

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 10.6.2024

PSALM 84 - LONGING FOR HOME

I. INTRODUCTION

PSALM 84:1-12

1 How lovely is your dwelling place,

O Lord of hosts!

2 My soul longs, yes, faints

for the courts of the Lord;

my heart and flesh sing for joy

to the living God.

3 Even the sparrow finds a home,

and the swallow a nest for herself,

where she may lay her young,

at your altars, O Lord of hosts,

my King and my God.

4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house,

ever singing your praise! Selah

5 Blessed are those whose strength is in you,

in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

6 As they go through the Valley of Baca

they make it a place of springs;

the early rain also covers it with pools.

7 They go from strength to strength;

each one appears before God in Zion.

8 O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer;

give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah

9 Behold our shield, O God;

look on the face of your anointed!

10 For a day in your courts is better

than a thousand elsewhere.

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God

than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

11 For the Lord God is a sun and shield;

the Lord bestows favor and honor.

No good thing does he withhold

from those who walk uprightly.

12 O Lord of hosts,

blessed is the one who trusts in you!

II. LONGING FOR THE BLESSINGS OF HOME

- The genre of this psalm is varied, it contains elements of hymn, prayer, lament, and a song of Zion.
- The superscription attributes the psalm to the Sons of Korah; priests who were in charge of the service of song in the Temple.
- It was likely written pre-exile, while the Temple of Solomon still existed and a king from David's line was on the throne.
- The setting for the singing of this psalm may have been for when the pilgrims went up for the old-covenant festivals.
- Its placement in Book III of the Psalter means it continued to be sung during and after the Babylonian exile when there was no king and the people longed for the temple.

- The psalm opens with the individual psalmist exclaiming, "How lovely..."
- What is it that he loves? "Your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!"
- The dwelling place was God's tabernacle, and then the temple in Jerusalem, called Zion.
- That was the place that the Lord Almighty, the covenant God with innumerable armies at his command, made his manifest presence known on the earth.
- That was the place where God's people came to meet with God.
- V2 That desire is fleshed out further and intensified.
- His heart and soul, everything in his being, longs for this place. He longs to be in the courts of the Lord.
- His heart and flesh cries out to be there, to sing for joy with God's people.
- The ultimate reason is not that he just loves and longs for the place, he loves and longs for the one who inhabits the place—the living God.
- He is the "living God," the source of all life. Those who know the living God, do not look elsewhere for life or anything that makes life worth living.

- The psalmist's entire orientation—his affections and desires—are all oriented towards the living God who made himself known in the temple.
 - He physically longs for the experience of God's presence.
- The earthly temple was the visible representation of the heavenly temple.
 - Hebrews 8:5 They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."
 - Hebrews 9:25 says that the holy places in the temple were copies of the true thing.
 - The temple was how God made himself known to his people in the old covenant.
 - We know God is not limited to a physical geographical place in time—he is the omni-present God, who fills the entire universe with his presence.
- The psalmist is not at the temple—he's not in the place he loves most—he's not home with God, but as he is reflecting on God's dwelling place.
 - In v3 he remembers how the courts of the temple are open, and even small birds like the sparrow and swallow can fly in and make their nests near the altars.
 - They are close to the presence of God and he longs to be there.
 - The reference to the altars reminds us that the magnificence, beauty, and glory of this place cannot be separated from the harrowing reality of the repeated offerings of bloody sacrifices for the atonement of sins.
 - Without these sacrifices on the altar, sinful men and women could not gain access to the presence of the living God.
 - Praise God that there would be once-for-all perfect sacrifice by the Great King who would place himself on the altar to ransom his people.
 - Jesus was both priest and sacrifice, and in him alone do we find true forgiveness, cleansing from sin, and true access to God through him.
- The psalmist is overwhelmed by all of these thoughts and proclaims a blessing.
 - V4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise!
 - These small birds are privileged to make their nests in and around the temple of the Lord of Hosts, how much more blessed are those who "dwell," that is, come to serve and worship the Lord at his temple!
 - The men and women who make pilgrimage to the temple come with glad and heartfelt praise.
 - Those who serve in the temple extol the praises of God and rejoice in their nearness to God's presence.
 - For the psalmist, this is the only truly good life, dwelling in God's house—that's home!
- On this side of the cross, we don't have to go to a place to experience the presence of God.
 - In Christ's incarnation, God came to us.
 - We have the privilege of worshiping the living God, worshiping him in Spirit and truth, wherever we are, because of what Jesus purchased for us through his sacrifice.
 - To dwell with God now, is to have access to the triune God through Jesus Christ.
 - God is near to us because of Christ.
 - Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

- The longing that the psalmist expressed for God's dwelling place, for God's presence, is echoed by believers today, who hunger and thirst for God.
- Does your heart long for God?
- There's truly no better longing than the longing expressed in this Psalm—the blessing of God's presence—the blessing of being home!
- The only right response is to sing His praise!

