Mt. Carmel BP Church Camp “Awe? or Blah?” Dr. Rick Griffith

8 June 1998 Message 1 of 4

NIV 50 Minutes

**Why Praise God?**

***Psalm 47***

**Topic:** Worship/Sovereignty

**Subject:** Praise God

**Complement:** because He’s the past, present, and future King.

**Purpose:** The listeners will commit to praise God for His sovereignty.

# Introduction

### [Jesus is often neglected at church.]

#### Some years ago a christening party was held for a newborn baby in a wealthy Boston suburb. The parents had opened their palatial home to friends and relatives who had come to celebrate this wonderful event.

#### As the party moved along, people enjoyed eating and drinking and celebrating and enjoying one another, someone said, “By the way, where is the baby?”

#### The heart of the mother jumped, and she instantly left the room and rushed into the master bedroom, where she had left the baby asleep in the middle of the massive bed. Pulling aside the heavy coats of the guests, she found her baby smothered under the weight of the coats—dead. MacArthur, *Ultimate Priority*, 21

### We seem to occupy ourselves with many good things at church, but too often in the midst of it all, Christ loses central focus. This is why I’m glad that you have chosen worship as your camp theme—for this is so central it is one of the few things we do on earth that we will do in heaven! So let’s get down to some real basics as we begin and ask a fundamental question…

### Subject: Why do you praise God? Why should we make sure we give Him the worship he deserves? Why not let Him get smothered underneath the coats of our busyness? What’s so wrong with that anyway? Why praise God? Why is it so important to worship God?

### It’s good to address this issue because it's very easy to let habits which are very good habits in themselves turn into very selfish practices—we easily place the focus on ourselves.

#### Take prayer, for example. It's good to pray and every believer should make prayer a regular habit. However, if we're not careful our prayers can unwittingly evolve into self-centered "grocery lists" which we regularly hand to God.

#### Bible reading may also illustrate the point. Regular intake in the Word should characterize every believer's life, but too often it can turn into self-centered "spiritual quick fixes" designed to appease God to give us a trouble-free day. I knew one believer who for years believed that God was out to get him every time he missed his quiet time! Sure enough, each time he missed his Q.T. he had a miserable day! For him Bible reading had become a selfish practice.

#### Praise of God is another very good habit in itself but it can turn into a very selfish practice. So let me ask you this question…

### Now back to my original question: "Why do you praise God?"

#### I think that, if we're not careful, praising God can also end up being a self-centered pursuit just like prayer and Bible reading.

#### We need to remind ourselves that we should worship God totally from pure motives, simply because of who He is and the fantastic things He's done.

#### So we’re going to spend a fair amount of time this camp just talking about who this God is that we worship. He's the God who has demonstrated Himself and will demonstrate Himself to be King of the universe.

### We find a tremendous reminder of His Kingship in Psalm 47. The focus of the whole psalm is the reasons we praise God, but notice before we get into this that verse 1 first invites us to praise Him…

# I. Invitation to Praise: Praise God with joy by shouting and clapping your hands (1).

## We often have a problem with this clapping and shouting stuff.

### Whenever we come across verses in the Bible which go contrary to what we normally do in our church services, people give excuses.

### I always hear people say, "Well, that's cultural. Israel as a society during Biblical times did that, but that's not acceptable today nor does it have the same meaning."

## I agree that many Biblical practices are cultural, but does the argument really hold up in this case?

### Do we clap hands and shout for joy in our society?

#### Americans sure do! Some of them go into hysteria every time the Cowboys score a touchdown!

#### But what about Singaporeans? Not as much as westerners perhaps, but I’ve seen a bit of emotion and pride shown on National Day.

### If a football team or our country deserves words of praise and clapping of hands does not the LORD of the universe deserve a bit of reverential emotion when we consider what He has done?

(Well, what has He done and who is He? Read on to verse 2…)

# II. Reasons to Praise God: Here’s five reasons to praise God as King (2-9).

## God judges as the King of the universe (2).

### God is worthy of our praise due to His position as the sovereign Lord of the universe who upholds the highest standards. His sovereignty is in view in the Hebrew title '*Elyon*, or the "Most High." This means that no-one has a right to question whatever He does (illustrate through Isaiah 29:16).

