

Psalm 95
New Revised Standard Version

- ¹ O 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 the dry land,
which his hands have formed.
- ⁶ O 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.
- O that today you would listen to his voice!
- ⁸ Do not harden your hearts,
as at *Meribah*,
as on the day at *Massah*
in the wilderness,
- ⁹ when your ancestors tested me,
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
whose hearts go astray,
and they do not regard my ways."
- ¹¹ Therefore in my anger I swore,
"They shall not enter my rest."

Language Notes & Textual Connections

Psalm 95 is very similar to the other psalms of adoration in Psalm 95 to Psalm 100 in terms of language, metaphors and tone.

Meribah, :: The Hebrew word means "strife" or "quarreling." It refers to a place in the wilderness where those who had been delivered from slavery in Egypt quarreled against Moses over the lack of water. They quickly forgot how God has liberated them and focused on what they wanted that God hadn't done. The story is told in Exodus 17:1-17

Massah :: The Hebrew word is related to the word for "tested" used in verse 9. It is another name given to the same location as "*Meribah*" in recognition that Israel put Yahweh to the tests as their provider. In Exodus 17. At the same time, the Israelites were themselves being tested by Yahweh for their faith, which was one of the general purposes of the trials in the wilderness (see Deuteronomy 8:2 and Psalm 81:7).

that generation :: In the story of the Exodus Yahweh says that no one of the unfaithful and ungrateful generation of those who God delivered from slavery in Egypt would come to know the peace in the Promised Land. This was because of their quickness to turn and worship other gods, forget and doubt the faithfulness of God, and to quarrel and fight against Moses – God's chosen leader.

[Moses said to the Lord]¹⁹ Forgive the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have pardoned this people, from Egypt even until now."

²⁰ Then the Lord said, "I do forgive, just as you have asked; ²¹ nevertheless—as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord— ²² none of the people who have seen my glory and the signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have tested me these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, ²³ shall see the land that I swore to give to their ancestors; none of those who despised me shall see it."

Matthew 25:31-40

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24 ³ When Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, asking him [questions about what would happen in the future.] ⁴ Jesus answered them, "Beware that no one leads you astray." [He then taught them with a series of parables....]

25 ³¹ "When the **SON OF MAN** comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³² All the **nations** will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the **SHEEP** from the **GOATS**, ³³ and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴ Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit **the kingdom** prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' ⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in the text?
- How are God's faithfulness and priorities described and depicted in these two texts? How are they different/similar to the priorities of the powers and kingdoms in our world?
- How were the people's hearts hardened in Psalm 95, and in Matthew 25?
- How is the Spirit of God inviting you to *live* / faith with soft and open hearts going forward? What does that mean for us? For you?

Language Notes & Textual Connections

SON OF MAN: : This is an apocalyptic and eschatological title for the One that God would send to bring to fruition the justice of God in the world. Talked about in Daniel in particular, this title indicates that we're talking about prophetic poetry, using images and metaphors to evoke something that is beyond words. Jesus chose to use this title for himself often in his ministry. Using it in the parable invites us to recognize that this language is poetic, filled with images that connect with other narratives and teachings. It's more truthful than literal.

SHEEP and GOATS: These animals are actually quite easy to distinguish and separate. Throughout the Biblical text sheep evokes the people of God, those who follow God's law and teaching and are submitted to Yahweh as shepherd. The goats are repeatedly those who are not obedient or submitted in that way.

the kingdom: This too is a symbol, metaphor and image that is larger than just one meaning. Jesus repeatedly talks about the coming Kingdom of God that comes in mysterious and paradoxical ways: .like a mustard seed Mt 13:31-32); like a pearl of great value (Mt 13:45-46); like seed thrown on a path (Mt 13:1-9); like a wedding banquet (Mt 22:1-14); and bridesmaids awaiting the groom (Mt 25:1-13). The Greek word here can be translated as kingdom, reign, empire. It's both temporal and geographic. What kind of kingdom is Jesus talking about? How does it differ from most kingdoms in our world?

nations: This is the Greek word [ethnos] from which we get our English words of ethnicity and ethnic. In the Jewish thought in Jesus' day – the nations were all the other peoples of the world besides the Jews. So this vision is a global, inter-religious one.