

# Gathering Song

Psalm 122

Go ahead and be turning in your Bibles to Psalm 122. As you're finding your place, you can glance at the screens. I want you to see and hear the lyrics we just sang one more time...

**We've waited for this day  
We're gathered in your name  
Calling out to you  
Your glory like a fire  
Awakening desire  
Will burn our hearts with truth  
You're the reason we're here  
You're the reason we're singing**

Those are joyous words, are they not? They're filled with a sense of ANTICIPATION and EXPECTATION. They're more than a "catchy tune" (snapping fingers). They're actually a POWERFUL REMINDER of the PURPOSE of our CREATION. **"YOU'RE the reason we're here,"** not just the original or creative CAUSE, but the One who gives MEANING to our existence! **"YOU'RE the reason we're singing!"** "It's all about YOU, LORD!"

We sing such songs at the beginning of services to REORIENT OUR HEARTS. Between the CRAVINGS OF OUR FLESH and being ACCOSTED DAILY BY THE PASSING THINGS OF THIS WORLD, we can easily find ourselves looking everywhere but UP into the face of our Heavenly Father who's over it all and for whose glory we were made. So much of preaching and teaching is REMINDING. Peter tenderly wrote as much to a scattered, beleaguered, persecuted group of believers. He said...

## **2 Peter 1:12-15**

**12 Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. 13 I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, 14 since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. 15 And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.**

Therefore, through song, at the outset of services, we remind our hearts, minds, and spirits that it's all about the LORD. They're GATHERING SONGS, if you will, and as the reality of the words we sing register in us, we experience the same sentiment, I believe, as David felt as he penned the words of Psalm 122.

I think of Psalm 122 as a GATHERING SONG, and as we wrap up this series, "going UP to Jerusalem," I hope it will cause us all to KEEP LOOKING AND MARCHING UPWARD, longing to be in His presence moment by moment until we're in it FOREVERMORE (I PRAY THAT FOR MYSELF). AMEN. In Christ's Name, AMEN. David wrote in verse one...

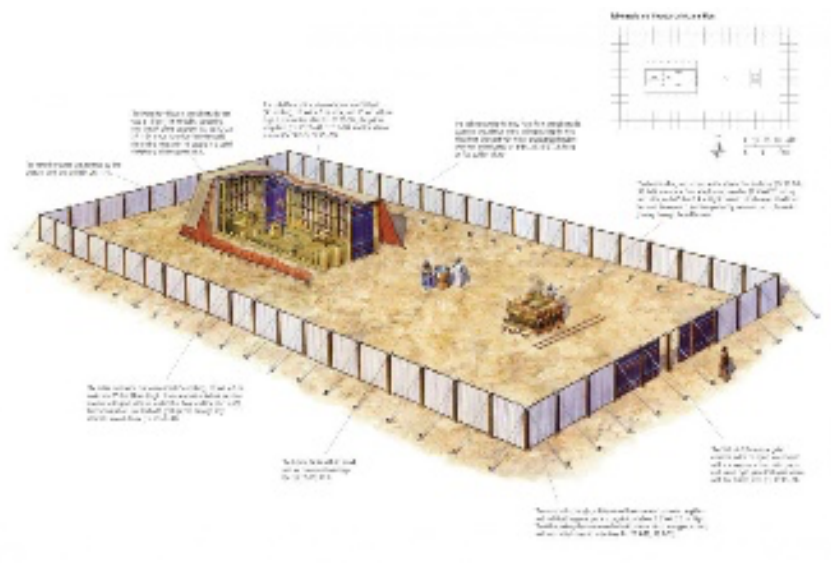
## **Psalm 122:1-2**

**1 A Song of Ascents. Of David.**

**I was glad when they said to me,  
Let us go to the house of the LORD!  
2 Our feet have been standing  
within your gates, O Jerusalem!**

Like all of the psalms selected for this series, Psalm 122 is attributed to David, and it's seen as the song of a PILGRIM. It's likely that PSALMS OF ASCENT (Psalms 120-134) were COMPILED and sang or recited as Jews traveled UP TO JERUSALEM to celebrate various religious festivals. Traveling to Jerusalem was always an ASCENT because it's a CITY ON A HILL. No matter where you were traveling from, you were always GOING UP.

David is rejoicing at the thought of going to the house of the LORD. Does anyone detect the thing that seems off about that statement? What didn't exist during the reign of King David? That's right! The TEMPLE! However, I said "*SEEMS* off" because David didn't say *TEMPLE* of the LORD; he said *HOUSE* of the LORD, a reference we see used multiple times throughout the Old Testament to describe...



