

Gladness in the House of the Lord

Psalm 122:1-9

May 31, 2020

Well it is so good to be back at church today, and I could just sit here and repeat that for another half an hour, but I'm, but I'm not going to. I'm going to let the word of God do that for us. "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'" That is a most fitting passage of scripture, isn't it? And for this Sunday, this gives expression to the joy that we all feel to be together. So I'd invite you to turn in your Bibles to Psalm 122. Psalm 122 and we'll get right into this text of this marvelous, marvelous psalm.

Psalm 122 starts with a title, a song of ascents, of David. And then David writes this, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!' Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem! Jerusalem - built as a city that is bound firmly together, to which the tribes go up,

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the tribes of the Lord, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord. There thrones for judgement were set, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! 'May they be secure who love you! Peace be within your walls and security within your towers! For my brothers and companions' sake I will say, 'Peace be within you!' For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good.'"

You get a sense from David of his feeling in this psalm, a feeling of joy and yet it's a joy that is emerging from a season of difficulty, of sorrow, of separation from worship. He longs to be back, he anticipates being back in the house of the Lord. And now he is back. And we have just, may have just tasted just a small sense, we ourselves have tasted a small sense of that same feeling. And we remember the proverb that says, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life."

For David, the city of Jerusalem is a visible symbol of spiritual blessing, of God's favor, of divine privilege that rests upon that city. Jerusalem, positioned by God to be a tower

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of refuge for his people. It was set up to be like a, like a beacon of hope for all believers in God. And as David looks up at the city of Jerusalem. The city, by the way, Jerusalem, has peace as its namesake, the word Shalom, as many of you know, is embedded in the name. In fact, many say the name Jerusalem means, foundation of peace.

So as David looks up at this city, his city, his eyes turn away from the surrounding world, from the surrounding chaos in the world, and he is relieved to escape that, to turn away from that for a time, from this world flooded with sin. A world saturated in the self; a world propelled by the ambitions of sinful people. Literally drowning in the terrible consequence of sin, which is death. He turns away from that, and he turns his eyes to where his hope is embedded in the heart of Jerusalem, in the temple itself.

The church is like that, isn't it? For all true believers, we feel that way about the local church, about the church we attend. There are times we live through like this current season of social, terrible social unrest in many cities in our country.

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And the church of Jesus Christ is in the midst of all those cities as a haven of rest for the weary. A blessed refuge of hope for all who look to God in faith. And the fellowship of believers, gathered together to worship our God, to proclaim his name, to sing his praises, to give thanks to him, to pray to him, to hear his word read, explained, taught.

Beloved, this is the privilege we have together, as Christians, as believers, this is the privilege we have that lifts us out of this sin saturated world that we live in, and we can give our attention to the hope of God and the Gospel. This is what we long for, this is what we give thanks for, and this is what we pray for.

Longing, thanksgiving, prayer, those are the three points that we'll, we'll structure this psalm around as we go through this. And I just want to take this time, this Sunday, taking the break from Luke's Gospel and from other things we're doing, to just spend some time in this psalm. Just to enjoy what's written here, so your joy may be strengthened. And to encourage your worship and praise with fellow, like-minded believers in your

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midst. And we just want to take a closer look here at the gladness of David, in this text, to be in the fellowship of the saints in the house of the Lord. The sweet psalmist of Israel is going to lead us now through corporate praise and worship as we follow his thoughts through this psalm.

So let me give you a first point for your notes, if you're taking notes. Number one, it's very simple, we long for the fellowship of believers. We long for the fellowship of believers. And we'll read through those first two verses again, including the title, which is important. It's called a song of ascents, it's of David and then this, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!' Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!"

Now I want to look at the title, and not get too technical here. But it is important to say just a few words about the title to help you appreciate what follows the title, what comes after it. There are two parts in the title, one part tells us what kind of psalm this is and the other part tells us who the author is.

