

Summary of Dr Roland Chia's sermon on 21st Sep 2025

Scripture and title: Psalm 95 “Heart of worship”

Audio: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtPuqiv5Z5U&t=1s>

Oh come, let us sing to the Lord;

let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;

let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

3 For the Lord is a great God,

and a great King above all gods.

4 In his hand are the depths of the earth;

the heights of the mountains are his also.

5 The sea is his, for he made it,

and his hands formed the dry land.

6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down;

let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

7 For he is our God,

and we are the people of his pasture,

and the sheep of his hand.

Today, if you hear his voice,

8 do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,

as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,

9 when your fathers put me to the test

and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.

10 For forty years I loathed that generation

and said, “They are a people who go astray in their heart,

and they have not known my ways.”

11 Therefore I swore in my wrath,

“They shall not enter my rest.” (ESV)

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Main idea

The main points of "The Heart of Worship" focus on drawing lessons from Psalm 95 about the true meaning and function of Christian worship. The core message is that worship should be centred on celebration, reverence, and obedience, rather than being distracted by style debates or personal preferences.

Worship as Celebration

- True worship is characterized by joyous celebration of God's goodness and love.
- Music plays an important role—it uplifts, inspires, and connects worshippers to God, echoing church traditions from ancient Israel to the Wesleyan movement.
- The content of worship songs should focus on God's greatness, acts of salvation, and faithfulness, instead of being emotionally shallow.

Worship as Reverence

- Worship involves a deep sense of reverence, symbolized by bowing and kneeling before God as Creator and King.
- Modern trends may erode reverence, making worship casual or entertainment-oriented, but authentic worship maintains a sense of awe before God.
- Reverence is visible in attitudes, language, and symbols used in worship, reminding believers that worship is about God, not personal enjoyment.

Worship as Obedience

- Psalm 95 warns against hardening hearts (referencing Meribah and Massah), emphasizing that authentic worship includes genuine obedience to God.
- Obedience validates worship, making it more than emotional uplift or therapy—it involves hearing God's Word, remembering His works, and living lives aligned to His will.
- Worship extends beyond gathered services to everyday life; it is living "coram Deo," or before God's face at all times, in a doxological life that declares God's glory.

Warnings and Lessons

- Debates over worship style ("worship wars") distract from the essentials and can cause division.
- Making worship a therapeutic event. Hence, come only when i feel like it or when i "need it".
- The Psalm serves as a reminder to focus on the fundamentals: celebration, reverence, and obedience, ensuring that worship transforms individuals and glorifies God across all of life.

Discussion questions

1. Based on Psalm 95, what are some characteristics of "worship"?
2. How are these characteristics of worship (based on Psalm 95) similar or differ from modern day understanding and practice of "worship"?
3. Do you think it is important to worship God based on what the Psalmist was suggesting in Psalm 95? Why or why not?
4. Some younger Christians lament that certain hymns / songs or the way we worship in church is "old fashion" or "boring". Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. While the heart of our worship to God is definitely important, how do you think we can worship God in the context of who we are as Asians since what we have as musical worship today is very much "imported" from "western" cultures?