

WELCOME 2nd August 2020 – 9 Pentecost '20 A

1 Chronicles 16:23-31

Welcome back to the On-line well of Living Water! I'm glad you're here AND I pray you experience God's grace in this brief time on-line. Please check our website for our weekly Zoom Bible Study catch-ups. Those are a great way to stay in touch & experience God's Word together!

We're continuing with our adapted...as usual there are Group Study/Discussion resources available on our website & I hope you've got those handy. Our on-line service is compact so you have time to go through that material & the Growing Praise with those you've gathered in your homes. Our aim is to equip you so your home becomes a place of the Spirit working leading you into the fullness of God's word & his work in your lives & then out into this city to declare what God has done for you. **As we move into this week...**

One of my seminary professors used to say...

In a Christian's life...prayer is often problem-centred...thanksgiving is provision-centred...but worship can only be centred on the Provider...or it isn't true worship. Worship isn't about me...my wants...perceived needs...circumstances

FAITH FORMED WORSHIP is about God...

- who alone is "gracious & merciful slow to anger & abounding in steadfast love" Ps 145:8
- who "Even before he made the world...loved us and chose us in Christ...to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ." Eph 1:3-5
- who "chose you & appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last" Jn 15:16
- who has promised to make "his home among his people." To live with us & ultimately take from us every burden every sorrow every sin every wound every tear & to multiply our joy & our delight in him alone. Rev 21:3-4

For too long we have been denied the God-ordained privilege of gathered worship...As we prepare to re-ignite the flame of **FAITH FORMED WORSHIP TOGETHER**, we'll explore, experience & proclaim the good news, "Let the heavens be glad, & the earth rejoice! Tell all the nations, 'The LORD reigns!'...Each day proclaim the good news that he saves..."

We'll explore and experience that together today...especially when we turn worship over to you in your homes with those other disciples around you... Let's pray...then we'll get stuck into it.

PRAYER OF THE DAY: PSALM 27 (NLT)

The Lord is my light & my salvation — why should I be afraid? The Lord is my fortress, protecting me from danger, why should I tremble? When evil...come/s to devour me, when my enemies & foes attack me, they will stumble & fall. Though a mighty army surrounds me, my heart will not be afraid. Even if I am attacked, I will remain confident.

The one thing I ask of the Lord — the thing I seek most — is to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, delighting in the Lord's perfections & meditating in his Temple. For he will conceal me there when troubles come; he will hide me in his sanctuary. He will place me out of reach on a high rock. Then I will hold my head high above my enemies who surround me. At his sanctuary I will offer sacrifices with shouts of joy, singing & praising the Lord with music...through Jesus Christ, our Lord... Amen.

Let's sing together...

FAITH CHAT:

1. When you were a child, how did your family celebrate special occasions? Any particular one you remember?
2. When was the last time you experienced worship as "awesome?" What fosters that sort of experience?
3. If you wanted to invite someone, who does not normally attend worship, to worship with you...How would you do it?

BIBLES

9 Pentecost '20 A - FAITH FORMED WORSHIP

Rebecca McCabe qualified for the Australian Olympic Swim Team heading for the LA Games in 1984...dream nurtured since primary school...But a shoulder injury not only took her off that team but out of the pool as a competitive swimmer 4/ever. Her premature exit from the pursuit of her passion left her like many in similar circumstances w/ a combined crisis of identity, purpose & meaning. Who was she apart from the water & the medals stand? Did she have a life outside of competitive swimminmg? What else was she supposed to do with herself after years of 5-6/hrs/day of daily training?

Unlike movie stars, rock idols, & business icons who crash burn & self-destruct, Rebecca found renewed purpose, deep meaning & personal peace...in Jesus. She turned back to the faith of her childhood & eventually joined a convent in Sydney. From that day until now, as a former nun, she sees the gathered worship community as the place where she found healing, restoration, strength & has been equipped to care for others in a way she never would have imagined as a world-class elite athlete. Her story & her journey are wonderful but not unique...she's not alone in that discovery... Countless others would say the same is their experience of the gathered worship of the Christian community. God's people gathered in worship is an awesome thing...whether it's small village church in an emerging nation or a multi-million \$\$ mega-gathering in the West or somewhere in b/t...God's people gathered in worship is an awesome thing

What is it about the gathered worship of God's people...

