years.

And at times like the week we were there 2,000 people at a time and there's plenty of water left. Isn't it awesome to see God work like that? To provide like that exactly what His people need? Isn't that exciting? Isn't God someone we can trust to care for us? Yes, they know that. They've seen that. Y'all, we don't give because we have to.

Because God told us there was something we had to do and meet a certain criteria. We give of our resources because we get to be a part of God's glory being declared to the nations.

For many of us who've never given to the church before 10% is a good place to help guide us and figuring out how we start doing that. But think honestly if this is to be the formative energizing passion of your life the focus of what you're about then we must always be asking where can God free up more of our resources more of ourselves for His mission?

[25 : 04] That's something that we then love to do. I love the way John Stott describes how Jesus functioned. He says what dominated Jesus' mind was not the living but the giving of His life.

Those are the kind of conversations you have. How can we reorganize reprioritize to give our money our time our home to the kingdom? Do you talk more about the living or the giving of your life?

Try it. It's actually pretty fun to sacrifice for the sake of seeing the church of Jesus Christ His kingdom advance. It's really exciting. See Jesus gave up the privileges and the riches of heaven didn't He?

And He came for the nations at the cost of His own life. It cost Him everything that the nations might know the glory of God.

that the salvation of God might reach to the ends of the earth. That's what He was about. See He's the hero of this story isn't He? The story of God's glory that we told really quickly through the Bible just a few minutes ago.

[26 : 23] Jesus is the hero of that story. He's the one who comes as the perfect reflection of God's image. He's the one who comes and lives perfectly obediently and He dies and rises again so the nations can know the salvation of God.

He comes so that the glory of God's salvation can explode to the nations in new ways like it never has before. That's how this works. Before Jesus very few outside of the nation of Israel and Jesus comes and it's to the uttermost parts of the earth because what?

He not only gives His life He not only dies for the nations but He then commissions His followers to go and make disciples of all nations. He says be my witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth so that all of them may know who I am what I've done for them and we get to tell people about this God?

Are you kidding me? We get that kind of good news? We could have been asked to say something a lot more downer. This is great stuff and we get to introduce people to this God.

See this is a God worth exalting and rejoicing in and we forget that so quickly. In the Hindu faith there are many gods.

[27 : 51] We heard while we were there the story of one village in India last India story I promise where there's a God who supposedly lives up on the top of a hill that's overlooking the village and for the Hindu people living in the village it's very rare that you would speak or interact with this God at all.

In fact if you really need to here's what you have to do. Spend 40 days with no food and no familial interactions 40 days then wash yourself cleanse yourself dress in all black and make your way all the way up that hill to the very top and when you get there you can talk to him and see what happens see how he responds.

Listen to what the one true all glorious God who lives above the heavens exalted far higher than anything like that how does he relate to people as gloriously different listen to this say among the nations the Lord reigns yes the world is established it shall never be moved he will judge the peoples with equity let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice let the sea roar and all that fills it let the field exult and everything in it then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord why?

what's everybody so excited about? why are they all before Yahweh rejoicing and exulting for he comes he comes to judge the earth he'll judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness he comes he comes the psalmist repeats he comes to us and this is a huge part of the glory that is to be declared it's that he pursues relationship as our father that he's full of grace that he moves toward us the good news we declare to the nations is a God you can know a God you can have relationship with a God who will in fact make everything right one day see some of you are good enough Bible students to say pastor you're not really being honest it says he comes to judge it's not nearly so exciting as you think in fact it says it three times he comes to judge look at what happens when he does what's the context of this judgment it's not the fearful judgment of God being highlighted here it's a judgment that brings rejoicing everywhere everything's rejoicing when this God shows up as the judge because he's making everything right everyone and everything in creation rejoicing he's coming to make all things new for the blessing of his creation for the good of his people for the glory of his name he comes friends we have the good news of the one true God who reigns over the nations and who comes for the nations to them and so many know nothing of a God they can have a relationship with many in India know only of a God they can try to manipulate or work to impress and maybe possibly walk their way up to receive a blessing from him and many in

Huntsville know only of a God who's a fiction for weak people or a God who I have to perform for to placate and keep at a distance so he doesn't get in the way of my life no wonder they don't love that God they don't know the one that you and I know who's their father who comes to them who loves them they don't know what that would be like that's a God worthy of rejoicing of exaltation of celebration and our job is to invite everyone to that party right now you may be thinking this is that one crazy sermon that you have to put up with when you send your pastor to India for two weeks I tell you two reasons why I hope and believe that's not true the first one is that this is a burden that's not new to us but the burden to live it is one that I pray doesn't leave me and you can pray for that too but the second reason is more important than that and way more important than whether or not I'm here or have a burden like that and that's that

[33 : 04] Jesus regularly calls us to remember this he regularly wants us to remember how valuable the nations are to him he wants us to remember our God's heart for the nations that he would come at the cost of his own life and lay it down for them that they might know the glory the salvation the love of our God it's here at this table that we celebrate the God who comes to us to

heal our hearts that were wayward from him that were broken seemingly beyond repair and he comes to heal those hearts it's here at this table that we celebrate a God who comes to us to eradicate the evil and injustice in this world and make things right once and for all and we celebrate that that is the God who eats and drinks with us remember what

Paul said about this sacrament he said I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you that the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks he broke it and said this is my body which is for you do this in remembrance of me in the same way also he took the cup after supper saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me for as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes every time you do this you declare that God came for the nations and is coming again to bring them to his throne forever we declare that and rejoice in that this morning let's pray and we'll celebrate together father we give you thanks and praise for your great and greatly to be praised and there's none other we chase a lot of lesser things in our lives but the way you love us knows no comparison and we rejoice in that and we ask now that you would set these common elements aside for a sacred purpose in our hearts that the death of Jesus for us might overwhelm us and overflow from us to others we ask it in his name amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org