

Declare His Glory

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Preacher: Leroy Coote

[0 : 00] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on the 10th of September 2000. The preacher is Leroy Coote.

His sermon is entitled Declare His Glory. It is based on Psalm 96. Heavenly Father we've just sung a new song.

A song that challenges us to worship you. Help us be challenged by your word today. And not just leave the challenge here but take it outside into our daily lives.

And we pray this in your son's name. Amen. Please be seated. And it would be helpful if you could open your Bibles to Psalm 96.

Which is found on page 479 of the Pew Bibles. At the end of each of the last three years there has been a new song sung to herald in a new AFL premiere.

[1 : 16] That song is usually the club's theme song. This year, as we well know from last week, it was the Essendon Bombers. And because I live in that area I knew about it big time.

Last year it was a team that surpasses Essendon's greatness. That is the mighty Kangaroos. And the year before that it was the Adelaide Crows.

And boy did they crow about it. We even heard the crowing in Sydney. However, in these cases, this rain, at least the crows and the kangaroos' rain, has only lasted for a year.

We don't know if Essendon's is going to last longer. Some people say it is. From a Kangaroo supporter and any other people that are not Essendon supporters, they hope it only lasts a year as well.

But this is not dismissing the fact that there have been teams who have won back-to-back premierships. But more often than not, there has not been more than three. And it is a team that's won three in a row unless my AFL history is wrong, which is possible being a Sydneysider.

[2 : 33] In our passage today, the psalmist calls us to sing a new song, a new song to herald in a new era. But unlike our premiership teams, it's not for one or two or three years.

It's until a particular event in history, that event being the return of Christ. The new era in Israel's history is what is known as the post-exilic period.

As the name suggests, the post-exilic period occurs after Israel occurred, after Israel was exiled from the Promised Land that God led them to in the book of Joshua.

They were exiled because of their consistent, unrepentant rebellion against God. Then when God decided that they had been punished enough, Isaiah and Ezekiel exhorted the people to return to the God that exiled them.

And that's the point in history where we pick up this psalm. The psalmist encourages the earth to sing a new song in verse 1. In ancient times, the singing of a new song marked a new time in the history of a particular country.

[3 : 47] In this case, it's Israel. This new song was used to inaugurate the new relationship God is to have with all the earth. This new relationship has the writer of the psalm calling not just on God's people but all the earth to sing this new song.

And to whom are they to sing it? It's to the Lord. The Lord, or Yahweh, is mentioned 11 times in the 13 verses of this psalm which shows the strong focus that this psalm has on Yahweh.

But what is the earth called upon to do in verse 1? Apart from to sing a new song, a command that is repeated three times in the first two verses, the reason for that is to emphasise the importance of this new era in Israel's history.

They are to bless his name, which is to pay homage to his name, as one commentator puts it. This new era is calling for an active response of the earth to the God of Israel.

It is calling for each individual to praise the name of the Lord. So immediately there is a call from God through this psalm that all must praise him.

[5 : 08] They must pronounce him as holy. But that's not all the earth is called to do. The earth must tell of his salvation day by day.

God has called them to tell of his saving work daily. Part of the saving work that God had done for his people was to rescue them out of Egypt into the promised land and bring them back from exile to his new temple which was described in Ezra and Nehemiah.

The recounting of God's saving work is a big event in Israel and needs to be told. And the ones who need to hear it are those who aren't his people.

And that task of telling those who aren't his people is mobilised in verse 3 which reads, Declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous work among all the peoples.

The psalmist here is calling on the people of God to declare his glory among the nations. Though he is calling the earth to sing this new psalm, only God's people know about his glory.

[6 : 18] It would have been pretty strange to call upon the idolatrous nations to declare his glory. But eventually that is what God hopes would happen after they turn to him. And what is God's glory?

In this psalm, it is his marvellous works among all people which includes the saving works that he has done. In the first three verses, there is a call to tell of God's saving work day by day.

It's something whilst working on this psalm I've been challenged by and I know I should be doing more of. All of us here can always tell others of God's work in our lives.

We should be ready and prepared to take the opportunities to do this. Especially the opportunities that God gives us. For our world today, in the year 2000, the gospel message is a new song for many people upon this earth.

But it's a new song that people need to hear. And the believers present here who hear this psalm need to be active in declaring God's glory through the gospel message of Jesus Christ among those who don't know Jesus Christ that they meet.