III. LONGING FOR THE BLESSINGS OF PILGRIMAGE

- V5 Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.
 - Though he was not at home, in the temple, his heart was set on pilgrimage.
 - He blesses all those who place their confidence in the Lord for strength for the journey to Zion.
 - "in whose heart are the highways to Zion."--He knows the way home.
 - But the journey for the pilgrim is not easy, and strength is needed.
 - And that strength is only found in God, he is the end of the journey and supplies strength for the road.
- The fact that these highways are in his heart is to have the desires expressed in vv1-4 in the soul.
 - Paul expresses it similarly in Philippians 3 where he writes that he forgets what is behind and strains forward to what lies ahead. "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil 3:12-14)
 - The psalmist's whole orientation: his heart, mind, affections, decisions, were oriented toward Zion.
 - Because the psalmist loves home—being with God in his dwelling place—he cannot stop thinking about the journey to Zion.
 - Because God's people love home, they want every step they take in life to be part of the journey home.
- The way there is not easy, the journey is fraught with peril and adversity.
 - V6 As they go through the valley of Baca...
 - The Valley of Baca is an unknown place in OT history, though the word is linked to the Hebrew word for weeping or sadness.
 - The pilgrim's journey home is "through the Valley of Baca"-- through places of difficulty, pain, despair, adversity and suffering.
 - But the pilgrim is not expected to remain there, they are going through the Valley of Baca on their way to Zion.
 - And not only do they get a blessing from the experience as the Lord strengthens them and they go from strength to strength so that they will appear before God in Zion, but they also leave a blessing behind.
 - The Valley of Baca, a dry place of weeping, becomes a place of refreshing springs.
 - The psalmist poetically depicts this experience of the one whose heart is filled with love and longing for Zion, traveling through the dry and difficult valleys, and making those tough and trying places into life-giving waters.
- What a picture of the Christian life!
 - 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the

things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

- 2 Corinthians 3:18, And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.
- Paul is saying the same thing that the psalmist is saying in Psalm 84.

- Peter in his 1 letter calls believers, sojourners and exiles (1 Peter 2:11).
- We are pilgrims, this world in its present state is not our final abode.
- We are passing through on our way home. The end of our pilgrimage is our promised land—the new heavens and the earth.
- Outwardly, our bodies will waste away, we will become ill, we will be persecuted, we will be afflicted, crushed by the miseries of sin and sin's consequences in the broken world we currently inhabit, our Valley of Baca.
- But inwardly, we will experience a wonderful, daily renewal by the Spirit of God.
- Because Christ walked through the Valley of Baca, his highway to Zion took him through the path of the cross, the path of suffering and sacrifice.
- Luke 9:51 When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.
- In the garden, he prayed for strength to endure the cup of suffering he was about to drink, and an angel of the Lord from heaven appeared to strengthen him (Luke 22:43).
- He was strengthened by the Father to endure all of the agonies in the Valley of Baca and by his glorious resurrection from the dead, he transformed it into a place of life-giving water for all who believe in him.
- We will make it through our pilgrimage home because Christ made it through his.
- We will have strength for the Christian journey, we will go from strength to strength, from one degree of glory to another.
- God will see to it that we make it all the way home.

- V8 O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob!
- His prayer was a prayer for strength, to get to the end of the journey, to be able to get home—to God's dwelling place.
- Likewise, we too pray for strength to endure.
- Daily we must ask for it. Life can be exceedingly hard, daily we must avail ourselves of the all-sufficient grace that is our in Christ.
- Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.
- The Christian life of pilgrimage is one of intense spiritual warfare, and we will only go through it availing ourselves of the Lord's powerful resources, relying on the strength of the Lord and his might, not our own.
- He supplies that strength through Spirit-dependent prayer.