...the TABERNACLE.

1 Samuel 1 describes how Samuel's mom, Hannah, went up to the "**HOUSE of the LORD,**" the Tabernacle at Shiloh, year by year (1 Samuel 1:7). Another instance of this is after the child born of David's sin with Bathsheba DIED. He prayed and fasted for the life of the child but to no avail. Afterward God's Word says...

**2 Samuel 12:20**

**Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the HOUSE of the Lord and worshiped. He then went to his own house. And when he asked, they set food before him, and he ate.**

So, we see the Tabernacle referred to as the "HOUSE of the LORD." However, JERUSALEM, specifically Zion, wasn't always the "City of David," and at the outset of David's reign, they didn't even have the Ark in the Tabernacle for him to go up to! Prior to David's reign, it was a Jebusite stronghold known as "**the**

**shoulder [or slope] of the Jebusites" (Joshua 18:16) or simply "Jebus" (1 Chronicles 11:4-5).** To lay out a bit of history, 2 Samuel records the scene where David took the stronghold and made it his capital. God's Word says...

**2 Samuel 5:6-7, 9**

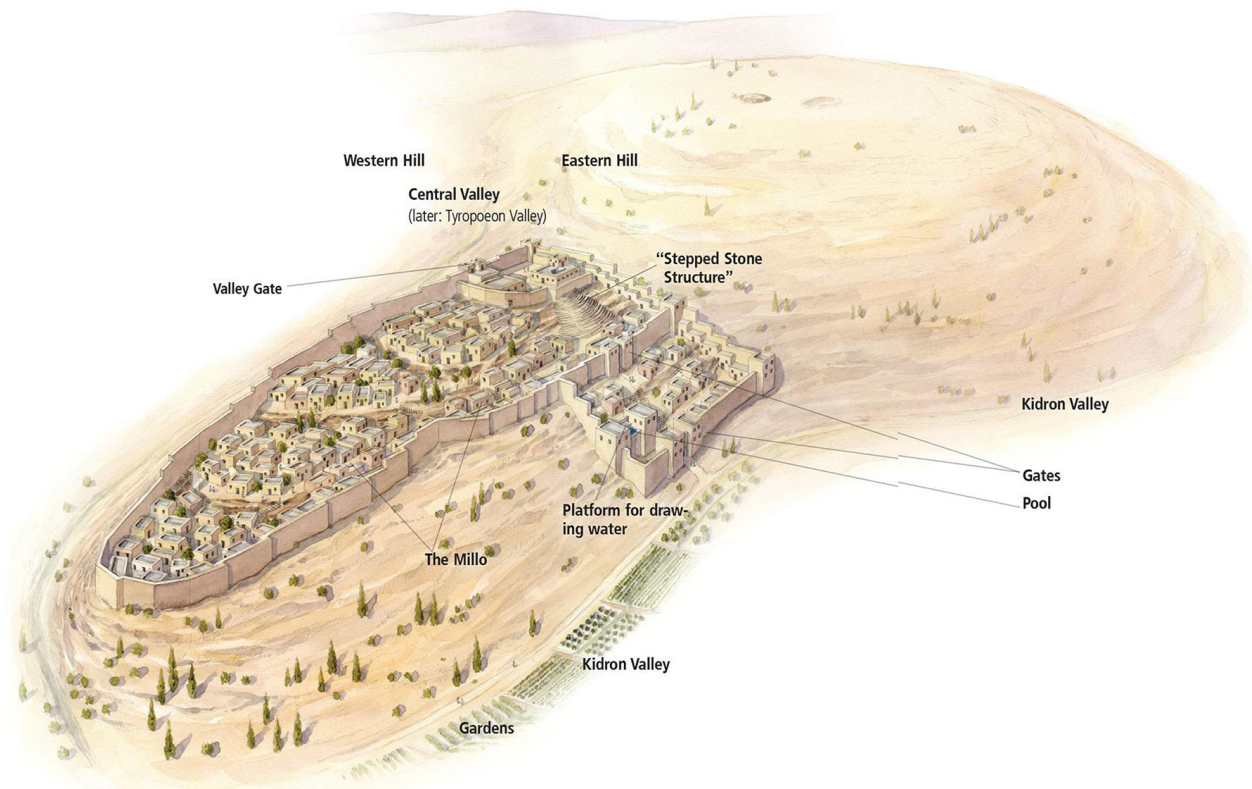
**6 And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, You will not come in here, but the blind and the lame will ward you off—thinking, David cannot come in here. 7 Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David.**

**9 And David lived in the stronghold and called it the city of David. And David built the city all around from the Millo inward.**

Jerusalem was ideally situated when it came to a place from which David could rule because it set along the border between the tribal territories of Benjamin and Judah. Given that King Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, and David from Judah, this location undoubtedly was helpful in maintaining a close relationship between the two tribes after Saul's dynasty ended and David's began.