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So let's start with what kind of psalm this is. This is a song of ascents, literally it's a song of steps. If we translated that literally, it's a song of steps. Like the steps of stairs, stairs that ascend, that's where ascension comes from. And there are a couple ways to look at that, song of steps. Refers to maybe the step like structure of the psalm itself, or it could refer to the setting of the psalm or even the occasion of the psalm. The occasion would be, when it was used in Israel's worship. But first let's consider that issue of the structure, step-like structure of the psalm.

Oh and many of you know that Hebrew poetry is not like poetry in English, it's not, it's not. English poetry, has a, it's, it's about the pattern of sounds we call that rhythm. Matching sounds like rhyming, meter, stressed, unstressed syllables, and things like that. I'm no English major, or poetry major for that matter. But those are the things that typify English poetry. You can hear something like that in the common refrain, I'm going to tell you where my poetic excellence rises

to. Roses are red, violets are blue, sugar is sweet and so are you.

Hebrew poetry doesn't follow that kind of structure. It doesn't follow that kind of a pattern. Instead, it structures thoughts and truths into patterns that are pleasing to the mind. Patterns that are rewarding for those who slow down with the text and meditate on the lines and the relationship between the lines and the words. Hebrew poetry is mental, you might say. It's thought provoking. It's meditative.

And it often makes use of a feature that we call parallelism. There's synonymous parallelism where two thoughts are parallel, synonymous thoughts. Synthetic parallelism, where a thought is spoken and a thought is continued and elaborated upon in the next line. Antithetical parallelism where one line is stated and the contrasting line, you see that in wisdom literature a lot, antithetical parallel, parallelism.

And having said all of that, about Hebrew poetry, I'm going to reverse course on you because in these songs of ascents, fifteen of them are collected together in the psalter. Psalms 120 through 134, and in those fifteen songs of ascents, the authors set aside those typical structures and features of Hebrew poetry, and these verses actually sound a bit more like English poetry to the ear, when spoken out loud. They have rhythm and rhyme and meter.

One example comes there in verse 6, where it says, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!" You can almost hear the rhythm, the sound, even in English. But in Hebrew it's *sha'alu sh'lom Yerushalayim*. You can almost hear the sound of that. The one man describes this sound as almost a, a climbing movement of the thoughts. As each thought plants upon a preceding word and thus carries itself forward. So when, when it's read out loud, when it's spoken out loud, it actually sounds like climbing. It sounds like steps, almost like a cadence as it moves upward to the summit.



Which is why it is believed, this group of psalms, psalms 120 to 134, was used by Jewish pilgrims as they traveled from different parts of the world to come and gather together in Jerusalem for the three great feasts. The Feast of Unleavened Bread, which includes the Passover, Feast of Weeks, also called Pentecost, and then the Feast of Booths, which is called Tabernacles or Ingathering.

So those three feasts, the Jews would travel in caravans, groups of families coming to, together to travel from the tribal territories that they were given as a possession, back in Joshua's day. Coming out of the different parts of Israel, they came from lower elevations throughout the land of Israel and made their ascent up to Jerusalem, standing at a higher elevation, the capital city. And as they traveled, they would recite, or chant, sing, one or all of these songs of ascent.

Even in the arrangement of the fifteen psalms shows a progression from Psalm 120 through Psalm 134. Going from places far away from Jerusalem to a place very near to the heart of worship within the temple. They begin with the author lamenting,

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Psalm 120:5. If you have your Bible, you can just look there, Psalm 120:5, "Woe to me, that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar!" Meshech refers to Asia Minor, modern day Turkey. Kedar refers to Arabia, this is now modern day Saudi Arabia, Oman, Yemen.

So these songs of ascent move from the outward regions of the, of the land, where, where the people of God were scattered and they move progressively toward Jerusalem. They even culminate in a call to worship in Psalm 134, you can turn over to it there, verses 1 and 2. "Come, praise the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who serve by night in the house of the Lord! Lift up your hands to the sanctuary and praise the Lord!"