[7 : 41] But why? Why should we declare the glory of God among the peoples? Take a look at verses 4 and 5.

Verse 5 and 5. Verse 5 and 5. For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. He is to be revered above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are idols.

But the Lord made the heavens. First of all, we are told that the Lord, Yahweh, is great and deserving of our praise. And because of this, he is to be revered above all gods.

God is greater than all the other gods that appear to be worshipped on earth, especially by the nations. Before this point, the people of God are told to avoid other gods and follow the God of the Bible.

Now they are told to follow only the God of the Bible for the simple reason is that he is greater than the insignificant other gods of the nations. And the reason these other gods are insignificant?

[8 : 48] Have a look at verse 5b which tells us that the gods of the peoples are idols. God is against the idols. Deuteronomy 5 verse 7 tells us that the Israelites are to have no other idols before God.

Idol worship was not part of this new psalm and it is a recurring theme right throughout this psalm. But what was distinctive about the Lord compared to the idols?

Well, the rest of that verse tells us He made the heavens. The Lord made the heavens. In the ancient world, the creation of the heavens is viewed as a mighty work of the power of the God of Israel because the heavens lie beyond the capabilities of any other idol to make it.

It is this capacity of the Lord to relate to both the earthly and the heavenly realm all at once that enables Him to be greater than the idols of the nations.

And that's a comforting thought for those who are believers in this day of modern day idols such as work, money, sport, the internet, etc, etc, etc.

[10 : 06] As a result of this creation of the heavens, honour and majesty are before Him. Another word for majesty is sovereignty which makes God king and ruler of all the nations.

Honour and majesty are characteristic of kings and queens in this day and age. they obtain these characteristics not necessarily because of their dress sense but because of who they are.

Similarly, God deserves these traits not just because of who He is but because of all He's done for us. Look at it just in this psalm.

He's created the heavens and the earth. He saves His people. He's glorious. As well as that, strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.

The sanctuary is His temple. God's temple will not be destroyed. The old one may have fallen but this one will not fall. That's how strong it is.

[11 : 14] But it's also beautiful because it was made by God. This temple, the strength of temple parallel continues in the New Testament where Jesus in John chapter 2 declares that He is the new temple.

Jesus' temple, the temple of Jesus will never fall. That's how strong it is. It hasn't fallen yet and I don't think it will ever fall.

The first half of the psalm introduces us to a new song that needs to be sung by all the earth. Its words encourage all of us here to tell of His salvation daily and it's because of this saving work that the accolades that are given to Him by the psalmist in verses 4-6 are deserved.

All believers should tell of God's salvation day by day but I must always be undergirded by praising the great God of the Bible who is greater than all of Israel.

We now enter the second part of the psalm which starts in a similar fashion to the first one and a half verses by repeating the use of the same word three times. In verses 7-8a we see the use of the word a scribe.

[12 : 32] A scribe means giving one his due but it's a different addressee. Instead of the whole earth in verse 1 in verse 7 it's the families of the peoples which generally is translated in other versions the family of the nations or the families of the nations.

This refers to the idle nations the idle worship of the nations in verse 5 and here they are commanded by the Lord to turn away from the idols they have been worshipping. But what are they to ascribe to if they are to turn away from the idols?

We see in the second part of verse 7 they are to ascribe to the Lord they are to ascribe to him glory and strength. The nations are commanded to trust the Lord for strength and give glory to him and not the idols they have been worshipping.

In other words for anything that we do we shouldn't take the glory for ourselves and say we performed an action in our own strength but we should always give the glory to God and we should always give thanks to the Lord for the strength he has given us to tell of his saving work.

Gospel work is the telling of God's glory if we use the strength that God provides.

[14 : 05] Can we say that again? Gospel work is the telling of God's glory. All of us here all the believers here in this building are his instruments and we can only be effective if we use the strength that God provides.

Even more so for the fact that he gave us the strength in the first place and no one else. It is through God's strength we can tell his message. In the case of the nations the idols could not do what God can do.

Therefore how much glory should we give to God? Well we get a clue in verse 8. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to his name.

But how much glory is due to his name? Well let's put it this way given that God gives us everything that we need and the means to use those gifts that he gives us I would say that all glory goes to God.

Not just part of it but all of it. Let's take this a step further. If that's what's due to the Lord in terms of glory then how should we give it and where?

[15 : 32] Have a look at the second part of verse 8 and verse 9. Bring an offering and come into his courts. Worship the Lord in holy splendour. Tremble before him all the earth.

