

“It’s All about Him” (Psalm 96)

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INTRODUCTION: Max Lucado tells an old fable of an elephant lumbering across a wooden bridge suspended over a ravine. As the big animal crossed over the worn-out structure, it creaked and groaned under the elephant’s weight. When he reached the other side, a flea that had nestled in the elephant’s ear proclaimed, “Boy, did we shake that bridge!” The flea had done nothing! The elephant had done all the work. (Max Lucado,

It’s Not About Me, p. 134-135.)

Lucado says, “God does not exist to make a big deal out of us. We exist to make a big deal out of him. It’s not about you. It’s not about me. It’s all about him.” (Lucado, *It’s Not About Me*, p. 6.)

Psalm 96 shows us how fleabraind we are to think it’s all about us. This majestic psalm is divided into three sections that show us in three ways that it’s all about God, not about us.

I. All glory belongs to God (v. 1-6)

A. What we sing (v. 1-2).

Notice what we sing. Verse 1 begins by saying, “Sing to the Lord a new song.” Many times in the psalms we are told to sing a new song (see 33:3; 40:3; 144:9; 149:1). When we sing the same old songs over and over again, they lose their freshness. From time to time, we need to sing a new song, so that our hearts are awakened again. When the Israelites escaped from Pharaoh across the Red Sea, Exodus says that Moses sang a new song of praise. Revelation 5 says that the saints in heaven sang a new song of the Lamb of God. Notice these new songs are not just any silly song; the emphasis is on the Lord. “Sing to *the Lord* a new song.”

For years, Dick Clark was the emcee for a TV show called *American Bandstand*. Young people would dance to popular songs, and they would rate them. Usually if they liked a song, they would say the same thing, “It has a good beat and you can dance to it.” In other words, the song was all about them, and whether they liked it.

A lot of people come to church thinking they’re on *American Bandstand*. They listen to the praise band and the choir, and decide if they like it because they like the style of music. But I have news for you: it isn’t about you! It’s all about Him! The question is not whether you like the beat or the tune. That’s not the issue. The question is, “Does it give glory to the Lord?”

It’s all about Him, not us, for all the praise and glory goes to God.

B. Where we sing (v. 3)

Surprisingly, verse 3 does not say to sing in the sanctuary. Instead, it says to “declare his glory among the nations.” This is evangelistic singing. The world wants to contain God’s glory in the church meeting houses. But God says His glory is to be spread everywhere! “Among the nations” and “among all peoples.”

The great evangelist Billy Graham has preached the gospel to more people on earth than any other human. Millions have heard him; once he preached to a crowd of a million people in Korea. Yet Graham rightly says, “People do not come to hear what I have to say—they want to know what God has to say.” (*Billy Graham in Quotes*, p. 151)

Martin and Gracia Burnham served God as missionaries in the Philippines for 17 years. On May 27, 2001, while celebrating their 18th wedding anniversary at a beach resort, Martin and Gracia were taken hostage by a militant terrorist organization with ties to Osama bin Laden. Chained to guards, they spent over 400 days in the jungle with the terrorists. Martin said, “We might not leave this jungle alive, but at least we can leave the world serving the Lord with gladness.” On June 7, 2002, Philippine Rangers attacked the terrorist camp, catching Martin and Gracia in the cross-fire. A bullet hit her leg, and another bullet took his life.

Why did this tragedy have to happen? We don’t know. But remember, it’s not about them, it’s all about God. The international news reports of Martin and Gracia Burnham’s faith spread their story of faith in Jesus all over the world. Millions of people all over the world watched the news report, and saw the interview with his father as he talked about their faith. Every major network in the United States gave full coverage to their testimony and their sacrifice. (Lucado, *It’s Not About Me*, p. 119-120.)

As God says in Psalm 50:15, “Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.”

So we need to give Him glory all over the world.

C. Why we sing (v. 4-6)

This evangelistic purpose of singing God’s glory is explained in verses 4-6. The reason why we must glorify God among the nations is because the nations are following other gods who are not real gods at all. Verse 4 reminds us that Yahweh alone is worthy of praise, and He alone is to be feared above all of the so-called “gods” that the world worships. In Old Testament times, Egypt worshiped the sun-god Ra, and Babylon worshiped Marduk. Today, Americans worship at the altars of materialism and entertainment. Ra and Marduk did not deserve glory in ancient times, and materialism and entertainment do not deserve glory today. As verse 6 reminds us, only the Lord made the heavens.

