

Everyone's Invited

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[0 : 00] Procter & Gamble is, I'm sure, a name most of us will be familiar with.! They are one of the biggest producers of consumer goods in the world.

! If you've not heard of them, you've definitely heard of and bought a whole host of their products. They are a huge company whose success depends on shifting a whole lot of stock.

So it's not surprising, is it, that for decades, they have thought very carefully about how to boost sales figures. There are countless options, there are countless avenues you could go down, improve the product quality, lower the costs, change the packaging, target different demographics, advertise on TV, on the radio, in the newspaper, on social media. There are loads of things to try.

But for decades, Procter & Gamble found by far in a way that the most effective way to increase sales lay in a simple three-letter word. New. New and improve, right? You can change the packaging or the formula or the target audience all you want.

And sometimes that works and the change is often good, but it is the concept of newness that captures our attention and sparks our interest. Because new is, isn't it? New is, or at least should we always be, good.

[1 : 44] But better than what was before. That's why you won't hear any adverts this year, will you, for the iPhone 17. It will be for the new iPhone 17. Every car advert, isn't it, is for the all-new Volkswagen Golf.

Because with newness comes the rightful expectation of improvements or innovation or restoration. The idea of newness is one that fills us with the hope of something better to come.

I know that Psalm 96, let me be clear, is not an advert trying to sell us something, but it is a promise of something new. Something new worth celebrating.

Worth eagerly expecting and looking forward to. That hope of something even better to celebrate would, I think, probably have been pretty difficult to imagine for the singers of kind of the original song that forms the basis of Psalm 96 here.

Because we find, right, almost all of Psalm 96 back in the book of 1 Chronicles. 1 Chronicles chapter 16, when David is bringing the ark into Jerusalem.

[3 : 22] It is a momentous occasion for Israel that is rightly celebrated joyfully. The whole nation is gathered together. There is widespread rejoicing, right? The music is blaring.

There are horns and trumpets and cymbals and harps and lyres. It is all going on. And so the audience is called there in chapter 16 to sing.

Sing to the Lord with an almost identical copy of the psalm we have before us this evening. Almost identical. There are a couple of minor differences, but the unmissable one is found in the very first line of Psalm 96.

Sing to the Lord a new song. They were called in 1 Chronicles 16 to sing in response to something really amazing.

And they did that with great joy. But now, now there is something better to sing about. Something new.

[4 : 42] I think you get a hint of what that newness is just in the very next chapter of that passage in Chronicles where God promises something better. That he will establish the throne of David's descendant forever. And we've already heard this evening, haven't we, that the reason Israel had to sing a new song.

In our reading from Isaiah 42, God's people were invited to sing a new song because the servant of the Lord was coming. To bring justice. To be a light to the Gentiles.

To be a light to the Gentiles. The servant of the Lord, the son of David on the eternal throne. The new song. The new song of Psalm 96. It is a big and bold arrow pointing us to the coming of the Messiah.

Sing a new song because Jesus Christ is coming. So we're going to see this evening how this new song that points us to Jesus shapes our worship.

How it encourages our witness and the expectant hope it gives us to wait for the future. They were looking forward to Jesus. We look back joyfully to what Jesus has done, but as we'll see we also with them look forward, eagerly anticipating when Jesus shall come again.

[6 : 21] So there's three points there this evening that we'll work through. Worship the Lord, witness to the nations, and wait for the King. With each of these we're not sort of kind of walking through the Psalm verse by verse, but looking looking through it as a whole. So let's just begin first of all there with the new song that calls us to worship the Lord.

Much like we saw in Psalm 95 last week, Psalm 96 is another invitation. Another invitation to praise the Lord.

And so it is unsurprising to find that there are a lot of similarities between the two. We are called again, aren't we, to sing to the Lord. In fact, here we are called, aren't we, to sing, sing, sing to the Lord.

Singing matters. We can confess what we believe to be true through speaking, can't we? But so often it is, it is song that reveals where the deepest affections of the heart lies.

And so the invitation is not just to know about God, but to know God, to love the Lord. So we're invited again to sing, and again, like Psalm 95, we're invited to come into his courts.

[7 : 54] Let's just look there at verse 8. Come into his courts, this time ascribing, ascribing, ascribing, ascribing to him glory and strength.

Sing to the Lord, ascribe to him glory and strength. Ascribing to the Lord, ascribing to the Lord, it doesn't mean, does it, giving something to him, that he doesn't already have, as if we had anything to give God that was not already his.

Rather, I think what we're being called to do here is to express rightly awe at what does belong to God.

