

LONGING FOR HOME

An exposition of Psalm 84
at West Hills San Jose on November 21, 2021

PASTORAL PRAYER: God Almighty, Lord of Armies, Refuge of the wandering, home for the lost, holy is your name. Lord we rouse ourselves to take hold of you, to seek your face and to ascribe to you the glory due your name. Help us to shake off the distractions of this past week and to be attentive to the goodness, grace and mercy of your holy power. Stir up our souls to worship You in Spirit and in the Truth, that you might be glorified in our midst.

Lord we confess that all of us live with a deep and persistent longing. All of us live with the ongoing ache that we would feel more complete, more at rest, more at home, more ourselves, more free if only something were different than it is now. Help us to hear from the Psalmist this morning and to learn from YOU how to long for things well. Teach our hearts to bring our weary and heavy laden burdens to Jesus, where we can actually find rest for our souls.

God I also want to continue to pray for renewal in our midst. A renewal of our minds and hearts in zeal. That we might be zealous for you and for your ways. Would you renew the desire of our hearts for evangelism, for worship, for building one another up in love, that we as a church in San Jose might be full of the spirit and of truth, both in our congregation and in all the congregations around us.

Lord we want to bring before you the ministry of our many international missionaries. We pray for our brother Heshimu in Nigeria who is preaching the gospel and distributing tracts to any and all who would list. Would you protect him from those who would seek to physically harm in the areas where he is preaching and open many doors for him to share the gospel with his enemies. We also pray for Darren and Jodi Beck in Cambodia. Would you strengthen their hearts and encourage their souls as they continue equipping and training church planters to fill that country with gospel churches.

Finally Lord I pray for our congregation here at West Hills San Jose. Would you strengthen our hearts to love well this coming thanksgiving week. Would you help our own hearts to be thankful for your many blessings, but also for all the people that you have ordained for us to interact with. Would you help us to be peacemakers, ministers of reconciliation, servants and friends to those around us, would you make us a people who come not to be served but to serve and to offer our lives, as a blessing to all. In doing this Lord would you bring healing to the world around us, for the glory of your own great name. I pray for everyone who is streaming this service would you bless them. Strengthen them. Encourage them. Establish them in their faith and in your word I ask, in Christ's name, amen.

PROBLEM: Well grace and peace West Hills. It is a blessing and a privilege to get to share with you what I received from Christ this week as I meditated on His Word in prayer. Let me begin with a question. And this is a question that is worth thinking about it, and worth having a thoroughly thought through answer about because it's likely to come up in an evangelistic conversation at some point. And the question is this: **What is so great about being with God?** I've been asked some variation of that question a few times. And if you were raised in church you probably have Sunday school answers that come to the fore of your mind. If you weren't

raised in church it probably takes an additional minute to begin mentally responding. But it's such an enormous question with so many deeply entrenched conclusions for most of us that it can be a bit paralyzing to answer in the moment. It's like being asked what is so great about having love in your life? Why is order better than chaos? What is so great about civilization as opposed to savagery? There are so many answers that knowing where or how to even start can feel overwhelming.

But of the many places you could start, one of the themes that shows up over and over in the bible is the idea of being home. Being home, or being at rest. Or being in the land the Lord your God will give to you. What God is doing at every stage of bible history is: bringing His people, to His place in His presence. Which is the essence of what being home really is. Feeling fully accepted as yourself, in a place where you know and love those around you and you are KNOWN and loved by those around you. Not everyone has shared in the glory of that experience. But that is how we were designed to feel the most at rest in this world. At home, in the place and with the people that we love and who love us most. This feels like an appropriate thanksgiving week subject of conversation.