The songs of ascent then are composed and structured, and even ordered and arranged in such a way that they became the pilgrim songs; chanted by worshippers of Yahweh, making their annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem to celebrate the three feasts of the Lord their God. And they, even the content of these Psalms, if you go through psalm by psalm, you can see that the content of your moving and your anticipating worship in the heart of Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, looking to the sanctuary

itself. The content of the psalms prepares the heart for worship. It gets them ready, it builds anticipation, builds excitement with every step. It reaches its climax in the city of Jerusalem, in the company of worshippers, like we are today in the fellowship of believers.

The title, also if you go back to Psalm 122, also the title there, it attributes the authorship of the psalm to David. In light of clues in the psalm itself, and this title, Davidic authorship may reveal something more specific about the setting of the psalm. Often escapes our memory that the first home of the Ark of the Covenant was not Jerusalem but it was Shiloh. Shiloh, about fifty miles north of Jerusalem. And it stayed there, the Ark of the Covenant stayed in Shiloh for about three hundred years.

When David became king, he took great pains to bring the Ark of the Lord near to him. A very significant move for a king, to move the Ark of the Covenant near to himself. He gathered thirty thousand troops, in 2 Samuel 6:2 tells us, they set out to bring the Ark of God from Baal-Judah, which is, the Ark is

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called by the name, the name of the Yahweh of Hosts who dwells between the cherubim. And that is the name, by the way, that David refers to in Psalm 122:4, "the name of the LORD" Capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D. That is the divine name, Yahweh. It's a name that signifies the very essence of God. It, it encompasses all of his attributes, and it is impossible to state how significant that this is.

That David wants the Ark of the Lord called by the name in the very heart of the city. David, now established as king over a united Israel, now located in the citadel of Jerusalem, David sees it as a matter of national significance to bring the Ark of the LORD to himself. The Ark, called by the name of Yahweh, it signifies the very presence of God. Along with, for the nation, God's favor, God's blessing, peace, prosperity for the people, wellbeing to the people. Wherever the Ark of the LORD is, worship is.

And David knows that the place of the worship, of worship of the Lord their God, that place of worship will draw worshippers. So David wants to be as closely associated with the

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place of worship as possible. Why? Because worshippers will come there to worship Yahweh. Listen, believers are drawn to the place of worship. They are compelled to come near to pray, to offer sacrifice, to sing praises to God, to hear the word of God proclaimed and explained. These are David's people. They are his people, closer than family, he wants them near.

David wants worshippers to worship together with him, to enjoy the fellowship of the faith, to be fellow partakers of divine grace as they come together to pray for the peace of the nation. That's why he says, "I was glad when they," other people, said to me, it's not just coming from himself, its coming from others to his own ears. He is so glad, rejoicing when they said, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!" He longs for the fellowship with, with other believers, with hearts of worship and he loves to hear the fact that they want to be there with him.

It wasn't always so in David's life, there were times when he was forced to be away from the Ark. Forced to be away from the place of worship, these were times of deep, deep sorrow and

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sadness for David. Most notable separation from the house of the Lord was during that coup attempt at the end of his life. He was an older man, having fought so many wars, his own son Absalom won the hearts of the people, turned them against him. David had to evacuate the city of Jerusalem, the city he loved. Along with of all his loyal company of men, he left.

You've been keeping up with the daily reading, you may remember, that as David was leaving Jerusalem, there was a Zadok, the priest, along with the Levites and they came to him, and they carried the Ark of the Covenant with them and they intended to accompany David, as he escaped, as he left Jerusalem. David told them though in 2 Samuel 15:25, he said, Zadok, appreciate what you're doing, carry the Ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me back and he'll let me see both it and its dwelling place.

It wasn't certain that David was going to be able to return, that he would be restored. It wasn't certain that this coup attempt, which had won the hearts of so many in Israel. It

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was not certain that, that that wouldn't be successful.

Especially when you consider David's age, when you consider the, the popularity of Absalom when you consider the injustices done to Absalom.