So, now we've got ourselves a Jerusalem and a City of David, but Israel wasn't in possession of the Ark of the Covenant at this time. Pastor Dale summarized how Israel had taken the Ark from Shiloh, regarding it as more of a good luck charm for battle than the MANIFEST PRESENCE OF GOD, and they LOST it in battle. The Ark of the LORD spent seven months getting passed about in Philistine territory, the LORD terrorizing and afflicting those who wrongfully possessed it until it was finally sent out to Beth-Shemesh with a GUILT offering to the LORD. It ultimately came to stay in Kiriath-Jearim at the house of ABINADAB.

Fast forward to 2 Samuel 6. David has taken over Jerusalem, he's obliterating the Philistines, and he decides it's time to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. After some difficulty along the way, God's Word says that **"the ark of the LORD came into the city of David,"** something David likened in Psalm 24 to the ARRIVAL OF THE KING OF GLORY TO ZION, Pastor Dale having taught us, and here's a picture to help you understand what we're talking about...



This is Jerusalem in the time of David's reign. Specifically, this is the city of David. The TOP CORNER of that WALLED AREA is the house of David. The walled in buildings below it is "the Millo;" we read about that a moment ago. Then there's the bare hilltop above it all with a flat-looking rock atop it. That's the Threshing Floor of Ornan (1 Chronicles 21:18), the site where David built an altar to the LORD to stop the plague the LORD brought as punishment for David's COUNTING of the people in the face of battle rather than trusting in the might of the LORD. It's also the future site of the TEMPLE (2 Chronicles 3:1). After Solomon finished constructing the Temple, God's Word says...

#### **1 Kings 8:1-4**

**1 Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers' houses of the people of Israel, before King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of THE CITY OF DAVID, which is ZION. 2 And all the men of Israel assembled to King Solomon at the feast in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month. 3 And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. 4 And they brought up the ark of the Lord, THE TENT OF MEETING, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent; the priests and the Levites brought them up.**

So, while Psalm 122 would become a psalm sang and recited by those making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, David had a pretty short pilgrimage. His home and the Tabernacle were both in the same section of Jerusalem; however, it's clear that King David didn't take this for granted, relishing every opportunity to go up and be in the LORD'S presence.

We titled this Bible study series "**After His Heart**," capitalizing on the multiple senses of the phrase. Yes, God declared that David was a man after His own heart, a man with a heart like HIS. However, David was only such a man because he was AFTER His heart, meaning that he was an ardent lover and

PURSUER of God. It's this meaning I wish to lean into and embody the most. David CELEBRATED the opportunity to enter into God's presence, RELISHING THE EXPERIENCE of standing within the gates of Jerusalem. He had a HEART FOR THE LORD, and this city stood as a monument to all that the LORD had done on his behalf and on behalf of his People.

#### **Psalm 122:3-5**

**3 Jerusalem—built as a city  
that is bound firmly together,  
4 to which the tribes go up,  
the tribes of the LORD,  
as was decreed for Israel,  
to give thanks to the name of the LORD.  
5 There thrones for judgment were set,  
the thrones of the house of David.**

The description of Jerusalem being “**built as a city that is bound firmly together**” conveys a SENSE OF UNITY. The NET Bible translates this in a way that makes it even clearer...

#### **Psalms 122:3**

**Jerusalem is a city designed to accommodate an assembly.**

Of course, verse four helps us understand this as well. David says the “**tribes of the LORD**” go up “**to give thanks to the name of the LORD.**” The twelve tribes plus Levi were UNITED IN THEIR WORSHIP OF THE LORD, something that was only historically true during the reigns of David and his son, Solomon. When the kingdom became divided, King Jeroboam set up golden calves in Bethel and in Dan, encouraging the northern tribes to worship at one of these sites instead of traveling to Jerusalem.

The Church, the Body of Christ, HAS SUCH UNITY according to the Apostle Paul, but it's a unity that must also be MAINTAINED. Paul taught...

#### **Ephesians 4:1-3**

**1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

WAIT! I thought we were supposed to bicker and focus on ourselves and look for every opportunity to be offended by others and then lash out privately or on social media at those who offended us! No, that's what's easy, what's NATURAL, which is far and away from what's RIGHT and GODLY. We're to endeavor to be bound together, and we have HELP that David and the rest of Israel NEVER HAD! We're bound together as a BODY by the INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT...

