

Don't Sit on the Fence

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[0 : 00] Well, we'll turn back to our reading in Psalm 96. We're going to look in particular at verse 7 to verse 9.

! This section in the book of Psalms, as you go through from Psalm 90 through to, you could say, Psalm 100, as you read through them, you find that you find recurring themes in them. There is the recurring theme of worship and of who God is, and there's the recurring theme of how the Lord reigns and the Lord is sovereign, the Lord is king over all. And as we think of these things, the themes that we find in these Psalms, they make us ask questions of ourselves. Are we worshipping the Lord with the glory that is due to his name? Do we see him as king over all and king over us? One preacher said about the Psalms in general, The Psalms show us the anatomy of all parts of the Christian soul.

[1 : 46] They express the whole range of Christian experience, from despair to gladness, from hopelessness to worship. So there's the anatomy of all parts of the Christian soul.

And as you read through the Psalms, we all have our favourite Psalms, our Psalms we go to in different times in our life. We do find that they do cover every aspect of our lives, the highs and the lows that we find in them.

And as we think of approaching a communion weekend, we find that it is a time as we draw near to God, as we prepare our hearts, and especially maybe more so as we think so closely and so vividly of the elements that we will have before us on the Lord's Day, the bread and the wine, as we think more vividly and clearly of what Christ has done for us as he gave his life on the cross for his people.

As we think of these things, then it should only stir up the range of emotions within our soul. As we think of that sense of unworthiness that we have, of how hopeless we maybe feel, the despair that sin brings to us.

We have that range of emotions, but we also have the other end of the emotions as well. We should. The gladness of what God has done for us. The rejoicing in what he has done for us that we couldn't do ourselves.

[3 : 17] And then that leads us to a fuller worship of our God and of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so where do you find yourself this evening in that range of emotions?

Where do you find your heart this evening as you seek to prepare, as we seek to prepare to come to the Lord's table? Do we feel hopeless and despair?

Or do we feel that gladness and that joy in worship? Well, as these days go on, we'll go through probably all of these emotions again and again.

But above all, that we would see and fix our eyes on Jesus in the midst of it all. And so as we look at Psalm 96 together this evening, we see how it speaks of this joy in worship and song.

But it also has a warning for us as well. The whole psalm is one that is directing us towards worship of God.

[4 : 24] But not just to worship God for a moment or for a certain time, but at all times. We're not just to come to worship God when we think it matters for ourselves, when we think it's important.

But how we come away from this evening or how we'll come away from the communion weekend and how we go on in that sense of are we continuing to worship the Lord with that joy?

How are you living now and how do you go forward day by day? There's a phrase we hear used from time to time and it's the phrase, sitting on the fence.

What does it mean? What does it mean to sit on the fence? Well, basically, it means avoiding making a decision. You sit on the fence.

You avoid making a decision. Because you're swayed, maybe you don't want to upset one group or another. You don't want to commit, fully commit, because you don't know just for sure what's right. [5 : 35] We want a bit of everything. And yet, when we're sitting on the fence, what we find is that we are gambling our salvation. Because we're not fully committing ourselves one way or the other.

We're not committing ourselves to the Lord. To gamble our salvation, it's a little like having an each-way bet. You don't have confidence in a winning outcome, so you spread your bets. To cover yourself no matter what. You're not 100% sure of a winning outcome. And that's what we see with the people of God.

We may ask, what does that have to do with us? But that's what we see with the people of God.

You see it in this psalm. In verse 5, For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols.

You see there, they were casting their lot everywhere. They were sitting on the fence. They didn't want to commit one way or the other. So they tried to appease all gods.

[6 : 40] And all people. And the people are being torn between worshipping God and worshipping idols. Continuing as they were.

Covering all options. And when we look at ourselves, that is how we can be. That is how I was in the past. I'm sure many of you were in the past.

You knew about God. You heard about Jesus. You knew what he did. But you still wanted the world. You still wanted to have that part of your life to yourself. You weren't 100% committed.

Sitting on the fence, avoiding making a decision. I want to live my life for God. But just in case, I want to live it my own way and for myself as well.

Covering all options. But this psalm, it makes demands of us. Just like the whole word of God, it makes demands of us.

[7 : 42] The psalm is asking us not to sit on the fence. But decide who we will serve. And you see it in verse 7 to verse 9.

Ascribe to the Lord. Ascribe to the Lord. Ascribe to the Lord. Three times that phrase is used. And then in verse 9. Worship the Lord.

