

Knowing God Psalm 96
Mission: Worship

* Passage being read before sermon

Intro

Hey we had an awesome Starting Point Friday Night. Lots of new faces. We had to close registration and I know some of you who were hoping to come weren't able to so I want you to know we are going ahead and opening registration for the February starting point. Ya'll I believe this is going to be a huge year for our church and part of that big year is going to be a collective spirit of being "all-in" for God's mission together. And I'm excited for it!

This is our last weekend in the Knowing God series. And the hope is that as we encounter these psalms we learn what it means to Know God. To not just know about God but to personally know him and relate to him. The psalms are great for that. We looked at Psalm 27 and our desire for God, Psalm 90 and how the greatness of God reveals our smallness and we saw a way to pray to God in that light. We looked at Psalm 42 and how God can bring us out of despair which starts with him being there in the middle of it with us. We looked at Psalm 19 and how amazing it is that this God has made a way for us to know him in the bible. We CAN KNOW GOD! It has been an emotional series which is good because the Psalms are emotional. And today...today we shed light on the one missing link in our journey through the psalms.

See up to this point we've dealt with our personal interaction with God. Which is critical but it is also incomplete. God designed you to know him personally and to find your fullest joy in HIM. BUT, you cannot stop there. You cannot stop with what God does to YOU.. Today we are confronted with what God wants to do THROUGH you. And if you listened to this Psalm you as it was read you know where it is going: to the nations of the earth!

Today is going to be massive for some of you. It's a big day I think for our church. Because in so many ways our psalm today exemplifies the mission of Mercy Church. So if its your first time here today, awesome. Because you are getting a Mercy Church Orientation Sermon today. Here's the deal: We believe the greatest news on earth is the gospel message. God loves people and offers salvation to people and we want everyone to have the chance to hear it. So we are committed as a church to taking the gospel as far as we can as fast as we can.

Today we go to Psalm 96. Some pastors and theologians have referred to this as the missionary psalm. because it is singularly focused on the people groups of the world worshipping the one true God.

Our The Main Idea comes from an idea in a book called "Let the Nations be glad" that upended my world 15 years ago. Here is our big idea today: The goal of the mission is worship. I want to show you through this Psalm the missionary calling God has given every christian. Three parts. The missionary message, the missionary destination, and the missionary heart.

When we draw closer to God, when God allows us to see more of himself and to know him better, he does it to increase our joy and then to extend that joy to others, specifically the people groups of the world.

The missionary message¹

Ok like any passage in the bible you read, its best to figure out if there is any other passage connected to it that can help you understand it. Let the bible help you understand the bible. Especially in poetry and stuff like that. Ok If you were to go into your footnotes in your bible you'd be re-directed to 1 Chronicles 16. And the reason is because most of this Psalm is actually recorded there first. David wrote the first version of this Psalm as a victory song. David was the king of Israel, God's people. And very important to God's people was something called the ark of the covenant. God gave it to them as a way to signify his presence with them. It was lost in battle a long time ago and now finally it has been won back. Recovered...and this Psalm...is a song is being sung as it is processing through the streets and into the holy temple. In response to God being faithful to his promise that he would always be with them, the people are to sing a new song.

[1] Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth!

¹ I am indebted to Dr. John Piper for so much of my own formation in this area. [His message on Psalm 96](#) influenced this particular section of the message.

Like a championship banner for your favorite team...or for the patriots. New victory, new banner.

Here how this connects: The missionary message that God's people carry today...it is a victory song. It is a celebration of God and his faithfulness towards us. The missionary message, the anthem of the church...it is a new song. This Psalm is looking back and looking ahead. God has returned! And there is a day coming where he will fully restore the earth. We see that at the end of this Psalm. What happens when Jesus is born? The angels in heaven fill the sky and SING. Revelation 5.9 when Jesus sits down on the throne of heaven it says God's people in heaven began to SING a new song. Worthy is the lamb who was slain! The response of God's people to his faithfulness is always SINGING. And here's the missionary message, the song we carry. The song I hope you hear when you are in here on the weekend in our music & sermons:

1. There is one God and he is glorious

Look at how much of this Psalm is spent just calling us to declare God's glory.