But think of it kind of maybe like seeing a friend's pristine garden. I've said before how terrible I've discovered I am at gardening, so pristine gardens really do amaze me.

Right, you kind of go to a friend's house and you look out the window and the lawn is weedless. How? And moss-free. The bushes, right, they're perfectly pruned.

[9 : 03] The veg patch is flourishing. No toddler has kind of emptied the planter onto the slabs. It looks spectacular. And so you look out the window and you say to you, or I do, wow, that's your garden.

That is amazing. You're not learning, are you, that the garden belongs to them. You're certainly not giving them their garden. But you are praising them by being amazed at the goodness of what they have.

That's your garden. You might do the same with a car or even a parent or a child. Ascribing to the Lord glory and strength is not as kind of giving him something he does not have.

Instead it is, I think, being audibly, visibly amazed at the goodness of what already belongs to God.

God's. This is your creation. This is your love. You are loving.

[10:14] You are good. You are holy. You are majestic. You are beautiful. You are merciful and gracious. You are slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. You are glorious.

You are strong. How amazing. How amazing are you, O Lord. Sing, sing, sing, ascribe, ascribe, ascribe.

So once again, we have the invitation to come and praise God. And once again, the reasons are given there in verse 4 and 5. Come and sing to the Lord, for there is no other God like him.

There is no other God. He alone is the one who made all things. He alone is God. So ascribe to him glory and strength.

That is the invitation we have here. And it is, isn't it? It is very similar to Psalm 95 last week. But while there are similarities, there are also some differences.

[11:22] Distinctives. Or perhaps we should say distinctives. And kind of, I think, like a spot the difference puzzle. When two similar pictures are presented next to one another, our eyes aren't, they are naturally drawn to what is not the same.

I think that's what happens here. And I don't think that is an accident. In the new song of Psalm 96, our eyes are drawn to what is new. And while the invitation itself is much the same, it is beautiful, isn't it?

It is marvelous. The invitation is similar. What is new, I think, is the accompaniment of the guest list.

We have the invitation. But here we also have the list of those who we can expect to be invited.

Guest lists can be difficult to compile, can't they? Who gets to come and who doesn't. If you've ever had a part to play in organizing a wedding, you will know something about the stress that those choices can cause.

[12:41] But there is no such stress here. There is no such stress here because there is no one, not a single individual on the face of the earth who is left off this guest list.

There is no name, not included. Everyone is invited. Second line of verse 1 there, sing to the Lord all the earth.

Verse 7, ascribe to the Lord, O families of the earth. Verse 9, tremble before Him all the earth. This is a gloriously universal, inclusive invitation.

Everyone. From the farmer in Ethiopia to the accountant in Singapore. From the Hindu in India to the atheist in California. To you and me here this evening.

Everyone is invited. All the earth are invited, called, commanded. To sing to the Lord.

[14:02] That means that your name. Your name is on the guest list. Maybe you sit here Sunday by Sunday thinking you're just not sure if you belong.

Or you're somehow not the right fit. Or that Christianity is for a different kind of person to you. Hear this, Sam.

Everyone. All people from all nations, you included, are invited. Not generically, but personally. You might not feel like you belong, but you are expected.

You should be there. Your name has been written on the table plan. And if you don't come, someone really is missing. And you will be missed.

You are invited. And you and I, we are all being invited, compelled, commanded again to come and sing. To the Lord. To the Lord.

[15 : 15] Just look down there with me. Even if you just glance quickly through the psalm, you will see repeatedly that name again and again and again. Just in kind of small all caps there. The Lord.

I'm sure we've mentioned this once or twice before. But a reminder, perhaps for anyone relatively new. When we see kind of Lord written like that there. That is our English translations kind of doing their best to bring our attention to the covenant name of God.

Yahweh. Yahweh. That he reveals to Moses and to all Israel in Exodus. That is the name God gives to those he wants to be in a relationship with.

You will be my people and I will be your God. But now, here in this new song of Psalm 96, all the nations are to come and worship the Lord.

He wants you to be his God. And you to be his. The one who had revealed himself to Israel calls all people everywhere to come to him in the same way.

[16 : 37] It's not an invitation to the nations to kind of come and watch from the sidelines. What will those who are really God's people get on with the business? There are not sort of some people in the box seats, some people in the front row. And then, you know, and a few others right in the back corner behind a pillar with a restricted view.

Everyone, all people are invited to come to the Lord as they are God. But in this new song, it gets better still, doesn't it?

