

## The Beauty of the Worship of God

This is the second in a series of articles on worship from Psalm 33. Last time we saw in verse 1 the command to “Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous!” We’re to joyfully come into God’s presence and worship with the people of God. Interestingly, the next two verses give us additional worship commands: “Give thanks (or praise) to the LORD with the lyre; make melody with the harp of ten strings! Sing to him a new song...” Notice that there’s a back and forth movement; there are commands to the congregation as well as to the musicians; the leaders, musicians, and the congregation must all be worshipers. We should be personally engaged in worship not passive spectators watching a performance by an entertainer.

The phrase translated, ‘new song’ is used several times in the Psalms and it often speaks of a song of praise following God’s deliverance from some dire situation (40:2-3); it can also speak of thanksgiving for God’s salvation (96:1-2), or a song of praise for all of God’s wonderful works (98:1). The general idea is that our corporate worship should never get old or stale. We’re constantly praising God for who He is and for his new mercies every day. As we think about our worship of God, there’s one other important aspect that we see in verse 3. Notice that the Psalmist commands that the musician “play skillfully...” which can be defined, “to do good; to be diligent; to be joyful and pleasing....” This instructs us as to the attitude of heart and mind along with the actions of preparation prior to coming into God’s presence for worship. We should always desire to do our best; to give our all; and to do it with a joyful heart.

It’s interesting that in the first three verses of this Psalm there are six commands! At the very minimum, this alerts us to the fact that God, himself, chooses to instruct us about our worship of him. It’s not given to us to worship God according to our plans but to seek to follow his plan that’s given in his word, here and in many other places. It’s so important for us to think deeply about God’s instructions for corporate worship as well as the reasons why we worship.

Former Westminster Theological Seminary President, Dr. Ed Clowney once wrote these provocative words about how we should think about corporate worship in the local church: “The adoring church hymns praises that even the angels cannot sing, for only the church has known the divine love that bore the doom of lost sinners and gave them sonship with the Beloved.” Angels have not known the redemption that God’s people have received. We have so much to praise God for! Our worship is truly beautiful when we praise and adore God for who he is and what he’s done. Along with the beauty of the worship of God let’s look next at:  
—The basis for the worship of God.

Among other things, this Psalm teaches us that we worship because of God’s faithfulness in his word and work. Listen to verses 4-5: “For the word of the LORD is upright and all his work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD.” All that God says and does is perfect and is always done for the right reasons. If we’re looking with the eyes of faith and trust—even when we face difficulty in our lives—we can see, and be thankful for, God’s work. The work that our sovereign God is

doing in our lives is for our good and his glory, always. The teaching that we receive from his word gives us proper guidance, always. Do we really believe that? We should because his word is true, always. Is this not a wonderful basis for our excited and impassioned worship of Him?

19<sup>th</sup> century pastor and author, Charles Spurgeon, once wrote: "Let us not present old worn-out praise, but put life and soul and heart into every song, since we have new mercies every day and see new beauties in the work and word of our Lord." We have so much to praise God for!

Rev. Dr. Steve Jones is the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church PCA in Paxton, Illinois