#### **Ephesians 4:4-6**

**4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—  
5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.**

I keep coming back this, but we live out of the UNITY for which God has made provision as we gather around His WORD, walking in agreement with it, and allowing our shared reality to be defined by it. This

is what David was reminded of as he went up to the House of the LORD in Jerusalem. These sojourns, however, had to be DECREED, as the psalm states.

The Hebrew literally states that “[it is] a **STATUTE for Israel to give thanks to the name of the Lord**” (**emphasis mine**). The males of Israel were commanded to appear before the LORD God **THREE TIMES A YEAR...**

#### **Deuteronomy 16:16**

**Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths. They shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed.**

So, you see, the practice of appearing before the LORD to give thanks was a STATUTE for Israel, which makes sense, because they (like us) are prone to forget. Just **THREE MONTHS** after the LORD had brought Israel up out of Egyptian bondage (Exodus 19:1), the Nation decided to turn to worshipping an idol because Moses was taking too long to come back down from Mt. Sinai. Aaron had everyone take off their gold earrings...

#### **Exodus 32:4**

**And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!**

UNBELIEVABLE, right?! Israel had only been out of the PIT of slavery three months, and they'd already forgotten (or else gotten over) the One who pulled them out of it. It would be unbelievable if it didn't seem so commonplace today within the Church. Christ was **HUMILIATED, BUTCHERED, NAILED** to a piece of wood, and **SUFFOCATED** to death **ALONE** for us, and we so quickly make like life is still all about us.

We need reminding of Christ's LOVE and SACRIFICE to, don't we? So, we have the ordinances of Communion and Baptism to remind us of what He did, what He **WON** for us. We **GATHER** on the **LORD'S** day, much like Israel at **FEASTS** and **HOLIDAYS**, to remind ourselves and one another of what the LORD has done. And what's the natural overflow from such memorable moments? What did David and the rest of Israel journey to Jerusalem thrice annually to give?

#### **Psalms 118:1**

**Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!**

The LORD'S command to give Him **THANKS** are the most quoted words **BY GOD** in the Bible. Thanksgiving is **SYMPTOMATIC** of a **SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE**. Paul describes this **ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE** in several of his letters. When Paul encouraged the Ephesians to lead Spirit-controlled lives, he taught that a reasonable practice or characteristic of such a life included...

#### **Ephesians 5:20**

**giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,**

He likewise encouraged the Colossians, writing...

### **Colossians 3:16**

**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.**

This "attitude of gratitude" wasn't merely encouraged in Israel, though; it was DECREED. God had set forth a statute commanding all Jewish males to appear before the LORD at the place He chose (JERUSALEM in the time of David) THREE TIMES A YEAR. He knew they'd need reminding

When we express thanksgiving, we RECOGNIZE the presence of SOMETHING THAT WASN'T THERE BEFORE and THE ONE WHO BROUGHT IT.

When we thank God for things, we RECOGNIZE WHAT HE'S DONE! We REMEMBER ALL THE WAYS HE'S COME THROUGH FOR US. Otherwise, we forget, and everything He's done becomes a little LESS REAL. When we aren't INTENTIONALLY THANKFUL, BLESSINGS GO UNNOTICED as if we never received them.

Are you in the habit of seeing God as He works in your life? If you intentionally give thanks, you will be. This was a characteristic of David's heart, a heart for the LORD, and a heart for THANKSGIVING and PRAISE. They're characteristics that we'll seek to allow the LORD to develop in OUR hearts if we're truly RUNNING AFTER HIS.

Along with having a heart for the LORD and a heart filled with thanksgiving and praise, we see that David had a heart for PRAYER...

### **Psalm 122:6-9**

**6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!**

**May they be secure who love you!**

**7 Peace be within your walls  
and security within your towers!**

**8 For my brothers and companions' sake**

**I will say, Peace be within you!**

**9 For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,  
I will seek your good.**

David PRAYED for the PEACE of Jerusalem. The name "Jerusalem" literally means "teaching of peace." As David demonstrates and as Paul would later teach the Philippians, PEACE is the natural OVERFLOW from gratitude. The LORD, through Paul, said...

### **Philippians 4:6-7**

**6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with THANKSGIVING let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the PEACE of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

As we're reminded of the WORKS of God throughout our lives, which is what happens as we give thanks, we're increasingly OVERWHELMED BY THE PEACE OF GOD.