[3] Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! ...[6] Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

[8] Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an

offering, and come into his courts! [9] Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!

We went over this a few weeks ago in Psalm 90. You remember Moses' psalm? The main takeaway from that one was that **God is GREATER than me and that is good for me.**

There is one king, one authority over the earth...One true God. David says

[4] For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. [5] For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

See David is comparing the gods of the world to the one true God and saying that there is no power in any of these carved images the world has created for it. But...the lord is all powerful. It's not like God is slightly more powerful than other gods. It's that other gods are fake & he is real.

1 Kings 18 – The Prophet Elijah is in a showdown with the 450 prophets of Baal. They build a wood pile and say which ever god answers our call to send fire from above to consume the wood, that god wins. Prophets of Baal call on their god to reign fire & nothing happens. Elijah mocks them [27] And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened." 1 Kings 18.27 – Elijah was the world's original trash talker.

Nothing happens. Well then Elijah says you know what...douse this whole thing with water. Build a trench, fill it with water.

Put stones around this altar. Then douse this whole thing 2 more times with water. Then he calls on the one true God to prove that he, and not baal, is God. & God sends fire down and consumes the whole thing, water included.

And this Psalm is the missionary saying There is only one God! Look at the cadence of the song. V.4 – Great is THE LORD. V5 – but THE LORD v7 – Ascribe to THE LORD v8 – Ascribe to THE LORD v9 – Worship THE LORD. There is only one God! The missionary song is unapologetically convinced there is only one true God worthy of worship.

I think too often the reason the church is not more passionate in this missionary calling is because we aren't convinced there is only one true God. Its common in our day to confuse tolerance and truth. Tolerance means I believe you have a right to your beliefs. Tolerance does not mean I accept it as TRUTH. Christians believe in religious tolerance because our religion is not one forced on people but offered to people. The gospel is a gift. Gifts are offered & received, not forced. But respecting one's belief and accepting it as truth are different. Do you believe there is only one God? That all other gods other than the God of the bible are false? When you actually start to think about it, it's a pretty staggering claim.

And here we see David saying the message of God's people to the world is first and foremost that the one true God is GLORIOUS! He's holy, he is strength & beauty, he is splendor and majesty. And The missionary message is really summed up in verse 10

[10] Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns!

There is ONE GOD! He is glorious, he has done great things & he alone reigns over the universe. Leads into the next part of the missionary message

2. God Still Saves Sinners

I want to sit on verse 2 for a minute because this is where the joy in the Christian life comes from.

[2] Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.

This is the 3rd time he's said "sing to the lord" in 2 verses. God's people SING! And what do we sing about? The salvation we have found in God! Listen we say all the time we are a gospel centered church and this is what we mean: We mean that down at the core driving how we do church is the belief that God saving us from our sin is the most important event, most important news, in the whole world.

If this word gospel is new to you here's what we mean: God made us to be worshippers. So every human worships with their lives. He made us to worship him & when we did we'd be satisfied. But each one of us at some point has directed our worship off of him and onto something else. I see this a lot with dating relationships. You wouldn't say you 'worship' a boyfriend or girlfriend but you can't seem to function fully without one. You find your security in comfort in being in a relationship and you are anxious about what they are doing when they aren't with you. If you aren't dating you feel somehow incomplete. That's worship. The problem is that

boyfriend is a worthless idol. Even if he's a great guy or she's a great girl, they make terrible gods.

And that's my point. We were meant to worship the one true god but we instead worshipped other things. Maybe romance, maybe success, maybe popularity, maybe financial stability, maybe pleasure. And God calls that misplaced worship sin.

