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Entering God's Presence With Thanksgiving

PSALM 95:1-7B

Introduction

1. I am sure that many, if not all of you have noticed, it.
2. Some of you have even commented on it.
3. Personally, I do not know when it began, but for several years now the retail industry focuses a great bit of advertising on Halloween:
 - a. Candy fills several aisles and end caps in anticipation of that one night.
 - b. Costumes of all kinds are advertised, and some houses are decorated to bring a bit of fright to the little ones.
4. No sooner has October 31st passed than the stores empty their shelves and begin preparing for December 25th, better known as Christmas.
5. Trees, lights and yard decorations of a different kind fill the shelves.
6. Many will "shop till they drop" in search of the perfect present.
7. What's missing? What has been left out?
8. Tucked almost half-way between these two holidays is another holiday we know as Thanksgiving.
9. But what is "Thanksgiving?"
 - a. It is a time when families gather together to rejoice and be thankful for the blessings of which they have been the recipients over the last year.
 - b. A time when families large and small gather around tables across our country spread with an abundance of food.
 - c. At these tables, they bow their heads and give thanks for their blessings.
10. But, to whom do they give thanks?
 - a. In 1621, Governor William Bradford gathered the people of Plymouth

Colony and proclaimed a special day **“to render thanksgiving to the Almighty God for all His blessings.”**

- b. In 1789, President George Washington assigned Thursday, November 26th as the day **“to be devoted by the People of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be . . .”**
 - c. On October 3, 1863 in the midst of this country's Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday of the following November as **“a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in Heaven.”**
11. Many of you will gather with family and friends this Thursday to give thanks to the same God who continues to rule the heavens and the earth.
 12. As Christians, we do not need a special day to remind us of the need to show our gratitude or as the only day when we do so.
 13. No, we have the privilege of expressing our gratitude for His bountiful care every single day He gives us breath upon this planet.
 14. Three times in our reading this morning from Psalm 95, the psalmist invites us to come and express our gratitude through praise to our Heavenly Father.
 15. As we look more closely at verses 1-7, I would like for us to consider three questions:
 - a. Who do we worship?
 - b. Why do we worship?
 - c. How do we worship?

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I. Who Do We Worship?

A. A GREAT GOD AND KING

“For the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods” (v. 3).

1. The god you and I serve is “a great God.”

2. When you open your Bible to Genesis 1:1, the first words you read are these, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."
3. His great power is revealed time and again as He speaks His creation into existence.

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4. In Psalm 33:6-9, the psalmist speaks of God's great power in creation:

"By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,
And by the breath of His mouth all their host.
He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap;
He lays up the deeps in storehouses.
Let all the earth fear the Lord;
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.
For He spoke, and it was done;
He commanded, and it stood fast."

(Psalm 33:6-9, NASB95)

5. Here in Psalm 95, when the psalmist speaks of God as "a great King above all gods," he is not acknowledging the reality of any other gods, but declaring God's sovereignty and superiority over every other force that exists, whether real or imagined.
6. Everything in "the depths of the earth," on "the peaks of the mountains" in "the sea" and upon "the dry land" belongs to Him because He made it.
7. As we often sing, "our God is an Awesome God" who reigns in heaven above.

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"O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord" (v. 1a).

1. This is the name by which our God has chosen to be called down through the ages.

2. It speaks of two things:
 - a. God's self-existence
 - 1) In Exodus 3:13 after God instructed Moses to go down to Egypt and lead his people out of their bondage, Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?"
 - 2) "I AM WHO I AM" . . . "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Exodus 3:14).
 - b. His relationship to His people
 - 1) God then said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations" (Exodus 3:15, NASB95).
3. As the Lord, He is . . .
 - a. "Our Maker" (v. 6) — as the apostle Paul said to the philosophers in Athens, "in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28, ESV).
 - b. "Our God" (v. 7) — "we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand" (Psalm 95:7).

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II. Why Do We Worship?

A. HE IS OUR SAVIOR

"Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation" (Psalm 95:1b, NASB95).

1. He is "the rock of our salvation" (v. 1) — in Him we find our security and

deliverance from Satan's schemes.

2. The superscription to Psalm 18 credits this psalm to David and tells us that he "spoke to the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul."

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3. In the first two verses, David declares,

"I love You, O Lord, my strength."

The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,

My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge;

My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."

(Psalm 18:1-2, NASB95)

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4. Two-thirds of the way through the psalm, David asks and answers two questions:

"For who is God, but the Lord?

