

# Finding God's Rest

Psalm 95:1-11

*Halifax: 24 July 2022*

## Introduction:

Today in our Hebrews sermon series, we are taking up Psalm 95 as a new Psalm of Focus, replacing Psalm 118.

- Our practice has been that we have a particular Psalm that we sing in relation to the sermon series that we are doing at the time.
  - I introduce a new one every couple of months or so.
  - Whenever I introduce a new Psalm of Focus, I always preach from it.
- So that's what we're doing today.
  - Rather than preaching from Hebrews itself, I'll preach from Psalm 95.
    - We will use this Psalm for a while as we go through Hebrews 3-4, which actually is, more or less, an exposition of this Psalm.
  - We were Psalm 118 for chapters 1-2, now we are doing 95 for chapters 3-4.

Listen as I read this Psalm to you. This is the Word of God:

**Psalm 95:1-11: Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. <sup>2</sup> Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. <sup>3</sup> For the LORD is the great God, and the great King above all gods. <sup>4</sup> In His hand *are* the deep places of the earth; the heights of the hills *are* His also. <sup>5</sup> The sea is His, for He made it; and His hands formed the dry *land*. <sup>6</sup> Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. <sup>7</sup> For He is our**

**God, and we *are* the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice: <sup>8</sup> Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as *in* the day of trial in the wilderness, <sup>9</sup> when your fathers tested Me; they tried Me, though they saw My work. <sup>10</sup> For forty years I was grieved with *that* generation, and said, 'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.' <sup>11</sup> So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'**"

This Psalm shows us how we should relate to God as God's people—as Christians.

- It's important to know how to relate to all that is around us,
  - to parents, to your spouse, to deceivers, to friends, to hostile people, to the environment itself, to the plants in your garden, to your phone.
  - How much more important to know how to relate to God!
- This Psalm has one of God's people—ultimately, Jesus, the Son of God made flesh—telling us how to relate to God.
  - He calls us to come with Him to God, to praise God and to worship (bow down to) Him.
    - This goes on through most of the Psalm—all the way to verse 8.
      - We will look at that in a moment.
    - But then God the Father interrupts with a solemn warning—telling us that we must not harden our hearts.
      - He warns us that if we do, we may not ever get to enter His rest—

- We will look at what that entails when we get to it.

Indeed, let's take a more detailed look at how we should relate to God according to this Psalm starting with the first five verses.

**I. In the first five verses, we are called to come and praise God as the great God that He is.**

- **Ps 95:1-5: Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. <sup>2</sup> Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. <sup>3</sup> For the LORD is the great God, and the great King above all gods. <sup>4</sup> In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the heights of the hills are His also. <sup>5</sup> The sea is His, for He made it; and His hands formed the dry land.**

**A. See how Jesus our liturgist calls us to come into God's presence in verse 1 & 2.**

1. Jesus is the speaker here who leads us in our worship.
  - King David may have written this Psalm, but ultimately, it belongs to Jesus by whose Spirit David spoke.
  - Jesus, as man, is the only one who praises God as God truly ought to be praised.
    - He is the one who brings us, the people He redeemed, with Him.
  - Every time we gather, we are to come to the Father in Jesus' name.
2. The essence and soul of worship is gathering to God.
  - That is what worship is about.
    - Verse 2 says, "Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving."
  - Our very name is "church" or "assembly".
    - That is what the people of God are called in both the old and new testaments.
    - This is what distinguishes us from all others—that we come before God.
  - The Lord promises to meet with us.
    - He visits the assembly in a very full way to receive our praise and our prayers and to bless us.
  - Yes, we gather with each other, and we worship together.
    - When we do, we consider one another, but if we do not consider God—if we miss the fact that we are gathered to praise Him, we have missed the whole reason for our gathering.
3. This being so, our worship is to be directed to God.
  - Jesus does not say, "let us sing for each other," or "let us sing to one another," but He says, "Oh come, let us sing to the LORD. Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation."
  - We are not here to watch a performance or to entertain each other.
    - We are here to praise God. We are before Him.
  - Do you do that?
    - Do you consciously come before Him and lift up your praises to Him?
    - Too often, I fear that that is not what you do. I know it is not what I do.