What's striking about the thought of PRAYING for the PEACE OF JERUSALEM is that MANY have prayed such a prayer throughout history. However, has Jerusalem experienced much peace? Not really. For almost all of its history, Jerusalem has been at the epicenter of the "Middle Eastern CONFLICT." Truly,

they'll never know peace until the Prince of Peace sits on the throne of their hearts. PEACE for ISRAEL will never come until they place their FAITH in the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

So, practically speaking, there's more we ought to be doing than just praying for the peace of Jerusalem. ALONG WITH PRAYING FOR PEACE, we need to pray for ISRAEL'S SALVATION, even WITNESSING to Jew's (along with everyone else) whenever we have the opportunity.

Secondly, like the Apostle John, we pray, "Come, Lord Jesus!" hastening the day when Jesus SPLITS THE SKY. Now, we know the next major event on God's timeline is the Rapture of the Church, which will also initiate the time known as the Tribulation or JACOB'S TROUBLE. It will be a horrific time, but it will also be the birth pangs that result in the NEW BIRTH of the NATION OF ISRAEL. Jesus lamented over Jerusalem, saying...

#### **Matthew 23:37-39**

**37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! 38 See, your house is left to you desolate. 39 For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**

And it's the time of the Tribulation what will make Israel finally cry out IN FAITH, "**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!**" And Jesus, the King of Israel, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, will ride out of Heaven into Zion and out to the Valley of Megiddo to the Battle of Armageddon rescuing His people and ushering in the Millennial Kingdom. "**Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!**"

Again, David prayed...

#### **Psalm 122:8-9**

**8 For my brothers and companions' sake  
I will say, Peace be within you!  
9 For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,  
I will seek your good.**

Jesus emphasized the DISCIPLINE OF PRAYER. He was always stealing away early or late to COMMUNE alone with His Father, even teaching His disciples HOW TO PRAY. If your prayer life isn't lacking, then you are an ATYPICAL CHRISTIAN. This part won't be for you. However, if you're like the rest of us, and your prayer life will benefit from this point in David's psalm.

"**For [his] brothers and companions' sake**" David PRAYED. He was praying for the nation of Israel. The heart that's AFTER GOD'S is VIGILANT IN PRAYER for the BRETHREN (as well as the lost), and this theme of praying for our brothers and sisters in the family of faith is carried into the New Testament. Paul taught the Ephesians that such prayer was just as essential as donning the armor of God...

#### **Ephesians 6:18-20**

**18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, 19 and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.**



Paul's instructions to PRAY juxtaposed against the backdrop of the ARMOR OF GOD, as well as David's description of prayer in conjunction with Jerusalem, conjures to mind the image of a dutiful soldier, a watchman on the walls of Jerusalem, ALERT to issues that may arise and threaten his **"brothers and companions."** It with such ALERTNESS, such VIGILANCE that we're instructed to pray for our fellow believers. It's convicting to be sure, but it's something we need to hear if we're to be AFTER HIS HEART.

David was a man after God's own heart, and as he eagerly anticipated meeting with the LORD before the Tabernacle in Zion, he displayed a HEART FOR THE LORD, a HEART FOR PRAISE, and a HEART FOR PRAYER. Such a GODWARD ATTITUDE is easily, and often SINGULARLY, associated with the LOCATION and TIME in which the people of God intend to meet with God. In the face of the pressures and demands of day-to-day life, we can be tempted to LIMIT or LEAVE our spirituality in a TIME and SPACE, but as the Church of God, we no longer journey to a distant Temple because WE ARE THE TEMPLE! In the days of King David, the "priestly king," the kingdom and the priesthood were kept separate, but in Christ, who is our Great High Priest and the King of Kings, we are a kingdom and priests unto Him (Revelation 1:5-6). Not only are we the Temple of the Holy Spirit and the priests who serve, but we're also the SACRIFICE that's offered up moment by moment in reasonable worship for all He's done for us.

The presence of God is something to anticipate and relish every day in every sector of life, from our homes to our campuses, from our workplaces to the marketplace. David expected to meet with the LORD before the tent of meeting on these feast days and holy days, but we can expect to meet with Him anytime anywhere, not because He's at our beck and call, but because WE'RE THE TEMPLE, and He forever goes with us. Do we anticipate encountering God in the day to day? For the sake of the brethren and the sake of those who are still lost in their sin, I pray we do.

The song we sang earlier is an anthem that helps us focus our hearts and minds on the LORD and what He wants to do in us THROUGH THE SERVICE WE'RE ATTENDING. It's a GATHERING SONG that seemingly fits best at the beginning of the service, but I'd like to sing it again, here at the end of this service. If we believe what's been taught tonight, we recognize that this is really just THE BEGINNING OF THE ACTUAL SERVICE, our GATHERING to GO OUT and LIVE IT. Let's sing...