The literal translation for sin is to miss the mark. And the penalty for sin is death. We are separated forever from the God we betrayed. And yet, we find those gods we chose never fulfill us. They are, we come to find out, worthless. And right there where we are separated from God with no right or ability to save ourselves, God steps in and saves us.

The gospel says Jesus payed the penalty for our sin by dying in our place on the cross. And now through his death we are SAVED from death. We who deserved death get a new life.

[23] For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23

The reason we SING is because our ETERNITY was set to be spent away from God and when we couldn't do anything about that he stepped in and SAVED us. God is still saving! So we are still singing! And we are singing a new song. The cross gives us a new song to sing! Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like...ME! God saved ME! It's amazing! And he offers that same salvation to the whole world!

Here's what I hope our singing is like here at Mercy Church. When we gather on Sundays...I hope it is a group of people who have been in AWE of Jesus all week. Marveling at his

grace, captivated by his power & love as we pray to him & read from the bible. And our souls are so filled with hope that it extends out beyond us day to day. We tell others about God's salvation as an overflow of the heart. And the whole time we are thinking...Sunday is coming. And when I get in there I'm going to be around a bunch of other redeemed sinners. And we are going to sing a new song together. Our God Saves! Sing to the Lord Mercy Church. Our God Saves!

So lift your hands, clap, shout as we sing. When somebody is preaching lift your hands, clap, shout. Some of ya'll think that's disruptive and it's the opposite. It's worship!

The gospel is at the center of our singing and at the center of our message to the whole world. I gotta keep moving. I told you the missionary message. That there is one glorious God and he is still saving sinners.

the missionary destination: the nations

This is the heart of Psalm 96. God did not make himself known, or reveal his salvation & greatness to you alone...or to your ethnic group alone. He did it with a long-term view of all nations worshipping him. By nations we don't mean political states, but nations more like Cherokee nation. People groups who share a common cultural identity. God created ALL PEOPLES and he loves ALL OF THEM!

Think about when this was written. America wasn't a thing. Not even close. The center of the known world was the middle east. God's people were a people group. The Jews. But God kept grafting non-jewish people in and he did it by Psalm 96 type commands. He sent his people to tell other people

groups that there is one true God and he saves. And they need to get in on it. Jesus comes along and says in Matthew 28 go make disciples OF ALL NATIONS. All People Groups. Jesus is a middle eastern jew. That's who we Christians worship. Sometimes we get 6'2" white robed flowing hair jesus and I'm like...who is that? Looks more like rick flair than jesus.

He sent out his middle eastern apostles to the Mediterranean world. And a bunch of Mediterranean converts took it to Europe who eventually brought it to the people groups in what we now call North America. And now it is flourishing in the Caribbean, and Africa and Asia. It's not an american religion. Far from it. It's a middle eastern religion that declares the love of God FOR ALL PEOPLES! And we here in the US are recipients of the missionaries of church history who brought the gospel news to us! We have 4 core ministry values at our church and one of them is that **people are the mission**. And this is why. God loves all people. Regardless of where you are from or where your parents are from...God loves you.

And this message, God has decided, is to be told to the nations by his people. The CHURCH is God's plan A for taking the gospel to the nations. Romans 10 makes that really, really clear. We talked about this in the fall if you remember:

[12] For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. [13] For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

[14] How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? [15] And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" ...[17] So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. Romans 10:12–17

The history of Christianity is the members of the church responding to the love of God they've received by going and telling other people groups that same love is available to them. We've been talking about how we are a singing people so maybe it fits to say: a healthy church is always on tour. Not filling up stadiums but stepping into nations that have never heard it before. Ya'll The church has been on tour for 2000 years and by God's grace it is our turn to go sing this new song to those who haven't heard it yet.

GOING and SENDING should be normative to the Christian life. Going to the nations is not for the marines of Christianity. Jesus' call in matthew 28 is for anyone who is a follower of Christ and he says "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."