Many reasons why this was an uncertain prospect, but David did eventually find favor in the eyes of the Lord. God did bring him back into the city. And so he says in Psalm 122 verse 2, "Our feet," he looks down and he says, "Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!" You can imagine that David's first stop was at the tabernacle, to see the dwelling place of the Lord and to worship in the Lord's presence.

So now in this psalm, in a retrospective reflection, David writes this psalm of corporate celebration. Of joy in the assembly of the saints, and notice as I said this is not individualistic, this is corporate, this is a rejoicing in the assembly because of the assembly, because of others, you can see it in the plural there. "I was glad when they," others, plural, "said to me," individually. "Let us, all of us, go to the house

of the Lord, our feet," our feet collectively, "have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem."

Listen, beloved, is this your attitude? Is this your attitude? Is this your heart toward the fellowship of believers? Is this your sentiment about the church, about attending church, and participating in its worship and being with its blood-bought redeemed people? You rejoice! Not only that you have a heart for corporate worship and fellowship of believers, but that others share the same heart. Does it sadden you when they don't? Does it worry you when your own heart can grow cold? Complaining even about the church?

I love how Charles Spurgeon expresses the thought. It says, "David's heart was in the worship of God and he was delighted when he found others inviting him to go where his desires had already gone. It helps the ardor of the most ardent to hear others inviting him to a holy duty. The word was not go, but let us go. Hence the ear of the psalmist found a double joy in it. He was glad for the sake of others, glad that they wished to go



themselves, glad that they had the courage and liberality to invite others.

"He knew that it would do them good. Nothing better can happen to men and their friends than to love the place where," God, "God's honor dwelleth. That David was glad for his own sake. He loved the invitation of the holy place. He delighted in being called to go and worship in company and moreover, he rejoiced that good people thought enough of him to extend their invitation to him." End quote. It's true, isn't it? It's especially true as we've come to see it. When our absence from corporate worship has been imposed upon us. We know that time away from this assembly has been ordered by a kind and loving providence and we don't complain against him. Still the discipline that we have felt these past couple months has been painful to bear.

We're so glad to see the end of it, if the Lord sees fit to extend his favor to us and allow us to continue meeting. And like David, you right now can look down at your two feet. I see a lot of pairs of feet all over here. The social distancing

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helps me to see more feet actually, than I usually can. You can look down, we can look down at our two feet, see their standing, sitting in your case, in this place of worship. We recognize that our waiting may have come to an end now. Our anticipation fulfilled. Our longing come to fruition.

Let's string together the weeks and see that our joy and excitement and anticipation of being in this place together to worship together continues. Let's stir one another up to love and good works, and especially the gladness of the house of the Lord. Like the Jewish pilgrims of old, when they reached the end of their journey, when they achieved the goal of their pilgrimage, they finally stopped their ascent and stopped walking, and they had to have just, as they stood before that city, they had to have just looked up. Look at this, we're here! We've arrived. They saw the towers, the ramparts, walls, the strength of the walls. It pastured the powerful strong gates and they, stir, stood on that good firm ground of Jerusalem.

And we too, like them, stand in the fellowship of believers. We stand before the Lord because God has made us to

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stand and our hearts are glad. Like David, like the visitors to the feasts, our feet have come to a standstill. And when we, we think about how we got here, we just wonder. How is it that me, a despicable sinner, filled with sin, can stand in this place? Is God that good and gracious that such a one as I can be before him? The answer is yes, he is.

The manifestation of his goodness and his grace, we're at the same time, humbled by that and lifted up, lifted up. That turns our heart to gratitude, doesn't it? It turns our heart to gratitude and a second point for this morning.

We give thanks for the fellowship of believers. So we long for the fellowship of believers, and as that's culminating, we give thanks for the fellowship of believers. As I mentioned earlier, we can hear the transition from verse two to verse three. In a stutter step, you might say it, the mention of Jerusalem. A name that means foundation of peace, and so David looks up. His eyes look, the visible concrete characteristics of the city of Jerusalem. And his, his mind reflects on what those physical realities represent. What is symbolized by this place.

