

**21A\*THE TIMELESS PSALMS:  
A CALL TO WORSHIP  
LENT 3A 2014  
PSALM 95**

Called to be God's people, we come to praise and worship  
our Glorious God, because we need to offer God our worship.  
**We come together today to sing our praises and offer our  
thankful prayers to our God, who welcomes us with delight!**

Called to be God's people, we come to celebrate God's royal  
mercy and grace, because we seek to be God's loyal people.  
**We come together today to acclaim our God, who even as we  
worship, invites us to be at home in the palm of God's own hand.**

Called to be God's people, we come to confess that we have not  
always worshipped or served God honestly, as we have promised.  
**We come together today to confess to God that we have not listened  
to God's voice or words to us, and have blindly gone our own way!  
May we open our ears and eyes to worship the Lord, who is our Rock. Amen.**

**PSALM 95**

**1** Come, let us sing to the LORD!

Let us give a joyous shout to the rock of our salvation!

**2** Let us come before him with thanksgiving.

Let us sing him psalms of praise.

**3** For the LORD is a great God, the great King above all gods.

**4** He owns the depths of the earth,  
and even the mightiest mountains are his.

**5** The sea belongs to him, for he made it.  
His hands formed the dry land, too.

**6** Come, let us worship and bow down.  
Let us kneel before the LORD our maker,

**7** for he is our God.

We are the people he watches over, the sheep under his care.

Oh, that you would listen to his voice today!

**8** The LORD says, "Don't harden your hearts as Israel did  
at Meribah, as they did at Massah in the wilderness.

**9** For there your ancestors tried my patience;  
they courted my wrath though they had seen my many miracles.

**10** For forty years I was angry with them,  
and I said, 'They are a people whose hearts turn away from me.  
They refuse to do what I tell them.'

**11** So in my anger I made a vow:  
'They will never enter my place of rest.'

**PRAYERS OF THANKFULNESS AND PENITENCE:  
LENT 3A 2014  
PSALM 95**

Guiding and Leading God, we come together to worship you, because you are so worthy of reverence, worship and praise. God calls to us to come primarily as a faith community, to celebrate the ownership, steadfast love and mercy of our God for all creation; and whose unchanging nature and ways inspire us to liken God to being a steady and safe rock and refuge. Our awe, thanks and praises can only be expressed in celebratory ways—with uninhibited shouts of joy and glad songs of thankfulness. The Lord God is Lord of everything, and is above all people who aspire to or inherit royalty; above all who claim the privilege of leadership; above all appointed to roles as leaders and guide to their people; and certainly the Lord God is far above the “things” that we choose to revere, in our desire to be a big “number one”.

Holy and Eternal God, in you all things begin and end; in you all aspirations for control over people or the things of the earth meet their match – whether under or above the earth’s surfaces – or even of vast regions of outer space; in you our acquisitiveness is defeated before it can even begin to acquire; and in you, we discover the gentleness and tenderness of our Compassionate God! We can do nothing except bow in reverent awe before God, the Lord our Maker.

Pilgrim’s God, despite all the glory and wonder of our God, somehow in our humanity and pride, we still fail you and blame you when life or things don’t go as we want or expect. We are no different than the ancient people of Israel, who lashed out at God and their leaders as they were wandered in the wilderness, and at Meribah and Massah. We still yearn for the “good old days” and the way we imagined things were always easier, and there were no hassles to bother us. How foolish we are, and how patient the Lord our God has been with us! Just as God called on the people of Israel to repent of their sin and start again, so, we too are challenged by God to take a clear look at ourselves and our living - to see for ourselves our own sinfulness. Remembering God, look at us again in your love, mercy and forgiveness, so that we may in all humility, seek to develop a deeper understanding of the holiness and “otherness” of the Lord our God; and to worship you with an authentic and honest desire to love and revere you. Amen.

**A PERSONAL MEDITATION:  
LENT 3A 2014  
PSALM 95**

This Psalm is uniquely a “beginners manual” to teach us how to worship God most effectively and appropriately! It also explains to us that we really have no choice about whether we should or choose not worship God— whose own holy sovereignty calls forth an instinctive and worshipful response from us, whether we recognise it or not! The Being of God is so awesome – we can do no more than respond in shared worship and praise. Worship is not simply a one-off or casual event, but is a constant state of mind, heart and spirit before God, who is our Maker and the very Foundation of our humanity. When we fail to worship God, we fall into the same trap the people of Israel fell into, when they demanded God act to save them, and then asked God: “...*Is the Lord going to take care of us or not?*”<sup>1</sup> Our very acts of shared worship of God, and our daring to call God “*our God*”, highlights for us our own shared and individual sin and failings, and so we can in humility only fall before God, seeking forgiveness and renewal.

Creative pause:        “*Come, let us come..., sing..., shout... give thanks to the Lord*”

The Psalm’s second call to gather together to worship God teaches us how we should approach God. “*Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker, for he is our God....*” As we rejoice in who and what God is— according to our limited understanding of the Awesome Being of God as our Creator/Maker – our songs and shouts of joy are silenced in humbled adoration and in awed amazement at God’s glory, power, majesty and compassionate care! The third act of our continuous worship is the exclamation: “*Oh, that you would listen to his voice today...!*” Once we have been awed into silence before God— we are urged to listen for God’s voice and to learn God’s will for us each of us. Thus, our authentic worship of God expresses our shared faith, hope and trust in God, that we daily live out through our obedient and faithful life and living.

Creative pause:        Worship of God is much more than offering up words!

In the second half of Psalm 95, God responds to our shared worship! The people had had their say by singing praises and shouting for joy, and then were silenced— out of awe before “*our Maker*”. The ancient people of Israel were warned by God not to become hard-hearted, rebellious and self-dependant; and not to turn their back on God! One of God’s greatest gifts to humanity is our memory! Each of us acts today in ways that reflect our past life’s experiences, all of which adds up to our personal or shared “*story*”; and each “*story*” is unique to each person or group. The people of Israel, to whom their specific “*story*” was basic to their very being as a nation, yet they never learned from their own “*story*”! The Old Testament is one long saga of disobedience to God, and then a return to faithfulness until the next episode of separation from God. Both people and leaders were not exempt from these failings. Our challenge is whether each of us will ever learn to be faithfully obedient and to trust in God’s declared love and compassion for each one of us?

Creative pause:        Will we ever learn from our own past and its mistakes?

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 17:7b (NLT)

Acknowledgements:

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