### His right to rule includes His judgments also, referred to by the Hebrew term meaning "awesome" (NIV) or that God is "to be feared" (NASB). God should be praised because every time He punishes, the punishment fits the crime.

### How many of you like the movie “Touched By An Angel”? I think that this is one of the very few series worth watching on TV. What attribute of God appears over and over in this series? Yes—God’s love. In fact, that’s all there is about God there. You never hear that He judges, that he has standards. In fact, yesterday he was depicted as a CEO sitting behind a desk in a white tuxedo! He assigned an angel to hell but she ended up too good for hell so God changed His mind to let her back into heaven!

### But God does have standards—completely just ones! And this is a reason we should praise Him—that He will not let the world go on without bringing about justice.

## God has protected us from evil influences (3).

### You will notice that the NIV, the NASB, and the KJV translate verses 3-4 as past, present and future, respectively. This is because of the great flexibility of the Hebrew tenses. However, since verse 5 indicates past tense, the near context shows that the past translation is really best here. In this psalm Israel is praising God as the nation looks back at God's blessing them with their land.

### The LORD deserved Israel's praise for how He cleared the land of Palestine for them.

#### The historical background here is the strength and abominable practices of the Canaanites (iron chariots, child sacrifice).

#### It was a miracle that Israel ever got control of the land—they were not particularly skilled in warfare, having lived in the desert for 40 years!

#### However, by clearing out these evil influences God protected His people…

### In like manner, God should be given credit for His hand of protection on your life.

#### Some of you are from Christian families. Who knows what could have happened to your life without growing up in a Christian or moral family.

#### Or, if yours is a bad background, it could have been even worse!

##### In my family my parents have experienced the heartache of 12 divorces when all those whom they have married is added up—my father is on his 5th marriage and my mother her 3rd.

##### But this could have been much worse—at least I did stay with my mother all those years!

#### The point here is that God should be praised for His hand of protection on your life.

## God provides our material needs (4).

### The LORD promised Israel that He would provide them the land of Israel as their inheritance way back from the time of Abraham (see Genesis 12:1-3). According to the twelve spies who visited the land before Israel ever entered it, the land was said to be "full of milk and honey," or abundant in farmland. In this sense it was the "pride" of the nation.

### We, too, should realize that all we possess is from the gracious hand of God.

#### What material need do you have that God has not taken care of? Philippians 4:19 is surely correct here!

#### Praising God for meeting our basic needs is very appropriate, though often neglected.

#### Not only do we have a physical inheritance like Israel, but a spiritual one as well.

##### Ephesians 1:3 says that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Have we grasped what that means?

##### We have the indwelling of the Spirit forever (Eph. 1:13-14)!

## God rules the entire universe now (5-8).

### In the time of Israel the coronation of a king was accompanied by the blast of a trumpet while the king ascended his throne, which may be in view here figuratively.

#### The temple was on the highest point of Mount Zion in Jerusalem, so people generally had to go uphill to get there—likewise the king during his coronation.

#### In like manner, when Israel worshipped God it was like they were celebrating the fact that He had become King!

### Of course, the LORD has always been king and always will be king, so a specific historical reference does not need to be in view here. The point here is that Israel praised God because everyone knew that He was in control of the world.

### Many times it's easy to forget who's really in control as we hear about another hijacking, another murder by a prisoner on parole, another country fallen to a coup, another famine or earthquake. Let's not forget to praise God as the real, legitimate King!