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Talks about Jerusalem and then he says it again in verse 3, Jerusalem, "Built as a city that is bound firmly together, 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. There thrones of judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David."

In this section, verses 3-5, David is reflecting on the reasons that he has for giving thanks. In fact, this is highlighted as the central purpose of these verses. In verse 4 there, it's highlighted as "to give thanks," it is the verb *yadah*, which means to confess or give voice to, To verbalize, praise, and thanksgiving. So the verb here is in the form of a purpose clause and so everything around this purpose clause of giving thanks become reasons for giving thanks. Reasons for expressing gratitude.

I mean we could break this down into a number of reasons, and believe me, I had a list. But I also thought, I've got a short amount of time. But I'll just mention four reasons and

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unpack each one of those four to point out the fulfillment we find in Christ. Four reasons for giving thanks.

First reason for giving thanks. We belong to a city, which stands on a foundation of gospel peace. We belong to a city, which stands on a foundation of gospel peace. And starts right there with the name Jerusalem, then the phrase, built, past participle, built as a city. An actual city, as in, in other words, not, not the tents of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob living as nomads.

Jerusalem is a city, it's not the hobbles and the shacks that they lived in as slaves in Egypt, grinding away under the oppression and tyranny of their slave masters. It's a city, it's not a military encampment in the wilderness, always ready to be on the march, always ready to get up and go at a moment's notice. Disciplined, ready for war. No, this is a city. It's a city with its law and order. It's a city with its courts that execute a divinely revealed system of justice and righteousness. Built on the truth of God himself that never changes.

It's a city. It's a city that's soundly built by wise architects and beautified by skillful artisans. It's a city that's generously supported by wealthy patrons. It's defended by its high walls and ramparts and skilled warriors. It's a city that's wisely governed by its judges and its elders and its king. It's supported by its industry. It's perpetuated by its productivity. It's a city. Is it any wonder then that we learn that the eternal state is portrayed as a beautiful city in Revelation 21?

Looking forward to Bret's sermon on that text. John saw, it says in Revelation 21, "The holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Arrayed with the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal." The holy city, the new Jerusalem, pictured in Revelation 21 with its walls and its gates and its foundations. An incredible amount of space for its believing inhabitants. And the city's energy, the city's light is provided by the glory of God himself. No sun needed to energize and to give heat and light to that city. The glory of God is there. Its lamps are lit by the light of Christ.

But, John tells us in Revelation 21:27, at the end of the chapter, "Nothing unclean will ever enter that city." Nothing unclean, "nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life." As the name, Jerusalem, reminds us, this city is built on a foundation, not merely of solid bedrock or quarried, cut, finished stones from a stone mason. The walls of this new city have twelve foundations.

Revelation 21:14 says, "And on those foundations are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." And the foundation of this city, where we are citizens, is a foundation of gospel peace. That's what's proclaimed by the apostles. That's the foundation we rest upon, is their gospel proclamation, with Jesus Christ himself as their chief cornerstone. This name, Jerusalem, refers to a peace that has been won. Bought and paid for, a peace that has been secured by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. It's a foundation of gospel peace, and only those who believe and obey the gospel live in that city.

Second reason for giving thanks. Not only are we joined together in city, but we are united by grace through faith. In an inseparable union with the people of God. We're united by grace through faith in an inseparable union with the people of God. David rejoices that Jerusalem is built as a city. And it says there, "bound firmly together." It's kind of a difficult phrase to translate, and so you see myriad of translations, all kinda coming around the same theme. Another way to translate it is, "built as a city, solidly united." Compacted together or even, joined together in partnership.

In the Septuagint translation the Greek word that's used there is a word that means sharing or partnership. Again, David is using a literal, concrete characteristics of a well engineered city that is closely joined together. It will not easily fall over, using those characteristics that he can see to illustrate a greater, deeper spiritual reality, a reality of unity and harmony, a reality of fellowship and partnership.