Not everyone has had this experience of home that I just described. And even some who have had a version of this experience with their earthly family don't understand why they are still longing for something deeper. Home in some deeper sense. And this morning, I want to contend that even the greatest versions of the earthly experience of home, are only a shadow of what the fullness of home is meant to be. I want to contend that even if you didn't have this experience growing up, you didn't fundamentally miss something. **Their lies before us, a greater reality to which our earthly homes are only a sign post.** It is pointing us beyond itself. And our wandering hearts look for this deeper sense of home everywhere. WE will cross the earth looking for it. We will spend millions of dollars trying to create it...we will make and break relationships seeking it, when the Son of man stands before us, offering us all we seek, saying come to me, in Matthew 11, you who are weary and heavy laden take my yoke upon you and learn from me, and I will give you rest for your souls. Come to me, come as my people, to my place and in my presence. Christ says, come in the Spirit to my throne of grace, as my beloved family, where I seek to be present with you, and you will find rest for your souls. And I believe this is the full picture of what the Psalmist is ultimately longing for this morning. This, I believe is the point of Psalm 84 this morning. What is so great about being with God? With God I am home.

MAIN POINT: We are all longing for a sense of home, but the joy of home is in God Himself.

SETTING THE CONTEXT: Please open your bibles to Psalm 84. This morning's Psalm was likely written during the period of the Kings. So after David and Solomon but before the people were carried off into exile. And that is a common view because the temple in the Psalm still appears to be standing. And there isn't any reference to any military conflict happening at the writing of the poem. The Psalm was written by the Sons of Korah who were appointed by David as singers in the temple and guardians of the temple gates. And the heading says according to the Gittith which was likely a musical tradition or a style, that the Psalm was composed in. Let's now humble our minds and open our hearts for the reading of the word of the Lord.

READING: To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.

[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!

PRAYER: Open the eyes of our hearts to behold the height, and depth of your love O Lord.

ROAD MAP: 1.) What the Psalmist wants, how the Psalmist will get it, and 3.) why the Psalmist feels so strongly

WHAT THE PSALMIST WANTS

1. This Psalm isn't complicated. It is a simple song about a deep and relatable experience. The Psalmist begins by saying how lovely is your dwelling place O Lord of hosts. The word for lovely isn't a comment about physical appearance or something. The word means how beloved or how dear or how precious is your dwelling place.
 1. The Psalmist begins the Psalm by pointing out something really crucial, that's easy to forget. He begins the Psalm by acknowledging what a blessing it is, to know where to find God. How precious and good is your dwelling place. If I want to be near you, I know exactly where to go. Do you know where to go? Are the stars beautiful? Yeah of course. Are the mountains glorious? Absolutely. IS the ocean big and humbling, totally it is. Do those things point us to God? Yes they do. But that's not where you FIND God.
 2. You don't go into the mountains to find God. You go into the mountains because they remind you to GO to God Himself. They are helpful in your life of worship in so far as they drive you back to the person of God.
 3. The Psalmist says how lovely is your house, the place where you dwell O God of armies, and as we will see in a moment, because that is WHERE GOD IS. If I want to be home... I know exactly where to go. God's house, is where home is.
2. Look at verse 2, the Psalmist says I recognize that what my whole being is actually looking for is to find joy in the living God. Every part of me. He says my soul LONGS, that is the word of the day. My soul longs yes faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh sing for JOY to the living God.
 1. The Psalmist acknowledges my LIFE is missing something. I wake up every day somewhere in Israel, with the full recognition that life isn't as good or as comfortable or

as fulfilling as it could be. But along side of that realization is the deeper acknowledgement that what my soul and my heart and my flesh are actually longing for, what they will actually find JOY in is the LIVING God. Why does the Psalmist love the temple? Because God is there.