Verse 6 poetically pictures splendor, majesty, strength and glory as if they were persons, escorting the Lord in a processional into the place of worship. We give all the glory to him, because He alone deserves the glory, and the world needs to know it.

II. All gifts belong to God (v. 7-9)

In verse 7, the psalmist uses a new command: “Ascribe to the Lord.” The word “ascribe” means to give something. Not only does all glory belong to God; all gifts belong to God.

A. Our wonder (v. 7-8a)

Verses 7 and 8 tell us to give our wonder to God. It says to ascribe “glory due his name.” Remember, he is king of kings, and should be approached with awe and wonder.

When Lady Diana was being groomed to become the Princess of Wales, she was prepared for her royal role. She had to learn to suppress her giggle. She could no longer be called by the familiar name “Di,” but needed to be addressed by the more formal “Diana.” The British royal family is treated as larger than life.

How much more, then, should be our awe be for the Lord. We must give him the gift of our wonder.

B. Our wealth (v. 8b)

The last of verse 8 reminds us to give a gift from our wealth to God. “Bring an offering and come into his courts.” The Israelites were required to always bring a sacrifice and offering when they came to worship, and they were expected to tithe, giving ten percent of their income.

Today, there are Christians who argue that we are under grace, not under law, and we are no longer required to give a tithe. That may be technically true, but it is spiritually false. While the Lord does not demand the tithe of Christians, what kind of ingratitude would it be for us to give less under grace than was given under law? What kind of dishonor is that to the Lord Jesus Christ who shed His precious blood on the cross for our eternal salvation, for us to say, “Well, I’m saved by grace, so I don’t need to give as much as they gave in Old Testament times,” when Jesus gave us His very life to save our souls?

C. Our worship (v. 9)

Verse 9 says we also should give the Lord the gift of our worship. “Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness” it says. Psalm 93:5 says, “Holiness adorns your house,” reminding us that what makes the place of worship beautiful is not the beautiful windows or banners or columns or stained glass, but the holy Lord who is worshipped there.

Psalm 96:9 says at the end of the verse, “tremble before him, all the earth.” I’m reminded of the spiritual that asks, “Were you there when they crucified my Lord?” The chorus to the song says, “Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?” If we truly give our worship to Him, we should tremble at His presence.

III. All government belongs to God
(v. 10-13)

A. Nations (v. 10, 13)

Verse 10 says, “Say among the nations, ‘The Lord reigns...’”

Verse 13 returns to this theme, saying, “He comes to judge the earth.”

Every nation on earth is under the authority of the Lord. It is not a democratic or republican government. It is a benevolent monarchy, a gracious king and Lord. It is not a government of the people, by the people or for the people. It is a government of the Lord, by the Lord and for the Lord. The people will be blessed by His rule, but it is an absolute rule under the Lord. It’s not about us, it’s all about Him.

B. Nature (v. 11-12)

Not only are all nations under His rule, but all nature is also under His rule. He created it all, and thus verses 11-12 picture creation itself personified, and giving God praise, “Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad, let the sea resound, and all that is in it; let the fields be jubilant and everything in them. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy...”

It is very interesting that Psalm 96:11 is the middle verse of the Bible. How appropriate that in the center of the Bible is a description of God’s creation praising Him.

CONCLUSION: There was a frog who had a problem. His home pond was drying up. If he didn’t find water, he was going to dry up with it. He heard about a lively stream over the hill. If only he could live there, but how? His short legs were not designed for such a long journey.

Then he had an idea. The frog convinced two birds to carry either end of a stick, he bit the center and held onto the stick as they flew. As they flew toward the stream that was to be his new home, his jaws clamped tightly to the stick and he flew with them. It was quite a sight! Two birds, one stick and a frog in the middle. Down below, a farmer in a pasture saw them passing overhead. Impressed, he wondered aloud, “Now who came up with that idea?”

The frog heard the farmer and couldn’t resist a reply. He said, “I diiiiiiii.....” (Lucado, *It’s Not About Me*, p. 137-138.)

Let’s learn from the foolish flying frog on the stick and the flippant flea in the elephant’s ear. It’s not about us! It’s all about the Lord. All glory belongs to God. All gifts belong to God. All governments belong to God. You and I belong to Him. Have you given your life to Him?

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