4. And note well that you are to actually come—to physically gather before God.
  - You are not to stay at home.
    - You are to present yourself before the Lord.
  - And when you are here, you are not to be aloof or detached.
    - You are before God—to praise Him!
  - I tell you, you ought to arrange your whole week around meeting with God on the Lord's Day.
    - It is something to pray about, to prepare for, to arrange your schedule so that you can be properly rested and ready.
    - Before you come, you should see that you repent of your sins and reconcile with those against whom you have sinned.
      - All week you should be serving Him and keeping yourself pure and holy by leaning on Jesus. You are a worshipper of God.
      - All week, feed on His word, pray to Him, and praise Him in private worship as one who will gather to Him.

B. And when we do come, what should our praise be like?

1. It is to be joyful and grateful.
  - Look at the words again in verse 1-2: **Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. <sup>2</sup> Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.**
  - This speaks of exuberance—singing with a joyful shout.
    - We are to be full throttle when we worship.
    - We should be awestruck and thrilled that we can come with Jesus.
  - Too often it is not so.
    - When this is the case, we should lament our condition and seek God's pardon and help that we might do better.
2. Joyful praise arises out of our love for the LORD, for who He is, and for what He has done. We need to consider who He is.
  - Look at how He is described here:
    - Vs. 1—He is the LORD, [that is, the self-existing one].
      - He is the Rock of our salvation [an immovable fortress].
    - In v. 3—He is the great God,
      - and the great King above all gods. [He has no rivals].
    - v. 4 says that everything is in His hand (to do with as He pleases)
      - and v. 5: that whatever exists, exists because He made it.
      - He does whatever He pleases. Be in awe before Him!
3. We do not praise Him as we should because we do not love Him or know Him as we should.
  - Ask Him to change that.
  - Ask Him to reveal His glory and excellence to you.

- Ask Him to pour out His Spirit so that you will see His glory and so that you will love and adore Him.
  - We need tender hearts to even see His glory.
  - The Holy Spirit is able give us tender hearts in place of our hard hearts.

Now let's move on to the middle section—verses 6 and 7.

## II. In vs 6 & 7, we are called to submit to Him as our God.

- **95:6-7: Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. 7 For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.**

A. The words in verse six, *worship*, *bow down*, and *kneel*, are words that speak of humbling ourselves as those who acknowledge His greatness.

1. This speaks of being in awe before Him—
  - of knowing that you are before One over whom you have no power—One who is transcendent, who dwells in inaccessible light and glory—
  - the One who can bless and the One who can curse,
  - the One who has authority to do whatever He pleases.
2. It speaks of a yielding of ourselves to Him in two ways:
  - As obedient servants who are ready to do whatever He asks of us...
  - And as those who entirely entrust ourselves to Him to save us and bless us.
    - We truly give ourselves up to Him.
3. If you harden your heart, you will not be able to do this.
  - You will resist Him and refuse to truly humble yourself before Him.
  - You will be proud and will deny His greatness...
    - You will find fault with Him instead of bowing to Him.
    - You will call Him unjust, unfair, unkind.
    - You will resist His call and His authority, and unless you repent, you will do it all the way to the end when you too will bow, not as one taking your place to be blessed but as one who has been put in your place and will be cursed.
      - Moses had a tender heart, and he bowed before the LORD.
      - Pharaoh had a hard heart, and he bowed by duress, being forced to admit that he had no authority before the LORD.

B. What is it that causes one person to have a tender heart that bows to the LORD and another to have a hard heart that refuses?

1. The answer is in verse 7. We bow and worship and kneel before Him: **“For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.**
  - This is the language of the covenant of grace throughout the Bible:
    - “I will be your God and you will be My people.”
    - This is much more than being our God in the sense of being our creator!

- This is being our God in the sense of restoring us to be His people who are saved from our sins and enabled to worship God.
2. Those who have this blessing are the ones who trust in Jesus Christ to save them from their sins.
    - God has shown them that they are sinners who need forgiveness.
    - And He has shown them that He sent Jesus to save them by dying on the cross, and that whoever believes in Him will be saved.
    - And they have believed—just what is described here...
      - They have bowed to the LORD—put themselves into His hands to save them.
  3. Have you done that?
    - Have you bowed before Him—putting yourself into His hands to save you?
      - Have you given yourself up to Him?
        - given yourself up to Him to rule you, to pardon you, to deliver you, to provide for you, to care for you, to keep you, to preserve you, to feed you, to sustain you?
      - The tender heart does that.
        - It says: “Lord, you take me, you save me, you provide for me, you lead me, you keep me.”
      - The hard heart refuses to bow down.
        - It will not trust Him, nor will it obey Him.
        - It does not delight in His majesty, it resents it.
        - And the more you resist Him, the harder your heart will grow.

TRANS> What is the condition of your heart?