And who is a rock, except our God,

The God who girds me with strength

And makes my way blameless."

(Psalm 18:31-32, NASB95)

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5. Near the end of Psalm 18, in verse 46, David again declares,

"The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock;

And exalted be the God of my salvation"

(Psalm 18:46, NASB95)

6. In 1 Timothy 2:2-4, Paul called God our Savior, and told Timothy that it "is good and acceptable in [His] sight" to pray "for all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity"

because God “desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.”

7. In the last chapter of Paul's letter to Titus, he again called God “our Savior” and told Titus that when God's “kindness . . .and love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:4-5, NASB95).
- Why do we worship God? It is because we are the recipients of so great a salvation from One who is our rock, Who clothes us with strength and makes our way blameless.

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B. HE IS OUR SHEPHERD

“. . . we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand”

(Psalm 95:7b, NASB95).

1. In Psalm 23, the Great Shepherd psalm, David said of God, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.”
2. At the end of Psalm 28, David not only asked God to “save . . . and bless” Israel, but to also “be their shepherd . . . and carry them forever” (Psalm 28:9).
3. This is what the shepherd in Jesus' parable did after finding his one lost sheep — He put it on his shoulders and brought it home.
4. As our shepherd, God meets not only our physical needs, but our spiritual need for nourishment and restoration.
5. He guides us in the way we should go, even walking with us through the darkest days of our lives.
6. He promises that He will never “desert” us or “forsake” us (Hebrews 13:6).
7. Who else can keep such promises throughout all the days of our lives?

- ❑ Is He not worthy of our praise and adoration?

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III. How Do We Worship?

A. IN HUMBLE ADORATION

“Come, let us worship and bow down,
Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker”

(Psalm 95:6, NASB95)

1. When the psalmist exhorts us to “bow down” and “kneel before the Lord” he is speaking to the attitude of our heart.
2. It is an attitude of humility, of submission.
3. We are like the “tax collector” which Jesus described in Luke 18 who went up to the temple to pray.
 - a. Jesus said that he “was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven.”
 - b. Instead, he “was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me the sinner’” (Luke 18:13).
4. We are like the prodigal son, who, upon returning to his father, said, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son” (Luke 15:21).
5. None of us are worthy to be here today.
6. It is only because of Jesus’ sacrifice for our sins that we can stand in God’s presence.
 - ❑ It is when we humble ourselves before God that He lifts us up.

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B. WITH JOYFUL PRAISE

“O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord . . .
Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms”

(Psalm 95:1a, 2b, NASB95)

1. Our God is worthy of all the "joyful praise" we can muster.
2. As Christians, we are recipients of the greatest gift of heaven.
3. Our sins have been washed away with Christ's precious blood.
4. Our citizenship is now in heaven and we eagerly await the return of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. When He comes, He will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body (Philippians 3:20).
6. Awaiting us is an inheritance "that can never perish, spoil or fade" (1 Peter 1:4, NIV84).
 - ❑ When we truly understand this, our hearts cannot help but burst forth in exuberant praise!

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C. WITH THANKSGIVING

"Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving . . ."

(Psalm 95:2a, NASB95)

1. How many times can we say thank you.
2. In 1974, Gary L. Mabry wrote these words to a song we sometimes sing:

**Thank You, Lord, for loving me;
and thank You, Lord, for blessing me.
Thank You, Lord, for making me whole
and saving my soul**

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3. The last two verses of Psalm 100 not only call us to "give thanks" to God but tell us why:

"For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

Conclusion

1. I want to encourage each of you to spend time this week with your physical family giving thanks to God for all of His blessings in your lives.
2. Those of you who are a part of God's family know that your thanksgiving is not relegated to only one day a year or only to those times when you gather with the saints in worship or Bible study.
3. Every day of our lives should be a day of thanksgiving because every day is a day which the Lord has made — we can rejoice and be glad in it (*Psalms 118:24*).
4. If you are here today and are not a Christian, your sins have cut you off from all these blessings which God would bestow upon you.
5. Wouldn't you rather live a life of gratitude to the One who created the heavens and the earth.
6. Wouldn't you like to call Him "my Lord and my God!"
7. All of this is possible if you will . . .
 - a. believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God
 - b. repent and turn from your sin to Christ in obedient faith
 - c. confess Christ as Lord
 - d. be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins.
8. Jesus invites you to come!