They're all really saying the same thing. As we approach a communion weekend. Are you sitting on the fence? Are you still trying to please both sides of your life?

Or are you 100% confident that he alone is worthy of all praise? We don't sit on the fence.

And so throughout this section of Psalms, as we think of the theme of the sovereignty of God. The kingship of God. This psalm is another one of these psalms. That the king makes demands of his people.

[8 : 46] And there are three things I want us to see in these verses. The call of the king. The demands of the king. And the response to the king. So the first thing we see is the call of the king.

You see that the beginning of Psalm 96 is closely linked to Psalm 95. Psalm 95 begins, O come, let us sing to the Lord.

Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Psalm 96 begins in the same way. O sing to the Lord a new song. Sing to the Lord all the earth.

There's the theme there of making praise to God. How important it is to praise the Lord. And to praise him for all that he has done.

And the more we hear the call of the king. The more we hear the Lord speaking to us through his word. The more that leads us into praise of him.

[9 : 55] These psalms are in a section that are full of this call to worship. This call to worship God. And it could be captured in four words.

The call of the king. Come. For. Worship. And today. Come. There is the call here constantly.

For the people of God. To come to him. Why? Because they have been hearing others calling them. To worship idols. To worship other gods.

But the Lord is saying. Come. And that's what he's saying to us. Come. And then you have.

For. There is a reason. To come and worship God. And again you see that constantly. Through these psalms.

[10 : 52] Oh sing a new song to the Lord. Declare his glory among the nations. His marvelous works. For great is the Lord. And greatly to be praised.

In verse four. There is always a for. There is always a reason. That we can see. That we should come. To God. And then you have.

Worship. Come. There is the command. There is the call. For. There is the reason. And then there is the outcome. Worship. Worship is constantly there.

As well. Worship is acknowledging. Who God is. Worshiping is bowing. Ourselves. Before him. The people here.

They would bow. Before their idols. All their gods. They would come and bow. Before them. But the Lord is saying. Come. And bow yourself. Before me. Worship. Before me.

[11:53] And then you see. The urgency of it. Because in this section. You have come. For. Worship. But it is also about. Today. Today is something.

You hear. Throughout this section. There is always. That urgency. Urgency. Of coming. To worship God. It is not a case. Of sitting the fence. And leave it for a time. To decide.

It is today. Today. If you hear my voice. Harden not your heart. There is that sense. Of urgency. And so.

There is that call. That we are constantly hearing. And as we come. To worship. As we come. To praise. As we come. To hear. From God's word.

These are the things. That we are constantly hearing. The call. Come. The reason. For. What we are to do. To worship.

[12:46] To make ourselves. Lie down. Before God. And today. Today. Is the call. There is repeated.

Opportunity. Throughout. These psalms. Here. For all of these reasons. To come. And worship. God. Now.

Is that not a reason. Not to sit on the fence. The king. Is calling. The lord. Is calling. And we are called.

To choose. One of the most. Frustrating. Parts. Of parenting. Is when you. Call a child.

Or tell a child. To do something. But how many times. Do you have to tell. And how many times. Do you hear. The reasons.

[13:39] And the excuses. That come. I didn't hear you. I forgot. I did something else. There is always something. The reasons come.

Thick and fast. We are frustrated. With children. Sure people are frustrated. With us. But imagine. Imagine the lord. And his call.

To his children. And how often. Our father in heaven. Has called you. And you say. I didn't hear. I forgot.

I did something else. Is that an excuse. You can give. To God. This evening. You did hear. You didn't forget.

You chose not to. You didn't do something else. You were disobedient. The father. Is calling. And we are not.

[14:35] To make. Our excuses. But if he is calling. The second thing we see is. That there are demands. What is he asking. Of us.

Well that's what we see. Next. In this section. Of the psalm. As well. In the opening verses. There was a repeated phrase there. Sing. To the lord.

Sing. To the lord. Three times. It's used. This is the lord's. Calling his people. To worship. With all joy. And praise. And to witness.

To all around us. Declare his glory. It says in verse three. Among the nations. His marvelous works. To all. The people. So there's this broad.

Spectrum. Of what. Sing. To the lord. Means. What praising. The lord. Means. But it's not just. To carry on. As you are.

[15:30] With a little addition. Of god. In your life. It's how are we doing it. In a constant way. When the king. Is putting demands.

On us. How. Do we respond. Well when you look. In the old testament days. The people. Were governed. By kings. For the majority of it.

We saw. See in the beginning. The judges are there. But then. We want a king. Over us. And then you have the kings. Who came. One after another. From the appointment. Of Saul. As king.