Because while God revealed himself as the Lord in the Old Testament, he has now revealed himself even more clearly. Even more personally, even more gloriously in Jesus.

The very image of the invisible God. It is an inclusive invitation for all people to come to Jesus.

But it is, I think, worth saying, important to say, it is also an exclusive invitation. It goes out to everyone, but it does not say, does it, come and be religious.

[17 : 53] Come and find God. No, it says plainly and clearly, come to the God of the Bible. The Lord, Jesus Christ.

Come to him. To go anywhere else would be like reading the venue on a wedding invite and deliberately driving to a different place.

Go anywhere other than Jesus, and you're not sort of on the right lines. You're in the completely wrong place. So it is to everyone, but everyone is to come and worship Jesus.

So come, come and worship Jesus, because in this new song, all people from all nations are called to worship him. So first of all, we, all people, are called to worship the Lord.

And then secondly, we, again, all people, are called to witness to the nations. We're moving into our second point here, but let me, again, just kind of mention this earlier, try and be clear, that we are not kind of breaking this Psalm up into three chunks.

[19 : 09] Psalm 96 does not kind of speak about worshipping, then about witnessing, then about waiting. These three are kind of key notes that are played together and interwoven through the Psalm.

It speaks of them together. Sometimes in the same breath, you see that they're in verse two. Sing to the Lord, bless his name, tell of his salvation from day to day.

Maybe just emphasize that point a little, because I think one of the kind of really significant lessons we can take from this Psalm is to make sure we do not sort of drive a wedge between worshipping and witnessing.

If you kind of go out here this evening, remember one thing, let it be this, right? Worship bears witness. Worship is witnessing. We know already there that the seamless transition in verse two, it continues there in verse three, right?

Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples. We have a similar flow there straight from worship into witness in verse nine and 10, right?

[20 : 23] Tremble before him all the earth, say among the nations, the Lord reigns. Worship bears witness.

We can so easily, I think, sort of draw a dichotomy between the two, as if kind of worship is what Christians do when they're with Christians, and witness is what Christians do when they're with non-Christians.

Or worshiping is what we're doing here on a Sunday, witnessing is what we do out there on a Monday to Saturday. Now, I suppose that distinction is not completely unfounded, is it?

We gather in and we reach out. But what I think Psalm 96 helps us to see is that that kind of distinction is not a division.

Because worshiping bears witness, and witnessing is for the purpose of worship. I think we see that in the seamless transition that we've mentioned from singing to the Lord to telling of his salvation and declaring his glory.

[21 : 33] I think the implication is that one thing is happening, that they are singing. And yet at the same time as they're singing to the Lord, they are telling those around them of the Lord's salvation.

That is what happens here every Sunday, right? We sing, don't we? We sing to the Lord. We are praising and worshiping him.

But we do so in such a way that others can hear. They hear what we are singing. They hear what we believe. They hear the gospel. It is coming from our lips.

I think it's kind of obvious, isn't it, in some worship, but again, I think it extends beyond that. We thought very briefly, didn't we, earlier, about ascribing to the Lord, speaking of his goodness, speaking of the goodness of who he is and what he has done.

Again, I think if you tell someone, tell anyone of the goodness of God in your life, you are praising him and you are making him known.

[22 : 51] Worship and witness. So in a very real sense, I think any kind of worship is witness. But we also see in this psalm, I think, how worship motivates witness.

Because worship is wonderful. Worship is wonderful. I hope Sunday never feels like a drag to you.

I hope it is the highlight of the week. We get to come and praise God. We get to come and hear his words.

Worship is wonderful. Remember the celebrations we mentioned in 1 Chronicles right at the beginning? It was a nationwide festival of singing and music. That was worship.

And this is a new song, right? Something even better than that. Remember Psalm 92, it is good to give thanks to the Lord. Psalm 95, we have an amazing invitation in our hands.

[24 : 03] Worship is wonderful. It is not only necessary for salvation, it is good. It is what we were made for. And everyone, everyone is invited to come and join in.

In the same way your own name is inscribed in the guest list, so is everyone around you. So is everyone in your family.

So are all your friends. Don't we want them to receive and accept the same incredible invitation? Don't we want them to come and join in?

So worship the Lord and witness to all the nations, to the ends of the earth. To the ends of the earth, this gospel is to go.

Sometimes though, isn't it? Sometimes to get to the ends of the earth. The best place to start is on our own doorstep. Just quickly before we go onto our third point this morning, but let's just take a moment.

[25 : 08] I think this is worthwhile. Just to put the two things we have seen so far together. And think about what this psalm is saying.

