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Sermon preached by Mr. J. K. Popham
on Wednesday evening, 6th. March, 1929

Text: Psalm 95 verse 6 & 7

"O come, let us worship and bow down:
let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.
For He is our God; and we are the people
of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand."

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This psalm mostly is occupied with thanksgiving and mutual exhortation to thanksgiving. "O come, let us sing unto the Lord." It may be that some may instantly say to me mentally, - But things are so dark; so portentous are the clouds over us, both in the nation and in the church of God, that singing to the Lord seems to be almost inconsistent. I am with all who view the state of things as being gloomy in the extreme, but I do feel that notwithstanding, it becomes us to sing to God. There is so much to thank Him for. So much reason to bless Him for what He is and for what He has done and for what He has promised to do, that rightly viewed, such things should excite us to praise and give thanks to a good God. May He graciously help us this evening so to do. Sometimes depression on account of indwelling sin and circumstances may really prevent, often indeed such things have prevented us, from even thinking about thanking God. We cannot, as I judge, look at present matters and feel other than depressed. When I look at the congregation now and on the Lord's days and see how many places are vacant through illness I am depressed. When you look into your families and see here and there so much trouble and feel the burden of matters you cannot control, then you may be depressed. When parents look at their children and see them worldly, and then see how that the whole world is just divided into two parts; a little camp containing the saints and the whole world encompassing that little camp, - then the heart sinks at times, - O if the children are outside. But notwithstanding, there is this: "O come let us sing unto the Lord", because He is worthy. Worthy is the Lamb. Worthy is He in Himself. He is worthy of praise because He is what He is.

If the Holy Spirit should show us that truth, it would do us good. How worthy the Lord is. Great in His Person; great in His offices; great in His work. Wonderful in His names and wonderful in His dealings with us. In the communication of goodness to us, how worthy He is to be praised. "Let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation." The Rock is above the waters; is not shaken by the waters, and on that Rock it has pleased God to build some of us. Therefore let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. "He is the Rock, His work is perfect": and all who have felt that God has pulled them out of the pit of corruption and set their feet upon the Rock and established their goings and put a new song into their mouth should, and do at times, feel there is just this to be done, "Make a joyful noise", that is, praise Him, thank Him, bless Him, adore Him for His infinite goodness. Sometimes there may come suddenly into your hearts a feeling that it is an amazing matter to you that you are not in hell. That one so vile should be out of hell is an amazement. O give thanks unto the Lord for that, that there should be in the heart a good hope through grace. May we give Him thanks for that, that the Holy Ghost should ever have revealed the Lord Jesus in our hearts, for that may we give thanks. "Make a joyful noise." "Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with Psalms."

And the view of the church here, was this: for the Lord is a great King, a great God and a great King above all gods. His greatness is unsearchable and when faith is lifted up the highest, she sings of none but Him; wants no other friend, no other saviour, no other king, no other intercessor, no other support. "The Lord is a great God." I wish that the little religion we have, may more and more have this in it - a sense of the greatness of God. Vital religion won't fix you in yourself. It will make you deeply concerned about yourself, and the concern will increase as God is the Teacher, but this will be the result, - it will turn you out of self to the Lord and bring you to realise a little of His greatness. Great in His nature; great in His counsels; mighty in His workings; great in the manifestations of His love and mercy; great in His being willing to be made sin, and great in making an end of sin; great in opening a fountain for sin and for uncleanness; great in being the Lord our righteousness. I wish I knew how, properly, to speak of the greatness of God. What little creatures we are. What

contracted creatures we are, even as believers. At what a distance do we live from Him. Sing then, as well as you can - Great is this good God; great is this glorious King above all gods.