3. The Psalmist can correctly assess what his soul is looking for. What his true source of joy will be. And it's important to see how the sons of Korah describe him. My soul longs to sing for joy VERSE 2 TO THE LIVING GOD.
 1. He doesn't long to sing about his religion. He doesn't like the idea of being a certain kind of person. He isn't focused on Himself. He is oriented entirely toward a living being, the God who made Him.
 2. One of the things that would have been unique about life in Israel during the era of the kings is that God literally had an address on earth, and you could go there and see His glory cloud resting over a building. And everyone in Israel could there, at least to the outer courts, and be near to the God that you could see and hear. You could be physically near the God who defeated your enemies and nourished your land and provided you with every good thing to enjoy.
 3. But if you were a son of Korah, you could be inside the threshold, deeper than the outer courts. You couldn't go all the way in, but you could be even closer than the average person. And it's not really clear where this son of Korah is and why is so far away from the temple, perhaps he aged out of temple ministry, which could happen. And he found himself living in some other part of Israel. And he is counting the days until he and his family can pilgrimage back to Jerusalem to be near to His God again.
4. In his mind he calls to mind and envies the sparrow who gets to live near His King and His God in verse 3. In the inner courts of the temple were enclosed. But the outer courts were open air and the eaves around the outside of the temple made for a comfortable nesting place for native birds.
 1. And what is he jealous about. Even the sparrow finds a home, even the swallow a nest next to God's altar. Birds get to live at God's house. I wish I could be that close to my King and my God.
 2. The Psalmist wants to be at home with the Lord because verse 4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house ever singing God's praises. Another way of saying that sentence would be to say HAPPY or complete or totally fulfilled, are those who live in God's house worshipping Him.
5. In other words, what the Psalmist is yearning for is to be totally happy and complete, which is what underlies the word for blessed. Happy and satisfied and complete is the one who gets to call your presence their home and take joy in appreciating your greatness.
6. And this is the big idea from this Psalm. We are all longing, for a sense of home. Everyone, who stops and takes a moment to think about it, experiences a deep sense of lack in their hearts, even those of us who know the Lord. You look around this world you live in and it's like something is missing. The Psalmist does it in Psalm 84. He acknowledges that his soul is in a state of longing, his heart and his flesh yearn to take joy in something profound.

1. And what the Psalmist does that is so significant, is put his finger on what HIS heart and by implication ALL OF OUR hearts are actually seeking. Happy and complete and satisfied is the one who is at home with God.
7. When I was getting ready to graduate high school, my family moved far away to North Carolina. Everything in my childhood home was packed up into a large truck and shipped across the country and another family moved in and lived there. And I stayed in Watsonville living with various friends. Then I left to go to college, where I lived in probably 10 different places. And it was during that time that I started thinking a lot about what it means to be home. I read a lot of books about it. On the road by Jack Kerouac if you have ever heard of that.
 1. I read lots of interesting ideas by lots of interesting people, none of whom seemed to have any true and meaningful sense of what it meant to be home. They were all themselves wandering, and all of their solutions were only half answers.
 2. And then I met the Lord and the Lord's people. And I began to experience a new way of being human. I will spend more time at the end unpacking what makes being with God so great. But, I began to enter the experience of truly being home when I believed God's word to me, that He will never leave me, and never forsake me. I began to experience true home when I began to believe Christ when he said go into all the nations baptizing and teaching them to obey all I have commanded you and behold I will be with you always, EVEN to the end of the age.
 1. Go everywhere, and I will be with you. You can be anywhere, with anyone, and I will be with you. In ANY place, you can be in my presence because I WILL NEVER FORSAKE YOU.
 3. I began to come home, when I realized that in CHRIST I was part of God's people, in God's presence on my way to God's place. And as at home and at rest and happy as that made me, it also awakened a clear realization that as home as I am in this world with Christ...I'm not home yet. And here the Psalmist can be very helpful to us. As he longs to be at home with God, he acknowledges some realistic expectations about the journey to get there. So what we have seen is that the Psalmist seeks to be at home with the Lord, because that is where he will be truly happy. Let's now turn our attention to how the Psalmist will get there.

HOW THE PSALMIST WILL GET THERE

1. The Psalmist says blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. What does that mean? Happy is the One who finds their strength in God.
 1. One of the odd blessings of having to come to Christ through the experience of addiction is that no one had to explain to me that I was weak and dependent upon the power of God for my salvation from my sin. That was a regular lived experience, as I would try hard, do good, then fail. Try hard, do good, then fail.
 2. What is the way out of that cycle? The way out for me, was finding strength in God. Or to say that in a more literal way. It meant waking up in the morning, and loading my mind with Scripture that warned me of the consequences of my sins, and encouraged me with the blessing of righteousness, and focusing on all of God's promises to help me. And then

when I failed, coming back to the cross acknowledging my sins, receiving God's forgiveness and mercy, going to sleep and waking up and doing it again, and giving myself to that way of life in the context of a loving, supportive church community. And as I did that, I don't feel like I got stronger, I think the LIVING GOD strengthened me.