- that provides such power for life...such abundant life?
- that opens our hearts to purpose & meaning for our existence?
- that equips us to love serve & forgive beyond what we would think is our normal capacity?
- that transforms us & empowers us to live with hope, confidence, boldness joy & assurance in all circumstances?

In the snippet from 1 Chron 16 we read this morning...David tells us. Remember David lived a large part of his life on the run...hiding from King Saul, who had been driven murderously mad by his own unfaithfulness & bitter envy of David. But David knew that worship could heal & transform & shape life not only for himself but also for all of God's people...

That is especially true for us...But there's more to 1 Chron 16 than just the triumph of God in David's life & his response in worship. The books of 1 & 2 Chronicles are their own witness to the Father's unfailing love, his eternal purpose for us & his sovereign rule of grace in all things across all generations...let's start there... **BIBLES** 39 books OT --- ½ way in

1 & 2 Chron re-tell the story of God's people from Adam to the return from exile in Babylon. But, like most histories, they tell the story after-the-fact. Chron is written about 450-500 years after David was King & just shortly after groups of Israelites started returning from exile in Babylon having been sent back to their homeland by Persian king Cyrus. Why does that matter? Well...the folks who were coming back home were returning to a place that had been decimated by warfare & bloodshed for years. It was in ruins. Their cities were heaps of rubble. Their fields were weed-filled & rock-strewn. Their capitol, Jerusalem, was a ghost town...No walls. No CBD. No temple. Nothing was like it used to be. It was a far cry from its great history under David or his son Solomon.

Under the successive leadership of Ezra, Zerubbabel & Nehemiah the temple, the city wall, the worship life & social & business structures of their community were rebuilt...sort of. It was all very basic very plain & not nearly as glorious as some of them remembered or as their histories recalled. Even after they had resettled in the land, they were a small, weak, uninfluential, vulnerable people; subject to the whims of the larger surrounding Median/Persian Empire that ruled them. It was a "new normal" & they questioned whether there would ever be reason for hope again...joy again...security or stability ever again or would they forever live in the shadow of death & gloom & fear...Wow...they had a lot in common with us. You may have your own home but if you're afraid to have your friends over for dinner...shops may be full of anything you could ever want, but if you don't feel safe going shopping...you might have the time/\$\$ to go on a holiday but if you can't cross the border...Will we ever see unrestricted freedoms again? Real fellowship? True companionship? Unrestrained joy & hope? Will weddings & baptisms be places where the church gathers & watches God bless & build the next generations? Is the shadow of death & gloom & fear a permanent part of the landscape? the "new normal"?

So Chron is written to remember...to remember they are not accidents on the landscape of history...they have been set apart by God for his grace & his purpose. Chron is written to remember...to remember they are not adrift in the sea of time but that God has been faithful in their past & has their destiny in his hands...they are secure only in relationship w/ the Father. Chron is written to remember...to remember they are not insignificant unnoticeable or unimportant as they live their daily lives, but that each day is to be lived responsive to God, purposeful among their neighbours & intentionally among the nations around them...Their lives matter because of their place in God's sovereign plan to rescue redeem & recreate all things. And as they are gather for worship...those promises are reaffirmed & fulfilled.

1 Chron 16 recalls a great day in Israel's history...the day the Ark of the Covenant...the visible tangible sign of God's presence & power among his people was brought into Jerusalem. It had been lost in the battle where King Saul & his sons had died & now it was back among God's people & back in Jerusalem. As the Ark is brought into Jerusalem David instructs his chief musician to sing the Psalm that is compiled here...vss 8-36. There are 3 basic stanzas...I'm not going to go into a ton of detail but stanza 1 is vss 8-22...Starts w/ a string of 10 commands to worship...*Give thanks...proclaim his greatness... Let the whole world know what he has done...Sing to him...sing his praises...Tell everyone about his wonderful deeds...Exult... rejoice...Search for the Lord & for his strength; continually seek him.* Here we see the heart of worship. Worship extols God... honours God...thanks God...praises God. Worship is about God...God calls us to worship to centre our hearts & lives not on what WE want or what WE think best, but rather focused on what God HAS ALREADY DONE for us.