The people were guided. By different kings. Down through. The generations. And when you read. Through. The book of kings. Itself. You see there. The cycle.

Of the people. How. In a good time. With a good king. They're doing right. But then they get a bad king. And things go wrong. And they follow. The ways of that king.

[16:24] And they become disobedient. To God. And the disobedience. Is so often linked. To having. Other gods. To following after. Other gods. And that's the warning.

That the psalmist here. Puts before us. In verse 4. And verse 5. 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. The Lord made. The heavens. And so you see here. The demands.

Of the king. If it was true. Of the nation. Here of God's people. And how easily. They went. For other gods.

And when you see it. Of all the different nations. Around them. How easy it is. For ourselves too.

We see. That problem. In our own heart.

[17:20] How easy it is. For us. To make. Other idols. Other gods. But the Lord. Puts. Demands.

On us. To come and worship.

God means. A whole. New direction. In our lives. For them. And for us. It means. Putting away. All these false gods.

It means. Letting go. Of all these. Worldly things. The worldly kings. And the worldly gods. As they have them here. And for ourselves too. It means.

They cannot sit. On the fence. Any longer. They have got to come down. On one side. Or the other. As. Joshua said.

It was. Choose this day. Who you will serve. There has got to be. A choice. Made. And that is what the psalmist. Is putting before them here.

[18:18] In verse 7. To verse 9. There are the demands. Of the king. Ascribe. Ascribe. To the lord. O families of the peoples. Ascribe.

Ascribe. To the lord. Glory and strength. Ascribe. To the lord. The glory. Due his name. There are these. Demands. Idols. Are worthless.

Earthly kings. Are not always right. But the lord. Is eternal. Majestic. And to be praised. At all times. Ascribe. Means.

Give. Worship. Means. Giving. To god. What is due. To his name. And so there is this demand. And as we come.

To this communion season. Are we giving. In that way. Are we hearing. The demands. Of the king. Not as something. Heavy. Weighed on top of us.

[19:17] But as something. That we would delight in. And rejoice in. That he has put it. In our hearts. Our hearts. That were hard. And cold. Against him. That he has put it.

In our hearts. To give this glory. To him. No longer. Are we giving it. To ourselves. Or to other things. In this world. But we are ascribing. This glory.

To him. We are not. To sit on the fence. Instead. It is to be like. Daniel. Of old. When you think. Of ascribing. To the Lord. The glory.

Due his name. You think of. Daniel. And the pressure. That was put on him. Not to pray. To God. But to worship. King. Darius.

And what did he do? He ascribed. To the Lord. The glory. Due to his name. He delighted. In his Lord. And in his king.

[20:11] I say. Of old. As well. In chapter 6. He says. Woe is me. For I am ruined. Because I am a man.

Of unclean lips. And live among. A people. Of unclean lips. For my eyes. Have seen the king. The Lord. Of hosts. Have we seen.

The king. If you have seen. Your sin. You know what it is. To see the king. Because he says.

Come. He says. Come. He says. Look. He makes demands. On us. They are clearer. For ourselves.

Today. Because we have a king. Who is Jesus. And what has Jesus done. For us. He went to the cross. To take our sins.

[21:05] On himself. And that. Demands. A response. And when you think. Of what he has done. When you look.

To the cross. How. Could we possibly. Sit on the fence. How could we possibly. Think. Maybe there is something else. Maybe there is another way.

When the centurion. Who looked on. As Jesus. Was crucified. What did he say. Surely. He was the son of God. He saw.

For himself. So we have a king. Who is worthy. Of all glory. We are to ascribe. That glory. To him. As a people. As individuals. Collectively. We are to give that glory. And strength. To the Lord. The glory. Due. To his name. To worship the Lord.

[22 : 02] In the splendor. Of holiness. When we look at the cross. How can we swither. How can we sit.

And not come down. On his side. Well the final thing. We see here. Is the response. To the king. There must be a response. In the midst. Of all of this. If the king. Is calling. If he's showing. His demands. There has got.

To be. A response. And there are always. Two responses. Obedience. Or disobedience. And which one. Are we going to do. As we come. To this weekend. Are we going to be obedient. To our king. To remember.

[22 : 59] Him. Not looking to ourselves. But looking to Jesus. And what response. Does it call for.

Well there are three. In a positive way. And the first. Is faith. The call here. Is to the people. To turn. To turn away. From the worthless. Idols. That they have been. Worshipping. And to ascribe. To the Lord. To give.