Calvin helps us to grasp the idea, when he writes this, "The mutual concord which reigns among the citizens of a city and by which they are united together to each other is compared to buildings, compacted together by a skillful and elegant workmanship so that there is nothing imperfect, nothing ill joined together or torn, but throughout, a beautiful harmony, a beautiful harmony. " This unity of believers, this concord, this harmony, it is a unity in the faith. In the truth. It is a unity in the gospel. It is a harmony then that is divinely granted and Spirit produced in love. It's a fellowship that is known and shared only by true believers.

And listen, this fellowship of believers, goes way, way back, before David's time, way back. We need to remember here that David, he was not the first righteous king of Jerusalem. He had to kick out the Canaanite people, the Jebusites, out of Jerusalem and take over the city. They're not the first kings of Jerusalem. Long before David, the first king of that city, the city then known as Urusalim, you can hear where the Hebrew name comes Jerusalem, Urusalim. City of peace it was known as and the king of that city is known to us as Melchizedek, king of Salem, king of Shalem.

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Before David reigned in Jerusalem, Melchizedek reigned over that same city. Melchizedek is the one who blessed Abraham before he became Abraham. He was just Abram then. Before he became Abraham, the father of those who believe the promise. The writer to the Hebrews picks up on this theme and draws it out for us in Hebrews. He says this, "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the , " Most High of, " Most High God, met Abraham ... And to him, Abraham apportioned a tenth," of all the spoils that he took from the war he just came from. "He is first," this Melchizedek is first, "by translation of his name, King of righteousness." That's the *zedek* part of Melchizedek. And then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. That's the *melack* part of his word, of his name. Melchizedek.

"He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days or end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever." So we have Melchizedek, king of righteousness, king of peace, joining together with Abraham, the father of all who believe and David sits on the throne that God gave him that was inhabited first by

Melchizedek. And here he is believing in God, worshipping the same God, God Most High. He is resting and rejoicing on the promises that God made to him.

2 Samuel 7, "I will raise up your offspring after you, I will establish his kingdom. He shall build up a house for my name, I'll establish the throne of his kingdom forever." It's a reference to Christ, we all understand that, his eternal enduring kingdom. So these titanic figures, Melchizedek, Abraham, David, David's greater son, Jesus Christ our Lord, they are brought together here, aren't they, in a unity, in a harmony. They are perfected in fellowship and partnership. They are serving the same purpose of God to unite the people of God as one people under one shepherd.

That's what Paul rejoiced at, over in Ephesians chapter 2. Turn there with me if you will, just to see this, Paul rejoiced in the same reality. Ephesians 2:19 and following, he tells the Gentile Ephesians, he says, "You, though you were strangers and aliens, you're no longer strangers and aliens. But now you are," verse 19, middle of the verse, "you are fellow citizens with the

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saints and members of the household of God. Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure, being joined together," there's that that same language.

"Joined together it grows into a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit." What a great connection, isn't that? To see what David looked at, at a distance, looked at in brick and mortar and stone and pavement on the streets and walls and, and Paul sees the reality fulfilled in the church, in us. So we give thanks because we stand on a foundation of gospel peace. We give thanks because we share in this inseparable union with the people of God and we are being built together even closer knit in unity and harmony than any city can be built.

Here's a third reason, third reason. Go back to Psalm 122. Third reason for giving thanks, we're called by the name of God and we exist for the praise of his glory. We have the privilege and the honor that we are called by the name of God, and we exist for his, for the praise of his glory. It says there,

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Jerusalem, built as a city, is bound, firmly together. To which the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord or Yahweh, as was decreed for Israel to give thanks to the name of Yahweh.

David refers there to what's decreed for Israel, literally it's a testimony for Israel and that looks back to what Moses said in Exodus 23, Exodus 34, Deuteronomy 16:16, "three times a year shall all your males appear before the Lord your God at the place that he will choose." He has chosen Jerusalem, it says come here for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Booths. So these are instituted then as a testimony in Israel. David is seeing them as joyful occasions for coming together to worship the Lord.