And now the church begins to look at what He has and what He does. "In His hand are the deep places of the earth." Then however you may sink into deep places, deep troubles, you cannot sink out of His hand. My sheep are in My Father's hand and no man can pluck them out of His hand. They are in My hand and no man can pluck them out of My hand. I and My Father are one. Are you in deep affliction? All deep places are in the hand of God. "The strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His and He made it: and His hands formed the dry land." Therefore the exhortation is a mutual one in the text. "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." Not for the first time do I say this: worship is everything. When you worship, then you are right. And think of what God does respecting the worshippers. You have it in the Revelation - Measure the altar and them that worship thereat. The altar we have in the Hebrews - "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." So when you come to Christ, when you bow down and kneel before Him, then you worship at the Altar. And then God takes notice of that, and says to the angel - measure that altar and the people who are worshipping at it, that is to say, take special notice of them, protect them. The Gentiles shall come to the outer court and tread down that, and the Gentiles shall be there, reigning, in a sense, but the people at the Altar are secured. Measure the Altar and the worshippers. Now my brethren, is not this a reason why, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, we should obey this word - "O come, let us worship and bow down." The longing of a sinner, again and again, under the Spirit's guidance, is - 'O that I might get near to Him', and when near, 'O that I might live near to Him.' "Let us worship." ... Worship has many particular things in it. It has a sense of the greatness of Him who is worshipped. Nothing kills our flippancy like that. Nothing attracts and holds the soul like the goodness of God; nothing has a more gracious humbling influence than this, - God the Altar! Let us worship there. There is adoration in it. O it is good to join with those blessed creatures in heaven - the four and twenty elders, the four beasts and the spirits of just men made perfect and ten

thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands uniting together to sing, "Worthy is the Lamb." And a few people in Galeed this evening, with hearts touched by the Spirit, will unite in that song and be acceptable to God. He is pleased with the songs that go out of hearts, believing hearts, and troubled adoring hearts, as with the song in heaven. The songsters are all the objects of His love and mercy. To worship, is to come, and with your cases bow down and kneel. O it is a great thing to have a case for God, a great thing to have a case for God. A case for God, is a case that no creature can touch except as being made an instrument. A case for God, is sin that you cannot manage; wants which He alone can supply; wounds that He only can heal; rags which He alone can take off and substitute by a perfect righteousness. A case for God, is a sense of weakness needing divine help; a sense of ignorance needing heavenly instruction; a sense of perplexity - needing to be guided. A case for God, is a case where a man really feels he can do nothing in himself and by himself, but sin, and therefore he cries mightily to God to save him. Worship has in it trust, confidence, and though at this moment some here may say they have not confidence about their interest, they can say they have confidence in the power and the love and the mercy and the sufficiency of the Lord Jesus. Applications are made to Him because faith in the heart says, there is all you need there.

"Let us worship." In worship, there is gratitude. "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplication." A feeling of loving thankfulness to the Lord for having heard the cry of your soul. "Let us worship." And worship brings the worshipper and the worshipped One, together. When you have any realization of being accepted in the Beloved, then, I say, the worshipper and the One worshipped, come together. And this is expressed in the psalms thus: "A people near unto Him." (148.14.) And in worship, that is fulfilled that I read just now, - that every knee shall bow to Christ, every tongue confess, - and the knee of the saint, and the tongue of the saint, bowing and confessing will always be acceptable to God. There is praise in this. Let us offer the sacrifice of praise unto God. The fruit of our lips. This is the sacrifice that is acceptable. And who are these spoken to? ... The people to whom it has been said, of whom it has been said, "We have an Altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." Now, partaking of that Altar, let us offer the sacrifice of thansgiving,

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even praise unto God, the fruit of our lips. "I," says God by Isaiah, "create the fruit of the lips." What a mercy it is then, to thus worship. In worship there are many many many petitions. The leper says - "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." The blind man says - 'Lord open my eyes; O that I may see,' and the publican says - "God be merciful to me a sinner." The thief on the cross says - "Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom," and one seeing the favour of God resting on the church - "O that Thou wouldest remember me with the favour Thou bearest unto Thy people." One in danger says - 'Protect me.' One suffering the ravages of his enemies like a vineyard trampled down and brought into desolation says - "Let Thy hand be upon the Man of Thy right hand, upon the Son of man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself. So will not we go back from Thee: quicken us, and we will call upon Thy name," and one who feels he is so vile and deformed by sin that he can hardly bear the sight of himself says - "Behold, O God our Shield, and look upon the face of Thine anointed," and in difficulties and necessities of various sorts, people pray - this is worship. It is the beginning of an endless act of worship, for His servants in glory serve Him. It is the beginning of a soul's delightful adoration and admiration of the glorious God. Now, it is frequently interrupted, then, in heaven there will be no interruption. Here, the worst interruption is from the wicked aversion of our nature to worship God. That will be clean washed away. O what a mercy it is to be a worshipper.

"Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." I think that there is a double reference here, - the Lord our Maker. We owe our creatureship to Him. Of the dust of the ground God formed Adam, and then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. We are His creatures. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." Also spiritually, - we owe whatever we have spiritually, to the creating power of God. "This people have I formed for Myself." "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price." Begotten again with the word of truth. And this is the blessing of God on some people: that He has made them new creatures in Christ. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." It is well if you can say, 'He is our Maker, He has made us Christians', - what a wonder of wonders that will ever be! "The Lord our Maker." The Lord, who has breathed eternal life into our souls, so that our natural

creatureship is turned into a blessed immortality. Sin made us mortal; grace gives immortality even to the body. In time it will be so. Jesus purchased the whole person of a sinner. He bought the church with His own blood and that means all who composed the church, - men and women. "Our Maker," - well, what a wonder! Now when God made Adam and looked on His work, the crowning act of creation, He saw it was very good, but it was capable of being destroyed. It was destroyed. Instead of the image of God, we read of fallen man - "the image of the earthy," which is the image of death. Now of the new man this is said -..... "We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." This creature is created in righteousness and true holiness. The secret of a sinner's hatred to sin, loathing of self, is this: that he has got a new creature in him, - holy. I wish that we more answered to the Word of God in this particular, - "holy brethren." It is a source of grief to be so unholy.

"Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." And we get a reason in the second verse of the text: - "For He is our God." Yes, "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." He is our God. Faith is enabled at times, thus to lay claim to this divine relationship. It is a relationship most blessed. He is our God in the covenant of grace. "Although my house be not so with God;" said one, "Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." Peter got a teaching in this point when the great sheet was let down from heaven containing all manner of four footed beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air, and when told to arise, kill and eat, his Jewish prejudices were shocked, and he said, "Not so, Lord." But God gave him a good lesson. "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." They were represented to Peter in their natural condition, but God had cleansed them in His divine purpose, and this is a great matter. O it is a great matter to be in the covenant of grace, bound in the bundle of life. Bound so as never, never to be cast out. He is our God in the covenant of grace. And in this covenant we are told that God has laid help upon One that is mighty. Mighty to save. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." And I believe that every child of God is

brought to enter into that word, "mighty to save," by having mighty sins, corruptions unutterable, wickedness that would in a moment, if left, destroy him utterly, but the Lord Jesus is mighty to save. This is the name wherewith He shall be named and called, "Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." This suits sinners.

"Mighty to save! He saves from hell;
A Mighty Saviour suits me well."

Sings Gadsby, and many have sung it with him, "A Mighty Saviour suits me well." O, it is a great thing to be a sinner. A great thing to have a Mighty Saviour revealed, and coming to do His great work in the soul. He is our God on the cross. This is a mystery, that every child of God sooner or later, more or less distinctly gets this:

"Almighty God sighed human breath!
The Lord of life experienced death!"

He did it voluntarily. There, He bore the load of sin, the sin of a whole church; the election of grace was on His holy soul. There, He was treated by God as if He were the greatest sinner. Holy, He was without sin in Himself, but sin was on Him by imputation. Only God could have borne the load. "Bore all incarnate God could bear, with strength enough and none to spare." Well, what a wonder if you can say that He is your God there. When you see Him on the cross, nature convulsed, the law with all its terrors and claims and authority and curse there, justice with its flaming sword there, holiness there, righteousness there, and yet, there finding God, pacifying, fulfilling, satisfying, saying, "It is finished." He is our God my friends! A revealed Saviour on the cross is the God of all His people, and each one comes sooner or later, to say, "God forbid that I should glory, - save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "For He is our God." For He is our God now in heaven, never intermitting for a moment, His compassion or His care. Jesus, the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world in divine purposes and decree. Jesus there, a Lamb as it had been slain. And every sinner taught of God hangs his hope there; finds an anchorage there; gets access to the Father, pleads prevalently with the Father, brings blessings down into his soul through this blessed Lamb of God. He is our God in heaven, and therefore He is our God to care for us. And though sometimes

He may be asleep, apparently, and you may say, 'Dost Thou not care that we perish?' He rises, He commands the waves to be calmed, He enters the ship, and immediately it is at the other side. So He cares for His people. He is in heaven to command holy elect angels to be ministering spirits to His people. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him." On the ladder revealed to Jacob, were seen angels ascending and descending. Our God has in His hand our all; deep places, all provisions. A nation is fed forty years in the wilderness by this God; their thirst assuaged by this God. "He is our God."