To the Lord. To be a people. Of faith. Faith. Reminds us. It's not of us. Because faith. Is placed. Elsewhere. And our faith. Is to be in the Lord. Jesus Christ. Christ. Faith. Faith in the midst. Of ridicule.

[23 : 56] Faith in the midst. Of challenges. Faith in the midst. Of doubt. But to be a people. Of faith. Who ascribe.

To the Lord. The glory. That is due to him. There was a man. Who. He wasn't. A believer. But he had a Christian. Friend. And he often.

Used to. Tease him. Or mock him. About his faith. And this one day. He says to his friend. Say George. What would you say. If when you die.

You found there wasn't such. A place. As heaven. After all. Well. The friend. Who was a believer. Smiled and said. Well. I would say.

I've had a good time. Trying to get there. But then he turned it back. On his friend. And he asked him. A question.

[24 : 50] What about you friend. What would you say. If when you die. You found there was. Such a place. As hell. After all. How do you respond.

To that. It will be too late. Faith. Is looking. To Jesus. First Kings.

18. Verse 21. Elijah. As he's there. With the people. Who are worshipping. Their Baal. Their God. He says to them. How long will you go. Limping between. Do different opinions.

If the Lord is God. Follow him. But if Baal. Then follow him. And the people. Did not answer him. A word. He says. Don't sit in the fence. If the Lord is God. Follow him.

[25 : 45] Have faith. In him. Faith. Is a response. Commitment. Is a response. As well. The nations.

Are used to. Bringing their offerings. Before their false. Gods. But here. In verse 8. We are told. Bring. An offering. And come into. His courts.

So. The psalmist is saying. Here is your response. How are you going to decide? Are you going to leave. These idols. These worthless. Gods.

Behind. And will you not come. And give this offering. To God. Come into. His courts. Come into. His house. To his people. To his kingdom. Commit yourself. To him. Is God just. Part of your life.

[26 : 42] Or is he your whole life. The one you commit. All your ways to. It commands. A response. It commands. It commands.

A commitment. As the hymn writer says. When I. Survey. The wondrous cross. On which the prince. Of glory died. Love. So amazing. So divine.

Demands. My soul. My life. My all. There are demands. And there is a response.

How. Do we respond. Are we going. To commit ourselves. To the Lord. In faith. And the third thing is.

And the final thing here. For us this evening is. There is a response. Of worship. Worship. Worship. What do you want.

[27 : 38] Out of this. Coming weekend. What do you hope. To get. Is that how you're coming. To it. First. What will I get out.

Or is it. First and foremost. Not linked. To what you put in. If we expect. Anything of God. And we long. For something. Out of this weekend. We long. For encouragement. We long. For blessing. We long. For fellowship. We long. For God. To be near. We long. For all of these things. But what are we putting in. What are we putting into it. You see. Ascribe. As it's repeated here. And worship. There's their demands. But there are response. There are response.

[28 : 36] To seeing. The glory of God. And to longing. For him. And so. Will we not worship.

Will we not praise. Our king. The king. Of glory. Will we not ascribe. To him. All that is due. And worship him. In splendor. And holiness. That we might receive. Blessing. From him. It's not just about.

What we get out. But what we put in. And the more that we see. What God has given for us. And what Jesus has done.

For us. That demands. Our life. Our soul. Our all. Let us pray. Lord our gracious God.

[29 : 37] We thank you. For the one who is. Our king. And our God. Our Lord. We thank you. That we have. In the midst of a world.

Full of idols. A true and a living God. And that we have a saviour. In Jesus Christ. One who we can come. And see and hear.

His call. One who demands. A response. Of us. And we pray. Oh Lord. That in these coming days. Even today.

That our response. Will be one. Full of worship. And ascribing the glory. Due to his name. Hear our prayers. Lord. Grant us. Your peace.

And your blessing over us. Your help. And your guidance. In all of our hearts. That we might come. In our weakness. And in our trembling. But in your strength.

[30 : 32] As we ask it in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. We're going to conclude. By singing to God's praise. In Psalm 105.

Scottish Psalter verse. In Psalm 105. Page 374. Of the Psalm books. We'll sing from verse 1. To verse 4.

Give thanks to God. Call on his name. To men his deeds make known. Sing ye to him. Sing Psalms. Proclaim his wondrous works. Each one. See that ye in his holy name.

To glory. Do accord. And let the heart of everyone. Rejoice. That seeks the Lord. We'll sing from verse 1 to 4. To God's praise. We stand to sing. Amen.

Amen. Thank you.

[31 : 47] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore.

Amen.