So if going to the nations and sending others to the nations is to be normative in the Christian life I think we have to change the way we approach missions. See often when Christians hear about an opportunity to go take the gospel to another people group our thought is...I'm not sure God has called me to go. Well, what we know is that YES he has called you to go

somewhere because faith comes by hearing! **So the Christian prayer is not should I go but *where* should I go?**

That is my challenge to you this year. My challenge for you to talk about in community group tonight or whenever you next meet. put your yes on the table and let God put it on the map. The way we say it around here is to know the will of God all you need is an open bible and an open map. What if that's the way we prayed. Prayed together. Yes God we are going. Where to?

There are a series of prayers I'm praying for Mercy this year. Pray them every day. One of them is God let us send 100 people on short term mission trips this year. I know that sounds crazy because it would mean over 20% of our church. But today there are 1,347 people **groups** who are unengaged with the gospel! There is no church, no mission agency, no one who has said YES to going there. 41 million people it is estimated who have no access to the gospel. Who cannot ascribe glory to the Lord because they don't know him. They don't know his love. Our goal as a church is to get engaged with some of those groups.

So here is what we are doing in 2018. We are taking 12 short term trips to introduce you the work of God around the world. To help us together expand our hearts to love the people God loves. We are giving you a chance for a week or so to put your yes on the map. Here is a map of where we are going.



I want to challenge you to let God put your yes up here somewhere. The greatest thing you may do for your faith this year is spending a week with some other Christians talking with some people, made in god's image, who God loves deeply, who have never heard the gospel.

Will you take that step? And here's the thing...what we'll be doing there you can do here. God loves your neighbor just as much as he loves the man or woman in Afghanistan. You've heard the gospel today. **The call God is placing on us Mercy Church, to take the gospel to the nations, is our window into his heart. And your willingness to obey him...that's your window into your own heart.**

Which is the last thing I want to talk about today. The Missionary Heart

Patrick

I told you last week I love reading missionary biographies. I'm re-reading an awesome book right now called *Movements that Change the World* and the author Steve Addison opens telling you about the story about a 16 year old british boy named Patrick. Patrick was born into a very wealthy family who had power and influence in Britain at the time. In 405 A.D. the Visigoths sacked Rome and as rome fell, the roman protection of britian fell as well. Irish raiders sacked Patricks family estate, captured him, took him back to Ireland and sold him into slavery. For 6 years Patrick lived the lonely, harsh life of a slave working as a shepherd in Ireland. And according to Patrick even though he grew up in a home where his grandfather was a pastor & he knew the gospel...it wasn't until there in slavery that he finally believed the gospel message. Patrick said he came to see the hand of God in his struggles. He described how when he finally turned from his pride and unbelief & turned to God, he realized God had been watching over him all the time. He became aware of God's protection, and he discovered that God loved him as a father loves a son.

One night Patrick said God spoke to him in a dream saying there was a ship waiting to take him home. Well, he escaped that night and began a 200 mile journey on foot as a runaway slave. Eventually made it to the coast and the ship was there. It took him home and against all odds he resumed life in Britian. Inheriting his father's estate...and had his life set.

But God was not done with Patrick. Some time later Patrick felt God calling him back to Ireland. To share this love of God with his captors. He was uneducated and pretty green to church work, but felt God calling him. So he went to the Irish “barbarians” sure he would never return. Most people thought he’d be killed quickly & would be a wasted life. But there in the countryside of Ireland...thousands upon thousands responded to Patrick’s message. They came to Christ. And many joined his missionary movement. He faced fierce opposition from all sides. Many Christians were killed for professing their faith. But the celtic missionary movement flourished. And for the next several hundred years Ireland became a missionary sending hub where monasteries would train young people to love Christ, his word, and the nations. Patrick died in 461 and has been regarded ever since...even up to present day...as St. Patrick, the apostle to Ireland.

I spend all that time telling you that because God used a shepherd-slave boy to change the world. Not just Ireland but the whole known world. Acts 17.6 talking about the disciples said there was a report of them to the roman governor that “these men have turned the world upside down.” May that be how God uses Mercy Church.