### We live in a semi-D on Rifle Range Road and have an important water drainage pipe going under the street in front of our house. Last year this pipe got clogged with dirt and the heavy rains came. As it poured we watched the water line rise centimeter by centimeter in front of our house. Soon the water started pouring into our carport, then our patio, threatening our dining room. We tried to bail it out but couldn’t do it fast enough, so our dining room flooded about 3 centimeters high. Our boys enjoyed trying to swim in the dining room, after a few hours we finally had it cleared. Meanwhile, the pipe remained clogged and the rains came again the next day. This time I discovered a way to put large sun shades in front of our driveway to divert the water into the drain. As I was out there in the rain, soaking wet, I saw that the water line in our neighbor’s yard was then rising. So our old Chinese Buddhist neighbor ran out to her altar and was frantically offering incense to her idols. I’ve never seen joss sticks move so fast! When I discovered I put boards in front of her gate to divert her water also into the drain. I stood there in the rain, reflecting on how utterly practical Christianity is. Our neighbor felt that she had to appease the gods or manipulate them in some way to keep her house dry. But in reality the great God of the universe simply gave me wisdom and extra old planks of wood to follow the laws of gravity to divert the water. The point? We don’t manipulate God—He’s the holy King of the universe! Verses 7-8 say…

### We should repeatedly praise God through music as the holy King of the universe (7-8).

#### Notice the repetition of the phrase "sing praises." We are to continually offer up to God appreciation for what He has done. The Christian's life should be a constant expression of praise to God, including music such as the psalms, or songs from Scripture. In this sense the church needs to see a return to music which takes the Scripture as its text.

#### God rules over all nations with holiness (8).

##### How comforting to realize that with so much unjust rule in our world, the highest of the rulers is completely just. He's transcendent, far above any other authority.

##### In order to bring God's sovereignty down to a level we can comprehend we see a figure of speech here when it says that "God sits on His holy throne." Obviously, since He is spirit (cf. John 4:24) He is not confined to a body, but by saying that He sits on a throne we understand that He has total control of the world. That's good reason to give Him praise!

## God will be worshipped by all nations in the future (9).

### The final reason to praise God is because in the future everyone will bow down before Him in worship.

#### This event is seen with such certainty the verse records it in the past tense as if it already happened.

#### When I say "everyone" this includes everyone!

##### All Gentiles will praise God. The "nobles of the nations" (= “princes” NASB) are Gentile leaders. Now if they are praising God, then certainly they are representing everyone under them as well.

##### All kings will praise God. These are called "shields" in the NASB. A quick look at the UN today reveals that this hasn’t happened yet!

##### And all Jews will praise God. Amazingly, Gentiles are called "the people of the God of Abraham" but I presume this includes Jews too.

#### Since this includes all of us, we may as well beginning praising and worshipping Him for His rule now!

#### Probably the clearest text on this aspect of worship is in Zechariah 14 [explain].

### Philippians 2:9-11 also comments upon how all peoples will gather before God to pay Him homage [read]. This verse doesn’t say when God will be worshipped in this way, but other Scripture reveals that when Christ rules the earth during the Millennium all people will pay Him homage.

# Conclusion

### Praise God because He’s the past, present, and future Ruler (M.I.).

### Praise God because He has shown Himself and will show Himself to be King of the universe (M.I. restated).

### So why should you praise the Lord? Through Psalm 47 we have been reminded of six reasons we should praise God. Did you get all these?

#### God judges as the King of the universe (2).

#### God has protected us from evil influences (3).

#### God provides our material needs (4).

#### God rules the entire universe now (5-8).

#### God will be worshipped by all nations in the future (9).

### These reasons include both what He has done for Israel (and us) in the past as well as what will happen in the future when every knee bows before Him during the Millennium.

### Do you praise Him for the wrong reasons? (Possibly you don't even regularly praise Him at all?) Is your prayer life characterized by simply handing God your "grocery list" of demands?

### How do we praise Him as our King?

#### I suggest that we make a conscious attempt to remember what He has done in our lives through writing it down in a prayer requests/answers journal so that we may praise Him for what He has done in our lives. Some of the most precious things I own are journals of significant events in my life when I saw Him work in special ways.

#### We can also praise Him for what He has done in the lives of others, too, particularly in the lives of the Israelites. This is the reason He has given us this Scripture hymnbook, the Psalms.

#### You might want to make it a regular practice to pray through a psalm a day, making the words of the psalmist your own words.

##### I want to demonstrate this with Susan using Psalm 111. We will simply read or put the psalmists words into our own words, maybe reading a whole verse or even just a phrase [do so].