But what is the purpose of this unrestrained exalting of God...TO REMEMBER & on the basis of remembering to find strength in the present & hope for the future. *Remember the wonders he has performed, his miracles...you children of his servant Israel, you descendants of Jacob, HIS CHOSEN ONES.* They are not accidents on the landscape of history, they have been set apart by God for his grace & his purpose. That was true of them...How much more is that true of you? *"Even before he made the world...God loved us & chose us in Christ...to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ."* Eph 1:3-5 David's psalm continues...*Remember his covenant forever...This is the covenant he made with Abraham & the oath he swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, & to the people of Israel as a never-ending covenant...They wandered from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another. Yet he did not let anyone oppress them.* Chosen defended protected from generation to generation. They are not adrift in the sea of time; God has been faithful in their past & has their destiny in his hands...they are secure only in relationship w/ the Father. *"You belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory...because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world."* 1 Jn 4:4 -- *I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials & sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."* – Jn 16:33 What was true for them is certain forever in Jesus Christ in you.

The 2nd stanza is short vss 23-27...but the critical piece is this: *The gods of other nations are mere idols, but the Lord made the heavens!* The better translation of that is...*the gods of the other nations are "non-existent things/nothings."* Worship reminds us that outside of the Father there is nothing...away from the Father is the void...death but w/ the Father is life in its most complete *"gracious & merciful slow to anger & abounding in steadfast love"* Ps 145:8 The Father, who is life itself has promised to make *"his home among his people."* To live with us & ultimately take from us every burden every sorrow every sin every wound every tear & to multiply our joy & our delight in him alone. Rev 21:3-4 Yesterday/Today/Forever

The 3rd stanza vss 28-36...reminds us that worship ultimately should lead us to obedience. Jesus would ask *"Why do you call me Lord Lord & not do what I say?"* Lk 6:46 As God's people worship, it is clear their worship is to draw others into the good news of The Father's love & saving mercy. *Let the whole world know what he has done. vs 8 Tell everyone about his wonderful deeds. vs 9 Each day proclaim the good news that he saves. Publish his glorious deeds among the nations. Tell everyone about the amazing things he does. vss 23-24 & now here: Let the heavens be glad, & the earth rejoice! Tell all the nations, "The Lord reigns!"* 16:31 The repeated refrain & expectation is that through worship we will be so infused w/ God's love his presence his power & his redeeming purpose that we will be unable to keep quiet about the Father who has loved us with an unshakable love & promised us an unbounded future in his presence & in this moment comes to us with unlimited grace mercy & peace strength hope & joy. *"You did not choose me, but I chose you & appointed you so that you might go & bear fruit—fruit that will last..."* - Jn 15:16

FAITH FORMED WORSHIP the gathered worship of God's people...

- provides abundant life...power that is unmatched anywhere else...life in its fullest
- opens our hearts to purpose & meaning for our existence...who we are...why we exist...what our lives are about
- equips us to love serve & forgive beyond what we would think is our normal capacity
- transforms us & empowers us to live with hope, confidence, boldness joy & assurance in all circumstances

Starting next week...we'll move slowly back into that gathered expression of worship in the Guide Hall. We'll still be here in this format...slightly different but still here...But most assuredly gathering together as God calls & circumstances permit.

Let's pray with that in mind: **Father prepare me for whatever you require today and lead me in faith wherever you call me to go. In Jesus' Name...Amen** **BLESS**

1 Chron 16 ends with the people saying "Amen" but that doesn't mean they simply go back to their business. Their worship continues & then they go home where their devotion & worship pours out into their daily lives...That's where we are now...

Let's sing...How Firm a Foundation...and then let worship pour forth in your homes...