3. What am I getting at, I believe the Psalmist looks at the pilgrimage to come, the long distance he must walk, and says happy is the person that looks to you for strength. With the subtext being because you are the one who strengthens us for the road You call us to walk.
4. Blessed is the person who finds their strength from the living God and then next it says in verse 5 and in whose hearts are the highways to Zion.
2. The Psalmist doesn't let His desires remain in the world of ideas. Blessed is the one who dwells in your house. That reflection doesn't simply remain as an idea. He acknowledges yeah happy is the one who lives in God's house...and happy is the person whose heart wants to be there. Whose heart yearns to GO.
 1. Zion is another name for the city of Jerusalem, where the courts of the Lord were built. Happy he says are those people who want to go to Jerusalem to worship God in His house.
3. The one who desires God is happy not only because God strengthens him, but also because He does not allow the deepest desire of his heart to be displaced by lower desires. He says I want to go worship the Lord...even though I'm tired. Even though it's been a long week. Even though it's a long way. Even though it's a difficult journey...I want God more than comfort, I want God more than convenience. I want God more than staying in my jammies, or sleeping in, or having my special coffee...all of those small things that accumulate into one large hinderance to coming and finding your true joy in the living God. But the Psalmist will let nothing displace the highway in his heart.
4. And he lets nothing displace it because he knows the truth in verse 6. As they go through the valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs, the early rain also covers it with pools.
 1. So it's important to not lose sight of the fact that for the Psalmist, the idea of a pilgrimage is deeply literal. He's thinking PROBABLY having to take a several day journey on foot through difficult terrain to get to the Lord's house. That's a lot of work.
 2. But here is what the Psalmist knows. He knows that the journey will be through the valley of Baca. What is that. The word Baca is very difficult to trace. If you have the NLT, it says the valley of weeping, because of the suggestion that the word baca might refer to the terebinth tree which weeps off it's leaves during the time of the early rains. Kind of like our trees around the church are dropping their leaves right now...during the time of our early rains.
 3. We know the word BACA, refers to some kind of tree or plant but the historical records aren't precise enough to know for SURE which kind of plant is in view. Of the possibilities, they have one significant thing in common as it relates to the interpretation of this text. They are shrubs and trees that grow in extremely dry and difficult environments.
5. The pilgrim who acts on the desires of his heart to seek out God will go into the dry places of Israel and what will happen? He will MAKE IT a place of springs. That's almost certainly a

metaphor. Pilgrims who make their way to Zion, won't just survive the dry places of discouragement, they will transform it into a place of blessing.

1. You and I aren't fully home yet. We are on the way. But rather than finding this in between place, a place of discouragement and drought, we can by God's strength transform it into a place of springs and blessings. Both in how we conduct ourselves and in God's outpouring of supernatural grace verse 6. THE EARLY RAIN ALSO covers it with pools.
2. In the mind of Psalmist, it doesn't happen to rain. God sends the rain. God Himself waters the earth and gives the earth life. In other words, the person who resolves to get up and seek the Lord with their body will find not only strength from God, but encouragement in the dry places, and supernatural outpourings of grace along the way.
6. WHY? Because God is alive. Because the LIVING GOD LOVES US AND WANTS US to find our greatest satisfaction in Him for our joy and His glory.
7. In verse 7, the person who might be tempted to think, I'm not strong enough to start the journey, will not only find strength from God, he or she will get stronger and stronger. They go from strength to strength. They never cease to have help. They are, every day, to face today. God doesn't give them tomorrows strength today. But every day, they find the strength and the peace that God supplies.
8. And for those who seek Him...they find. Each one appears before God in Zion. Those who seek him will find him. Those who yearn for a home, will find their home if they seek it in God.