Well first of all here the nations are called to bring an offering to his courts which is a the courts are a reference to his temple. This offering this would be the best thing that the nations would have to offer.

Back in the times of the sacrificial system when a sacrifice was to be brought the best thing the best thing needed to be put at the altar as this was the only thing that would please God.

Anything less would not have given God glory at all and they would have to bring it to the temple courts but also they are called to worship the Lord.

Now this is not to give our purple sorry our verbal praises to God as we think worship is it is in fact the way Israel was describing worship was to actually lay prostrate on the ground as a heartfelt acknowledgement of God's worthiness and glory but undergirding that is a call for the nations to reverently fear him but this is not just the nations to do that it is the whole earth that is being called to reverently fear him ascribing all these things mentioned to God are not one off occurrences we continually need to ascribe to God the glory that is due to him we need to bring our best offerings to him not offertory but offerings even though that could be helpful at this time our best offerings are ourselves God's own creation as well as the gifts we give him are you prepared to give God the offering he deserves are you prepared to stick with it in the long haul are you prepared to give everything to the worldwide mission that God is calling his people to at this point you may ask why why should we keep doing verses 7 to 9 and for how long how long do we need to keep ascribing have a look at verse 10 to start with say among the nations the Lord is king the world is firmly established it shall never be moved he will judge the peoples with equity in that verse alone there are three reasons why we should continue doing verses 7 to 9 one the Lord is king two the world is firmly established and will never be moved and three he will judge the peoples with equity when God speaks we should listen that's what he wants the idolatrous nations to do the reason he is king is that he has established this unmovable world of his a feat no idol is capable of matching but as well as that

[18 : 55] God is going to rule over the peoples with equity in other words he will rule over or judge as the passage uses with fairness he will be just with all peoples he will rescue those who want to follow him totally and punish those who don't want to follow him in other words if we ascribe to the Lord then we will be rescued by God but how long do we need to be ascribing for we get a clue in verses 11 to 13a 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 for he is coming the answer until the

Lord returns we see this fantastic picture of creation celebrating when the creator returns look at it with me the glad heavens the rejoicing earth the roaring seas the exulting fields and the joyful forest tree singing isn't that a great picture of the time when our Lord Jesus returns and there is a sensational summary of this in Revelation chapter 5 verse 13 let me read it for you then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them singing to the one seated on the throne and to the lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever wow this verse is a foretaste of what is going to happen when Christ returns let me tell you from this friends that Christ's return is definitely waiting for worth waiting for if this is the type of celebration that's going to take place if this celebration does take place and it will

I will definitely aim to keep ascribing to the Lord with the help of God's grace and God's Holy Spirit and let me encourage each and every one of you here to do the same another thing about this creation motif here in this passage is that the nations idols embrace parts of creation the nations have sea gods they have tree gods they probably have field gods but they have all sorts of other gods related to God's creation and this makes the scene in verses 11 to 13 even more significant as we see a sign of perfection here a sign of perfection that will happen at the end because all the idols will be wiped out and why is that because the idol's source creation would have turned to the Lord which results in the idols becoming to worship God creation would have come back to its creator and have rejected the idols that tried to worship part of it and yes the Lord is coming the Lord's coming is not only a cause for celebration but also the reason for his coming is a cause for celebration look at verse 13b for his coming to judge the earth he will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with his truth creation friends is abuzz with the news that the Lord will come to judge the world by his righteous standards which is by punishment of those who reject him and deliverance of those who ascribe to him our ascribing to him can only stop when Christ returns to ascribe to him we need to accept the saving work of our Lord

Jesus Christ and give our whole lives over to him Psalm 96 presents to us a new song to sing it will outlast any premiership brain our world is becoming less Christian by the day dare I say it by the second the gospel message needs to go out to those who don't know it before it's too late the gospel must become a new song for Australians in the year 2000 it's a sad reality that it has become a new song but it's the case we have a growing church here with most people ascribing to the Lord the gospel is a song that needs to be sung and God gives us the strength to sing it are you ready to sing the

Lord's new song are you ready to ascribe to the Lord let me pray heavenly father we thank you for this new song that you've given us we ask that you would help us to ascribe to it we ask that you would help us to sing it and we pray that there'll be many people there'll be people who don't know about you that we come into contact with and we ask that you give us the boldness and strength to sing it but also the grace to ascribe to it and we pray this in your son's great name amen