##### I want to encourage each of your groups to do this in each session with Psalms 111–114. These four psalms (one each time you meet) can be your prayer and worship order of service for each session!

### Whatever it takes, let's praise Him as He deserves to be praised!

# Discussion Questions:

1. How does true Christian worship differ from worship in Buddhism, Chinese Folk Religion, Islam, or Hinduism? Why is this?
2. Define genuine worship. Think in terms of what is absolutely necessary for worship to take place.
3. Which reason to praise God given today meant the most to you personally? Why?

 **Preliminary Questions**

**Verses Questions**

Context What did the author record just prior to this passage?

Purpose Why is this passage in the Bible?

Background What historical context helps us understand this passage?

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**Tentative Subject/Complement Statements**

Text

**Possible Illustrations**

Neighbor frantically offering incense as the Rifle Range water line rose.

**Why Praise God?**

***Psalm 47***

**Exegetical Outline**

***Exegetical Idea:* The reason all nations should praise the LORD in song is because He is the transcendent, sovereign, universal ruler who executed judgment for Israel and before whom all peoples will pay homage.**

# I. Call to Praise: The way all nations should praise God is through clapping their hands and joyful shouting (2 [1]).

# II. Cause for Praise: The reason the LORD should be publicly praised is because as the world's feared and sovereign ruler who executes judgment He conquered the Canaanites and gave their prosperity to His beloved Israel (3-6 [2-5]).

## He calls for the LORD to be praised because He is feared as the sovereign ruler who executes judgment over the entire world (3).

## He declares that the LORD subdued the Canaanite nations through military conquest on Israel's behalf (4).

## He declares that the LORD gave the material prosperity in the land of the Canaanites to His beloved nation Israel (5).

## He declares that the LORD is publicly acknowledged as sovereign ruler of the world with shouts and trumpet blasts (6).

# III. Call to Praise: The reason the psalmist repeatedly calls for praise of God through rejoicing with song in a skillful, didactic psalm is because God is the sovereign ruler of both Israel and the world (7-8 [6-7]).

## He repeatedly calls for rejoicing with song to praise God as Israel's sovereign ruler (7).

## He calls for rejoicing with song in a skillful, didactic psalm because God is the world's sovereign ruler (8).

# IV. Cause for Praise: The psalmist declares again that the LORD should be publicly praised because of His unquestioned, transcendent, universal rule and authority and all Gentiles, Jews and earthly rulers will gather in homage before Him (9-10 [8-9]).

## He declares that God has unquestioned, transcendent rule and authority over the nations of the world (9).

## He declares that both Gentiles and Jews will gather before God in homage since all earthly rulers are under his authority as the sovereign ruler of the world (10).

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Subject: Why do you praise God?

### It’s easy to let even good habits turn into very selfish practices (prayer, Bible reading).

### Now back to my original question: "Why do you praise God?"

### We find a tremendous reminder of His Kingship as a reason for praise in Psalm 47…

# I. Invitation to Praise: Praise God with joy by shouting and clapping your hands (1).

## Original meaning

## Modern meaning

(Well, what has He done and who is He? Read on to verse 2…)

# II. Reasons to Praise God: Here’s five reasons to praise God as King (2-9).

## God judges as the King of the universe (2).

## God has protected us from evil influences (3; tense, Canaanites, appl.).

## God provides our material needs (4; Gen. 12, basic needs).

## God rules the entire universe now (5-8; coronation, forget, music, holiness).

## God will be worshipped by all nations in the future (9; Zech. 14, Phil. 2:9-11).

# Conclusion

### Praise God because He’s the past, present, and future Ruler (M.I.).

### Through Psalm 47 we have been reminded of six reasons we should praise God. These reasons include both what He has done for Israel (and us) in the past as well as what will happen in the future when every knee bows before Him during the Millennium.

### Why is it that you praise the Lord? wrong reasons? not at all? "grocery list"?

### Write requests/answers in a journal or pray through a psalm a day. Whatever it takes, let's praise Him as He deserves to be praised!