I just want to stop and give a footnote here. God has made this a testimony, and David calls it here a decree, or as we see here in our English Bibles, a decree. We might say this is an ordinance, we might say this is a command. You know that all commands to you are for your good and for your joy. All of God's prohibitions are to, to keep you away from, from ruin. Keep you

away from sorrow and sadness and all of his commandments to you are for your good and your blessing and your joy.

And he comes and he says three times a year I want everybody in Israel, all the men, I want you to come together to Jerusalem, bring your families and I want you to rejoice. I want you to pray. I want you to praise. I want you to sing. I want you to eat. Commanded fellowship. Say man, don't mess with my autonomy. Don't mess with my autonomy, I'll fellowship when I want to, I'll stay alone when I want to, that's the attitude of our culture, isn't it? They're just ruining themselves. Listen to God.

Worshippers, notice in those verses, they're not strangers to one another. They're brothers. They come together as relatives and tribes; they're members of the same family. They're members of the tribes of Israel descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but notice there, David does not refer to them as the tribes of Israel. He's given them an even greater honor. He calls them the tribes of the Lord, tribes of Yahweh.

That expands it, doesn't it? That opens it up to us Gentiles, not physically descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but we are members of the tribes of Yahweh. There's no higher honor, is there? Than to be called by the name of somebody great, to have a great family name, to belong to a great, and wealthy, and powerful family.

I know it's not popular these days to talk about privilege, but listen, we make no apologies for the privilege that is ours to be called by this name. It's a name that guarantees goodness and blessing to us. Think about what that's meant in our country in times past, to be called by the name of Rockefeller, or Kennedy, or DuPont, or Hurst, or Vanderbilt. The men who built those dynasties are dead and gone. Their greatness is only an entry on a Wikipedia page. All their wealth, and power, and influence, they had to give that up and pass it on to others, to their heirs, to be squandered or spent or used up. It's already fading away. Earthly dynasties, merely human, they're subject to futility. Earthly favor is fading, and fleeting, and doing so quickly.

But to the, be the object of divine favor, like the tribes of Israel that ascended into the house of the Lord. Like those who are called by the divine name, set apart by his grace to give him praise, and honor, and glory. That is an eternal calling, isn't it? Because God, the Lord, Yahweh, is an eternal being. To be called to the, to the, to the duty and the task of praising his name, that never ends.

And so this eternal calling is one that requires an eternal life, so it's implied here. We beloved are so deeply, deeply privileged as Christians to be living today because we have seen and we have come to know what David only saw from a distance. David's, reasing, reason for rejoicing has been fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Most of us here today, we're not numbered among the tribes of Israel; not by physical heritage or lineage anyway. But we do belong, by the grace of God, to the tribes of Yahweh. We do belong in this, in this family. We belong to him, by faith in Jesus Christ and this means that we too, are called by the



divine name, the name of Yahweh. We too have the privilege of living for the praise of God's glory.

You can turn back to Ephesians. I sent you back to Psalm 22, but let's go back to Ephesians again, Ephesians chapter 1 this time. Turn to Ephesians 1:3, right there in the beginning. Many of you probably have this memorized, and for good reason. Ephesians 1:3-6, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has blessed us," in the, "in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved."

That's our birthright. That's our inheritance right there. We are a highly, highly favored people. We're called by the divine name. We're united in God's one and only son to bring praise to the glory of divine grace. This is why we gather, this is why we come together, as a living testimony, with a chorus of

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praise, born again worshippers, united together in this fellowship. Amen? We get to do this together.

Look at verse 5, there's a fourth reason for giving thanks, Psalm 122, sorry, go back there, Psalm 122 verse 5. Fourth reason for giving thanks. We live under the gracious lordship of Jesus Christ. We live under the gracious lordship of Jesus Christ. Psalm 122:5 says, "There thrones for judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David."

I'll just make this very brief. You know what's better than the constitutional, representative democracy that we live under in our country? This, this. A divine monarchy, where David's greater son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the prince of Righteousness himself, reigns, sitting on this throne.