IV. LONGING FOR THE BLESSINGS OF MESSIAH

- V9 Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed!
- The psalmist goes from praying for himself to praying for the king.
- The king is called "our shield," he is the man who protects and defends his people.(Ps 89:18)
- The king is the Lord's anointed.
- But why pray for the king? Because the future of the Messianic promise rested with the line of King David. (2 Sam 7).
- Prayer for the Lord to look on the face of his anointed, was for God to show the king in David's line, favor and blessing because he wants Messiah to come!

- And those who sang this psalm during and after the exile, when there was no king, were singing it in hope of the future King—David’s greater Son.
- David’s greater Son is Jesus Christ—Messiah!
- The favor and blessing of God rested in its divine fullness upon Jesus. (Matt 3:17)
- God has favored the Great King Jesus—his anointed.
- And now we pray for God’s favor to rest on the people of the anointed One, the Church of Jesus Christ.
- V10, the psalmist expresses how blessing and goodness is found in the courts of the Lord.
- V10 for a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.
- “For” ties it with v9. The psalmist prays for favor and blessing on the king because access to God depends on him.
- Two contrasts highlight the glory and wonder of the presence of God the psalmist longs for.
- First, one day in God’s courts is contrasted with a thousand elsewhere.
- One day of true blessing in God’s courts is worth infinitely and incomparably more than all the so-called blessings found outside of God’s dwelling place.
- Second, a doorkeeper in the house of God is contrasted with one who dwells in the tents of wickedness.
- The word “doorkeeper” is related to the word “threshold”, it is not referring to an official position in the temple.
- The point of the contrast is that it is better to be on the very outer edge of the presence of God, than to dwell comfortably in the tents of wickedness.
- The psalmist knows that there is nothing that will satisfy the longing of his soul other than being in God’s presence.
- Many try to satisfy those deep longings of the heart with worldly things that can only be satisfied in God.
- Praise God for Christ, who is the true temple of the living God, and because of him we have access to the presence of God, to the throne room of grace to receive mercy and find grace for our time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)
- The psalmist reflects on God’s abundant, gracious generosity.
- V11 For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.
- “For” ties it back to v9-10. The promise of God bestowing favor and honor and good things is grounded on the favor of the Father to the Son.
- For the Lord God is a sun and shield—God is a sun, he is the source of light and life, he is the living God.
- He is shield—he is the king of Kings, the protector and defender of his people.
- Those who walk uprightly are those who have the desires of vv1-4, who long to dwell in the house of the Lord, and those in whose heart are the highways to Zion (5).
- What a wonderful promise, “no good thing does he withhold...”
- That promise rests completely on the fact that all goodness resides with God and that there is no good apart from him.
- And on the fact that all the blessings of God come to the people of God only because they are first poured out without limit upon Christ our King.
- He is the only one who is truly upright and righteous and blameless and from whom God withholds no good thing.

- And in him and in him alone, all true goodness and every spiritual blessing can be found.
 - Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,
 - He is the only one who truly walked in complete trust and confidence in the Lord Almighty.
 - He is therefore the preeminent recipient of the Father's blessing, and the One in and through whom all that blessing is poured out upon his people.
- This promise is exceedingly precious to believers on this pilgrimage home.
 - It is true for all who are in Christ.
 - It is a reminder that nothing God gives to us is anything other than good.
 - God, our good heavenly Father, never gives to us anything except what he knows, in his infinite wisdom, goodness, and kindness, to be what is truly best and good for us.
 - We will not often understand how this can be so, but it nonetheless true.
- If you find your strength has waned, and you've grown weary in your pilgrimage journey, ask the Holy Spirit to renew and strengthen you.
- If you've been drinking from the unsatisfying wells of this world, I invite you to drink from the living waters Christ provides. Ask God to give you that longing for his all-satisfying presence.
- If you've felt like God has been withholding good from you, remind yourself that God gives us always and only what is good for us, we have been given every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, hold fast to that promise today.
- Christian, are you longing for home?
 - This world isn't our home.
 - Our true Zion is Christ and his unshakeable kingdom.
 - May the Holy Spirit reorient the affections and desires of our heart to love and long for God and emblazon upon us the highways to Zion, to guide us all the way home.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?