- Really—consider it.
  - Are you resisting Him, or are you giving yourself up to Him to save you and lead you as your Saviour and Lord?
  - You need to face where you are with Him.
    - It is a great tragedy if you have heard His voice and are hardening yourself instead of putting yourself in His hands as your LORD and your God and your Redeemer.

### III. In verse 8-11, the Father breaks in to warn us not to harden our hearts.

- It says: 95:8-11: **“Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as *in* the day of trial in the wilderness, <sup>9</sup> when your fathers tested Me; they tried Me, though they saw My work. <sup>10</sup> For forty years I was grieved with *that* generation, and said, ‘It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.’ <sup>11</sup> So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’”**

A. This almost seems out of place at first.

1. The Psalm was going along so nicely.
  - Here our Lord Jesus was calling us to come and praise the Father with Him with joy and thanksgiving, considering His greatness and majesty with adoring love.

- He was telling us to bow before Him as our God—to place ourselves under His loving care for our salvation and guidance as His people.
2. It was all so lovely and marvellous—
    - and then there is this almost rude, abrasive interruption:
      - **“Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion.”**
- B. God describes a time when His people did harden their hearts.
1. He speaks of the time when He redeemed Israel as His people and they rebelled.
    - He saved them and brought them out of bondage in Egypt and promised to give them the land of Canaan.
      - They were to dwell there as His special people, in His care, as we have just described—trusting in Him to forgive them, to govern them, to lead them, to provide for them, to preserve them, to feed them... to be the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.
  2. This was all well and good at first, but then there were some hard things that they did not like.
    - They were tried and tested to see if they would trust God and obey God.
      - Would they rely on Him to provide for them in the wilderness?
      - Would they trust Him to drive out their enemies in the land that He had promised them?
        - They did not.
        - They hardened their heart because they did not like the way God was doing things.
        - They did not value the fact that they, as sinners, had been restored to the living God.
  3. You see, God uses testing to see if we understand and value the relationship that we have with Him.
    - He tells us that we will have to go through much tribulation to enter His kingdom.
    - When we are tested, the testing forces us to decide how much we understand and value our relationship with Him.
      - If we don't really understand what it means to be eternally saved and reconciled to God, we will harden our hearts against Him.
      - We will not think it is worth it to suffer for Him.
        - That's what we will do if our faith is not real.
    - But if our faith is real, testing will help us to value our relationship with God more and more.
      - We will see how trustworthy He is to keep us through the times of testing and our love for Him, our delight in Him, and our trust in Him will get stronger and stronger.
- C. The warning is necessary because there is a danger that we will harden our hearts as God's people.
1. We have a history of doing that.

- a. We see it in the Old Testament and we see it in the New Testament.
    - There is Cain, Esau, King Saul, Jeroboam, Ahab.
    - There is Judas, there is Demas, there is Hymenaeus and Alexander.
  - b. We have seen it in the life of our congregation.
  - c. No doubt you have experience times when your heart was hardened because you did not like what God was doing.
    - You were in danger of ruin in the great assembly.
      - Jesus warned of this danger in His parables.
      - Paul and the other apostles warn about it in their epistles.
      - It happens.
    - If you were to continue to harden your heart, you would not enter God's rest.
2. What does it mean to not enter into God's rest?
- a. God's rest is work that He has completed for our benefit and enjoyment.
    - Creation, redemption from Egypt, Jesus purging us from sin, heaven.
  - b. If we do not continue to trust Him to bring us into His rest, we will not enter it.
    - If you harden your heart because you don't like what He is doing, and you do not repent, you will be cut off.
3. But don't get me wrong. If we are truly trusting in Christ, if we are truly born of God's Spirit, God will keep us.
- But here's what you need to understand about warnings.
    - He uses warning to keep those who are truly His people.
  - When you start to harden your heart, He brings a warning like this warning in Psalm 95.
    - And His Spirit uses the warning so that you pay attention to it.
    - You don't go on hardening your heart the way so many of the people did in the wilderness or the way Judas did,
      - But like Peter or David when they sinned, you hear the warning and you turn back to the Lord.
      - Even better, you are like Joseph in the Old Testament or like Paul or like Jesus and you hear the warning before you turn away.
    - That is why there are so many warnings like this one in Psalm 95.
      - We need them to keep us from hardening our hearts.
      - God is very kind to give them to us.

**Conclusion:** Is your heart hard or tender toward God?

- Do not harden your heart by resisting Him.
- Look upon your glorious God, look at what He did to save you, and melt into His gracious loving care as your God and Saviour.