

Humility:
An Essential of Christian Worship
Psalm 124

Each week as we open the Psalms, I'm trying to make a case for their import in your *private devotional life* **and** *our gathered worship life in the church*.

The Psalms are the song book of God's people—both Israel and the church. As such, they teach us the essentials of Christian worship.

Of course, true Christian worship is *grounded* in the glory of God the Father, *centered* on Jesus Christ, the Son, and *dynamically fueled* by Spirit of the living God. All Bible believing churches would affirm that.

What else would we say about Xn worship? Well, we would need to include the biblical components or rhythms of worship: gathering, praying, confessing our sin, singing, reading Scripture, preaching, repentance, giving tithes/offerings, baptism, sharing the Lord's Supper... if we don't do these things, we haven't...

But there is also **a tone of worship** (John Frame). And the tone of worship is just as important as the individual components of worship. The tone is what Pastor Jon tries to set @ the beginning of the service. Not every Sunday. And not always explicitly. But watch for that.

Ask yourself, *What is our tone of worship today?*

Sometimes our tone is more celebration and big/sometimes more reflective. Sometimes gladness / sometimes sorrow for our sin, the brokenness of world. Christian worship *should* reflect a variety of emotional experiences.

But there are some tones that should always mark our gatherings. Essential tones. I want to talk about one of those today. **Humility**.

Psalm 124 teaches us that true worship is marked by humility.

1. Our need for humility
2. How worship cultivates humility
3. Jesus: the embodiment of humility

1. Our need for humility (vv 1-5)

I see our need for humility in two ways in this psalm—at the personal level and the congregational level.

First, King David embodies our personal need for humility. He is the composer of this psalm. David was a man just like you and me. Tempted toward self-glory all the time. On one tragic occasion (2 Sam 11-12), he gave in. He stole the wife of Uriah (one of his trusted warriors) / had Uriah killed to cover it up.

2 Sam 12:7-8—Nathan the prophet exposes David's self-glory...

That's who we are. Enough is never enough for us! Our pride and self-glory and lust all mingle together to lead us away from God and his glory. That is the human condition since **Gen 3**. Thankfully **Psalms 51** tells us...

Secondly, and more obviously, this psalm captures our need for humility as a people; a congregation of people God is making for himself.

Listen for *humility* as I read

Read vv. 1-5

The heart of this psalm is Israel's confession of **their own inability** to protect themselves. To stand up against the opposition. To make their way into a land promised by God. It's called the **promised land** for a reason. It is not the '**you deserve it land**'—because you worked so hard/so worthy of it! The heart of this psalm is a growing awareness of utter humility and dependence on God.

Remember Deut 7:1, 6-8

listen to this!

That's the big picture background of Psalm 124.

If it had not been the Lord on our side... the other nations would have:

Swallowed us up like an evil dragon (v 3); like a monster who devours its prey...

OR

Swept us away... like a flood during the rainy season... or a **hurricane**... an especially powerful flood that we thought we were prepared for.

2. How worship cultivates humility (v 1)

Let's get practical: Singing the Psalms of Ascent—with God's people on the way up to Jerusalem 3xs times yr—how does that cultivate humility?

And, for us, worshiping together on Sundays? How does a shared song/common confession/a corporate prayer cultivate humility?

I think the answer is in v. 1—**let Israel now say.**

Let **all of Israel** now say—we can't save ourselves! This little phrase between the two dashes is so instructive. This is not the confession of **one** person.

This is a congregation of people—being led *by* the worship leader—to *remember/to experience God's saving work as a people.*

In the psalms, it is the worshipping community that shapes the individual and not the other way around. Let *all* of **Israel** now say... **Our** help is in the Name of the Lord. **Not my help** but **our help**... is the LORD who made heaven earth!

One of the most life-altering things God will do for you is take you out of the suffocating world of self; and place you among a life-giving, worshipping people.

That's why Sunday worship is so important for Christians. Because God wants to challenge your **self-reliance** / your **self-made confidence** / your **pride**...

Illus CS Lewis

Gathered worship cultivates humility in two simple and necessary ways:

- a. **It's God-centered**—therefore the inertia of worship pulls us away from ourselves. To sing and pray and glorify God with his people. Sometimes I don't have a song in my heart... but I end up sitting next to my brother or sister in Christ and they voice his glory for me!
- b. **It's Other-centered**—again the inertia pulls us away from ourselves. As we greet one another, prefer one another, bless one another, sing with one another, pray for one another, give our offerings to help one another... this is all happening in worship!!!

If you are struggling with pride/self-centeredness/isolation... step into the center of the worshipping community and let break you down.

Now, we can look at v. 8 ... which points us to the Lord Jesus Christ!

3. Trusting Jesus Christ begins with humility

Read v. 8

As Christians, we read this psalm with more clarity than David himself... clarity about exactly who the Divine Warrior of the LORD is. Who fights our battles for us! Who is **on our side!**

David could see... but not as clearly as we can now see.

In the NT, the Apostles don't hesitate to identify the Name of the LORD with Jesus of Nazareth. In fact, *this is the truly amazing claim of Jesus Christ.*

So much so that in **Acts 4**, Peter and John—speaking to the rulers of Israel—claim that there is no other **name** under heaven by which we must be saved. The Jews heard nothing but blasphemy at that point...

But the Apostles were confident that God sent his Messianic Son—to bear his name and to save his people. Call him Jesus because the LORD saves. YHWH will save his people from their sins.

In other words, as Christians, we can sing **Psalm 124** like this...

Or to use the Words of Paul that we recited at Dan's funeral this week:

If God is for us...

Rom 8:31-32 / 35 / 37-39

Did you hear the gospel in this?

Jesus fights for us... he conquers our sin, our suffering, our selves...

Close:

But you have to humble yourself and receive him (he gave/will give/etc).

Trusting in Jesus begins with humility...