So what have we seen so far? We have seen what the Psalmist wants, to be home with His God because that is where he will be happiest. We have seen how the Psalmist will get there, by the strength that God supplies, through dry and difficult places where the God of grace will meet him with supernatural outpourings of grace. But let's now close by reflecting on WHY. Why does the Psalmist feel this way? Why does He think He will be so happy at God's house. Why will he be so happy if he never loses his fervor to make his way back to God? Why is the difficult journey worth it, even with the assistance that God promises on His journey?

WHY DOES THE PSALMIST FEEL THIS WAY

1. The answer is really simple and straightforward. He feels this way because of who God is. I just want to put some meat on the bones of how the Psalmist finishes his song. He says in verse 8 O YHWH God of hosts, hear my prayer. So he refers to God in the all caps LORD, as YHWH, His covenant God. The God He knows and who knows Him. The God who is FOR HIM, and who has promised blessing to Him and to His people.
 1. Why does He first and foremost want to go home to God? Because God loves Him. Because God wants Him there. Because God is happy to see him and wants nothing but good for him all the days of his life. When people act like God towards others...they create home in this world. The most typical place for this to happen is at home, parents with their children. Two people in a covenant of love, wanting each other, happy to be together, seeking the good of the other, and inviting your little children into the love of that covenant.

2. But it doesn't have to only be there. You can choose to love people that way, this week. You can choose to begin creating home in someone else's house. You can choose, to be happy to see people this week, you can choose to resolve in your heart, that whoever God is bringing into your life this week, that you are going to want them there. That you are going to make them feel loved, and considered and wanted and you are going to seek their blessing and their welfare because that is HOW GOD has loved you and drawn you into covenant with himself.
2. The Psalmist says O YHWH, O living one, you are the God of armies. God of hosts, means God of armies. You are the powerful One. THE one I pray to, the one I am in relationship with, is the God of power. The God of armies. I want to go home with God, because God is safe. Because is strong...and to be with him is to dwell in safety.
3. God is also the God who listens. Hear my prayer he says in verse 8, give ear, O God of Jacob. Why does he say that? Is that what you say when you don't think someone can hear you? NO. That is what you say when you think someone CAN HEAR YOU. Can you listen to what I'm trying to say Lord? The Psalmist wants to go home, because He believes God will listen to him.
4. There is so much here I'm going to explode. He says give ear, O God of Jacob. His God is the God of his fathers. Jacob isn't some random dude. Jacob is his great great great great...great grandfather. The God my great grandfather worshipped is also MY GOD. And He has been with our family throughout the generations. This is the God that WE know, and how knows us. The Psalmist wants to go home with God, because God is the one he knows and who knows Him. With God is where He is known, because the Lord is the God of His family.
5. Verse 9, He says behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed. I could take those separately but I'm going to put them together. It's like he is saying protect your king or your priest. The anointed one is the king, or the Messiah. The word for Messiah or Christ in the old testament is the word anointed one. And the person that is anointed in Israel is typically the king and the priest more often the KING. So it's probably a reference to the king. In any case, the call is to be faithful to your promises. The Psalmist wants to go home with God because God is faithful.
 1. When God says He is going to do something he does it. When God makes a promise He is faithful to do it. When God commits to something, he never lets it go. And one of the things he has committed to is loving His people who live under the reign of His king.
 2. Or to say that another way, He has committed to loving and blessing those who live under the rule of his anointed one, or his Christ.
 3. One of the craziest things about getting to know God is coming to terms with how big, and steadfast, and immovable and unbreakable his faithfulness actually is. "God I sinned, I'm so sorry, do you still love me?" His answer to that is...I started loving you before the foundation of the world, and my love will complete you into eternity future. Do I still even though you sinned and are repentant over it? God is faithful.
6. And here in verse 10 we get to the biggest most concrete claims of this Psalm. The Psalmist, who has worked as a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord, as a guard at the gate...says from experience...a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. The number one

thousand isn't there to get you thinking about math. You aren't supposed to start doing conversions, let's see a day in God's court is equal to 2.739 years. So let's see... When the poets of scriptures say a thousand of something, you own the cattle on a thousand hills, a thousand years in your sight are as but yesterday, God remembers his covenant for a thousand generations...the word implies totality or fullness.