One word more. He is our God as the captain of our salvation, who has undertaken to bring His many sons unto glory, and therefore this comes to pass: "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle." The Lord will fight for you. The battle is the Lord's not yours. The fears, the devils, the sins, the difficulties, the troubles, the many temptations that come as so many enemies, the battle with regard to this, is the Lord's. You need not to fight except on your knees, by precious faith seeking to engage the Lord. That is the fighting of the saints, but the real dealing with the enemy is by God. O, said He to Gideon, I cannot go with thirty thousand men, so He brings them down to three hundred, and then these three hundred men - what weapons were they to have? A pitcher and a lamp within the pitcher. But this was the whole thing - "The sword of the Lord." "He is our God." Kneel before Him and beg His protection. Ask Him to be the Captain of your salvation. Tell Him of your enemies and how they lash; how they threaten, how they hurt, how they frighten. "I have given Him," said His Father, of Jesus Christ, "I have given Him for ---- a Leader and a Commander to the people." Then He gives His saints faith to follow. Well, if He is our God, this is true, - He is our God, because He bought us with His blood. "Ye are not your own." 'O,' says a proud fallen man, 'I am.' Grace brings that same man down to say, 'Lord, if I only may belong to Thee,' and the Holy Ghost brings it into his heart sooner or later, - You are not your own. Then says that happy sinner, 'Lord, do not let me act and live as if I were my own, take this heart and make it Thine. Captivate my thoughts, bring them into obedience to Thyself. Move me, guide me, rule me, reign in me, reign for me.' Does it suit you? Not as you are man fallen, but as many as are born again, find their hearts in a blessed unison with that: Reign o'er me, says each one, as King,

and powerfully bring me forth from all ill. "For He is our God." And He is our God in this way in a promise. He is our God in this way in a gracious invitation. "Open thy mouth wide, I will fill it." "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." "Seek the Lord, and His strength: seek His face evermore." What a God we have, - what a good God we have! How faithful He has been to His word in us, though we, alas, have been very faithless to Him.

"We are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand." His pasture. Then, you are not to find your own pasture. He leadeth thee out. The Psalmist found this. He leadeth me into green pastures. His pasture. His gospel. His nourishing word. "Nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine." His pasture really is this: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." Now when faith receives a revealed Christ, then the grandest of all pastures is had. The people of His pasture - the sheep of His hand. His protection. My sheep are in My Father's hand and no man can pluck them thence. They are in My hand and no man can pluck them out of My hand. Sometimes God's people feel this. Sometimes they are certain that it is well with them and that their protection is not left to themselves, but is in Him. It is beautiful in another way expressed in the psalms. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever." Now you may feel just the opposite of being a protected sheep. You may feel like a poor man, as is expressed:- "Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth." What an experience, - what a solemn experience! Just scattered. As one chipping wood sends a bit flying here and another bit there, so are we scattered, as when one cleaveth wood upon the earth. O but that same person prayed, "Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk." And the Lord said, "This is the way, walk ye in it." What is that way? We walk by faith, not by sight. The sheep of His hand. Tender are they, and tenderly are they cared for. Helpless and silly and weak and defenceless are these sheep, and He, wise and mighty and good and vigilant. Fearful of lions are they, and He, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. The Mighty God holds all enemies and all things in His hand. Now if I have spoken the truth, and I believe I have, is not this a reason, a good reason, a very sufficient reason for the mutual

invitation that the saints here give each to the other? "O come let us worship and bow down." Let us go with our troubles and depressions and fears and necessities, let us go and kneel before the Lord our Maker, remembering that the cattle on a thousand hills and the gold and the silver belong to Him, yea, He is the Maker of heaven and earth. May we then be encouraged even in the midst of trials and difficulties to walk in this way. Let us bow down in reverence and kneel in this posture of prayer before the Lord our Maker, for we are His people, the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand and may He help us to regard the exhortation that follows: "Harden not your hearts."

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