Two questions have come before us, haven't they? Who is to come and worship? Who is to hear of the glory of God? We might expect the answer to those questions to go something like, who is to come and worship?

Christians, believers, right? People who trust in Jesus. Who is to hear of the glory of God? Non-Christians, unbelievers, people who don't have faith in Jesus.

But what does Psalm 96 say? Who is to come? Everyone. Who is to hear?

Everyone. First we declare among the nations. Verse 10, say among the nations, just as all the earth was invited to sing to the Lord.

[26 : 16] The right expectation of this psalm is that all the earth will be worshipping God and telling all the earth about the glory of God.

This is, in a very real sense, a missional psalm. We've just thought about that. Encourage us to go out. But here's what it is also saying. Even if all the earth were Christians, Psalm 96 says we should still go and tell everyone about God's salvation.

Let me put it this way. If evangelism, right, means proclaiming the good news, which is exactly what it means in the New Testament, there will be more evangelism in heaven than there ever will be on earth.

Forever proclaiming the good news to everyone. Because worship bears witness to others about the goodness and glory of God, even if those people already know the goodness and glory of God.

But that witnessing, doesn't it, inspires more heartfelt worship, which bears witness. All the earth is to bear witness to all the earth.

[27 : 44] That absolutely means that we should be telling those who do not know Jesus about Jesus. But it also means we should absolutely be telling those who do know Jesus about Jesus.

So when you declare the glory of God, go out, absolutely. But don't forget to declare the glory of God amongst your brothers and sisters in Christ too.

We all need to hear the good news proclaimed that we all might come again and again, ceaselessly, constantly in worship.

So we worship the Lord, we witness to the nations, and then thirdly, and finally, we hear this new song, call us to wait eagerly for the King.

We said right at the start that this psalm kind of not only points us back to Jesus, it also points us forward to his coming again. Just look through those last three verses and you'll see, you'll see creation kind of holding its breath.

[29 : 01] It's on the edge of its seat, the trees themselves sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes. He comes to judge the earth.

Usually, don't we, I think we imagine judgment as a negative thing, but probably in part because we know that we have done things that make us guilty.

But the coming judge here is clearly not a cause for concern for creation, is it? Be glad. Rejoice. Roar and exult.

Sing for joy. This is not a kind of cautious creation waiting anxiously. No, creation and everything in it cannot wait.

It's like when the holidays kind of booked in on the calendar and the months and then the weeks and then the days are ticking down and you so look forward to that day, don't you?

[30 : 06] That is the anticipation with which the earth is awaiting the judge. Because this judge comes in righteousness and faithfulness.

This judge comes to bring justice. We might feel uneasy about judgment, but we know that justice is good.

This judge is coming to right every wrong. to rid the world of every sin and its consequences.

To remove once and for all sorrow and suffering to make all things new. This is a new song that looks forward to a new creation.

Remember where I began, newness, isn't it? It is the right hope and expectation of something better. That is why this judge comes.

[31 : 16] That is why creation cannot wait. It is holding its breath in eager anticipation. And again, we read in Isaiah 42 earlier, that this judge is the servant of the Lord, Jesus.

And so while we might feel unease at judgment because of our guilt, we know, don't we, that when we put our faith and trust in him, we know that our guilt has been removed. It is gone forever and we no longer need to dread judgment but can instead wait joyfully and eagerly with all of creation.

For the judge comes and the judge will stay. This coming day is not a momentary reset, kind of only for things to go downhill again.

It's not sort of a recharge in the battery just to watch it deplete. It is not that because the judge is the king. The king who reigns and will reign over all things forever and so never again.

Never again will creation decay. Never again will sin enter the earth. Never again will wrongs need to be righted because the judge, the king, Jesus Christ will reign forever.

[32 : 53] And so we wait. We wait eagerly and expectantly with all creation for something new to come for the king who will come as the faithful judge.

Come, Lord Jesus. So Psalm 96, it gives God's people a new song to sing.

For Jesus has come and Jesus will come again. This is a song that is also a summons. It is a call for all the earth to worship the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a call for all people to bear witness to God's greatness and his goodness to all people.

And it is a call for all creation and everything in it to wait eagerly for his coming again as the faithful judge. So let us worship.

[34 : 03] Let us bear witness. Let us wait for he has come and he is coming. Let us pray. Father, we thank you that you call us and all people to come and worship you.

We pray, Lord, that we would joyfully respond to this call to worship, to witness and to wait as we rejoice in your coming and look forward to your coming again.

Lord, we pray that all nations would sing to you and make known your glory both now and in eternity. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.