7. A day with God is better than all the days of this world, spent literally anywhere else.
 1. That's the verdict of someone whose been there. And that is also my observation. Many of you, have more experiences in this created world than I've had. But I have never been anywhere or done anything, that has even come close to the sense of blessed completion I experience when I am unusually close to God, or doing God's will, or experiencing God's pleasure in Christ.
 2. Good food is enjoyed and then it's over. Vacations, begin and end. Relationships are good and wonderful but they can't be everything. Life itself is aging. There is one thing, alone in the universe that I have tasted and enjoyed and hasn't been haunted by the specter that it will soon come to an end and that is the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. He is home. He is where you can find rest. Not in the poetic...metaphorical...pretend way. In the way that our wandering hearts, our longing hearts can find a real, living, meaningful place of rest. Home is in God. And a day with Him is better than a thousand elsewhere.
8. It's better to be a janitor at God's door than on a throne in the house of evil verse 10. I would rather be the least in God's kingdom than the greatest in the kingdoms of this world. Why?
9. He says because YHWH our God is a sun and a shield. He gives warmth and shade. He is the source of light and relief. He is the best parts of every good thing. He is the source of all good and in Him is life.
10. The LORD bestows favor and honor. I love the way the NASB translates that process in verse 11, it says the Lord bestows GRACE AND GLORY. What higher thing could you want from than faithfulness, grace and glory, favor and honor.
 1. Grace or favor means He has postured Himself in kindness and generosity toward you. He has resolved to do excessive good to you on your way home to Him.
 2. He has also resolved to honor us, or glorify us. Wait I thought God wants to glorify Himself. He does. God shows us how great He is by loving and glorifying us with His Son. His love is real love. He wants to display his other oriented love for all to see by loving us and glorifying us, that we might turn and show favor and honor to one another.
11. Back to verse 11, the Psalmist would rather be a janitor in God's house than a king in tents of evil, because NO GOOD THING does God withhold from those who walk uprightly. Not even His only begotten Son whom God gave so that through faith in Him we would not perish but have everlasting life. The apostle Paul reiterates this claim in Romans 8 Romans 8:31-32 "[31] *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? [32] He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"*
12. The way back home is in Christ. The sense of home you are longing for...is in the God who WANTS to withhold no good thing from us. The God who has resolved to bless us with more than we can even understand.

13. And this Psalm ends in verse 12 with the obvious statement. O YHWH of armies, blessed is the one who trust in you. Or happy, or complete or on the way home...is the one who trusts you to strengthen them for the pilgrimage to your place, knowing that you are God and you will never leave us nor forsake us. What's so great about being with God...His love is better than life.

If you find yourself longing for something deeper this morning, let me invite you to find what so many people have found before you. That the joy of being home that we long for, has always been trying to point us to God.

And happy will you be if you go to him, trusting Him, looking to Him to disclose Himself and his blessings to you. It's a simple matter of acknowledging your sins, turning to him and trusting him to bring you into His presence.

You might think to yourself...I don't deserve this thing you are describing. YOU're right...that's why it's a gift of grace. I'm not strong enough to do this. God will strengthen you. I don't know where to go or how to do it. Christ is right here in this room with us, it's a simple matter, of resolving in your heart to with your mind set your trust on Him. He is good, His love is abundant and free...if your heart is restless, come to Christ and find home in God. Let's pray

COMMUNION: Come home to Christ's table. At the table of the Lord, God has prepared a place for you. And in this life, that place is meant to nourish and remind you that these things are true. That Christ really is present with us, as we remember his sacrifice and his covenant. As you go into this thanksgiving week, let me encourage you to bring home to others by bringing Christ to others in word and deed. If you are His, He dwells in you...and where He is our souls can begin to find home. Let's now read the words of institution.