

Loving the Body of Christ
Psalm 84

It's been really interesting and revealing to read the Psalms David wrote while he was exiled from Jerusalem and hiding from Saul who sought to kill him. The Psalms present us with David's diary during that time, an intimate look at the soon-to-be-king whom the Bible calls, "a man after God's own heart."

I've chosen Psalm 84 because it reminds us that believers before us have been in our situation.

In the NT and on Wednesday nights, we are studying Peter's encouragement to people who have been exiled from Jerusalem, the Temple and gathering with God's people.

Picture: In Psalm 84, David is in the same situation. He is hiding in the wilderness of Southern Israel where many of you have stood at the large spring where David found sanctuary.

Reading chronologically encourages us to read the epigraph to each Psalm; those few words of explanation or dedication that occur just before the Psalm and give us insight into its context.

A 'gittith' is an Gathite, 8-stringed instrument like a modern guitar. (Ps 8)

First: David's Passion for the Temple. 1-4a

If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go? Some people pick the beach. Others, choose the mountains. Some people want to visit the city, others the countryside. I know where Teana would go and I don't have to ask her.

You can tell a lot about a person by watching how they spend their time. We may claim to be 'family people' but do our calendars reveal we are more wedded to the job than family.

No amount of money ever bought a second of time
Howard Stark

Where we spend our time and how we spend our time reveals our treasure.

David reveals that he longs to be with God and God's people.

- a) The Temple's description – lovely – a reference, in the original language, to the Temple

From its colors, cloths, metals and woods used to build the sanctuary, it was lovely, intended to reflect God's beauty and the Garden of Eden.

The size and beauty of the Temple, along with the sacrifices, were meant to engage all five senses of worshippers.

But the temple was most beautiful because God lived there. When Adam and Eve sinned, the garden lost its beauty. When Israel desecrated the Temple, God's presence forsook it (Ez 8-10), making both Solomon's glory and Herod's additions, fit for nothing but destruction.

We too show our commitment to God by loving his people and longing to be with 'Him in them.'

b) God's description – Lord of **hosts**

The 'host' of God is normally associated with God's angels but also describes his people.

- God lives in eternity community.
- It was not good for Adam to be alone.
- Israel camped in through the wilderness by tribes
- Jesus created his own tribe through the disciples
- The early church met in the Temple and house-to-house
- Paul ministered with others
- We are encouraged to live in body-life

Eph 4:15-16 – Jesus is the head and we are the body.

It is impossible to love Jesus and not love his body

This is, in fact, one of the ways we demonstrate our love for God; by loving his body.

ILL – Heritage during the pandemic

Look at how David loves to be with 'God in his people'

- c) David's expression –
- My soul longs, yes faints
 - My heart and flesh sing for joy

d) The sparrow's rest

The sparrow is mentioned 3 times in the OT

Psalm 102:7 - *I lie awake; I am like a lonely sparrow on the housetop.*

We often talk about the shepherd who left the 99 to find the missing sheep but it's interesting that David uses a sparrow to describe loneliness, as though one sparrow will not be missed. In the Bible, the sparrow is a symbol of insignificance. And yet,

Matthew 10:29 - *Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.*

But as much as God knows and loves sparrows –

Luke 12:7 - *Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.*

If you read through the Bible, God is constantly concerned for everyone.

OT - Deuteronomy 7:7-8a & 9 - *It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers... Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations*

NT - Luke 1:47-55 - *My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹ for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰ And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; ⁵² he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; ⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. ⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵ as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."*

Even a sparrow is welcome in God's temple. And so are we!

First: David's Passion for the Temple. 1-4a

Second: David's Praise in the Temple. 4b-8

Blessed = esher = happiness

"in whose heart are the highways to Zion" = "I'm going to make a bee-line for the church!"

This is the only place "Baca" occurs in the OT.

It means "weeping" and David calls it a valley.

There are many valleys in the Bible

- Siddim = Sodom and Gomorrah – the valley of sin
- Eschol = Decision – obeying God
- Kidron = Suffering – David passed through it as he escaped Jerusalem
- Elah = Battle – this is where David defeated Goliath
- Achor = Punishment – where Israel was defeated after Jericho
- Gehenna = Garbage – literally a garbage dump outside of Jerusalem
- Baca = Weeping -
- Jezreel – Triumph – Also known as Armageddon
- Shadow of death –

More often than not, valleys are associated with sorrow but, look what David says –

Vs 6-7 - As they go through the Valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools. ⁷They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.

How does that happen? Because.....**Jesus is the 'lily of the valley!!!' (SoS 2:1)**

When David understands that, he prays –

V 8 - O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah

IMP: This is the 2nd 'Selah' (v3, 8). It means, "Stop and think about that."

And then he concludes,

⁹Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed!

First: David's Passion for the Temple. 1-4a

Second: David's Praise in the Temple. 4b-9

Third: David's Picture of the Temple. 10-12

- a) One day in God's court is better than a thousand elsewhere. 10a
- b) A doorkeeper in God's Temple is better off than the owner of a nightclub. 10

He's making the distinction between the lowest place in God's kingdom and the most revered place in the world. If you don't know it already, the world will change its mind about you. Today's hero is tomorrow's villain. But God always thinks the same thing about you.

- c) The Lord:
 - i. Is a sun and shield

In Western Jerusalem is the Tower of David or Jerusalem Citadel, located near the Jaffa gate.

Picture – Song of Solomon 4:4 – *Your neck is like the tower of David, built in rows of stone; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors.*

ILL – Whenever Israel was at peace, the soldier’s shields were hung from that tower in order for the desert sun to hit them and shine like a light in the daytime, informing Jerusalem’s inhabitants that the city was at peace

- ii. He bestows favor and honor
- iii. He doesn’t withhold any good thing

If God doesn’t behold any good thing, then anything God sees fit for our lives, is good for us. We may not know why. We may not know how. But we know that God is good and does only ‘good’ in our lives (Ro 8:28).

David concludes the Psalm saying, “*O Lord of hosts, blessed is the one who trust in you*” (12).

Conclusion:

The Bible speaks often of the beauty of God and the loveliness of His dwelling place. Though it is hard for us to fathom now, our Creator is more beautiful than anything we can imagine. Everything pales in comparison to him. His body is also beautiful.

*How beautiful the radiant Bride
who waits for her Groom
with His light in her eyes.
How beautiful when humble hearts give
the fruit of pure lives
so that others may live....
How beautiful the feet that bring
the sound of good news
and the love of the King.
How beautiful the hands that serve
the wine and the bread
and the sons of the earth.
How beautiful is the body of Christ.*

Ann Wilson

One day, all of us who are in Christ will see this loveliness face-to-face (1 John 3:2). Christ is better than any of the pleasures this world has to offer, so why would we serve lesser idols instead of Him?

Community Group Thoughts:

- 1 – How is Covid-19 life?
- 2 – What is the most important lesson God has taught you during this time?
- 3 – Have you been able to maintain your daily bible reading?
- 4 – If so, what passage, thought, etc, has most blessed you?
- 5 – If not, just pick up where we are this week.
- 6 – Read Psalm 84.
- 7 – If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?
- 8 – What have you missed most about gathering on Sundays?
- 9 – Why is impossible to love Jesus and not love his body?
- 10 – How do you express love to the body of Christ?
- 11 – How does Jesus make you happy?
- 12 – What do you find beautiful about God?
- 13 – How has Covid-19 made the body of Jesus real to you?