We understand three branches of government, comprehend the functions of government. The legislative branch, the power to pass laws. Judicial branch, power to interpret the law, make judgements based on the law. Executive branch, power to enforce

the law. Verse 5, just two branches represented there. Thrones of judgement, that's the judicial. Thrones of the house of David, that's the executive, the administrative. Where's the legislative? It's there, it's in the Law of Moses, it's written. Once God gave the law to Moses, the legislation is complete. The foundation is set. It sets a perpetual foundation of righteousness for the nation of Israel.

Simplifies the task of government tremendously, right? Simplifies, takes the complexity of everything. You don't need new laws made for a new people. David rejoiced in the blessed city, the joyful task of administrating Jerusalem, promoting the righteousness of the divine law, by ensuring righteous judgement is upheld in the courts, by executing righteousness for the good of the people of God.

Listen, we live in an even greater reality now that Jesus Christ rules and reigns from heaven, and will one day rule and reign from David's throne here on earth in the millennial kingdom. We can read about this in Jeremiah 23 verses 5 to 6, "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will

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raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'Yahweh, our righteousness.'"

Those few comments just don't come close to exhausting all that is contained there, in verses 3 to 5, but they do. It was just a sense of the gratitude that we share in the fellowship of believers. The reasons we share even with David, for giving thanks, every time we come together as a church. God has made us citizens of a heavenly city, new Jerusalem, but the with an immovable foundation that's set upound, set upon, grounded upon the foundation of peace, the gospel of peace.

God has united us all together by his grace to be called people that he has foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified. God has honored us by calling us by his own name. Privileged us to bring praise to the glory of his grace. And God has given us the joy, the safety, the comfort, the protection, the, the satisfaction, the contentment of living under the

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righteous administration of the gracious Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Well with our longing fulfilled and our hearts full of joy and gratitude, we come to a third and final point for this morning. We long for the fellowship of believers. We give thanks for the fellowship of believers, believers. And thirdly, we pray for the fellowship of believers. We pray for the fellowship of believers. We go to the final verses there, starting in verse 6, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! May they be secure who love you! Peace be within your walls and security within your towers! For my brothers and companions' sake I will say, 'Peace be within you!' For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good."

We entered into this psalm with David rejoicing in verse 1, but those called him to join in worship saying, "Let us go to the house of the Lord." Now in verse 9, he calls those same people to join him in praying, "for the house of the Lord our God." Again, notice the focus on the place of worship. The house

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of Yahweh, the house of Yahweh our God. It's the place of worship that brackets the refrains in this psalm.

Yes, God is omnipresent, he is infinite spirit, he is a being that fills all things, and is everywhere at the same time. And yet, he has chosen to localize his visible presence. Identifying particular places, the tabernacle, the temple of Jerusalem, the Ark of the Covenant. He's identified those places for his people to gather for worship. And now we come together in local churches, where the spiritual temple of the living God is manifest in his people. Inhabited by his spirit, growing in the fruits of the spirit, manifesting a likeness to Jesus Christ. He inhabits the praises of his people. That happens in a place, beloved. It doesn't happen online. It does not happen fishing out in the lake. It doesn't happen at the barbecue pit. It happens in church.

And those who love that place, as David says, those who love to be at that place, worship with him. David calls them brothers. They're closer to him than physical family. He calls them his friends. The word, companion, is in the ESV, it also

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could be translated friends. Probably better here, brothers and friends. David calls upon these people, those people with whom he is united, with whom he shares this deep spiritual kinship, those who are compelled by the same love, who are driven by that same longing; he calls upon them to join him in praying for this place. Pray with me.

Want to do some self-assessment? Want to find out what it is you really love? Examine your prayer life. You pray for what you long for and you long for what you pray for. David prays for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem. He's not praying for its stones, and its walls, and its ramparts, and its streets. He's not praying for its homes and its shops, not for its courts and palaces. He's praying for its environment. He's praying for its attitude of harmony. He's praying for the blessing and prosperity of his people.

Listen, it's no good having strong walls and high towers for repelling the enemy outside the city if the inhabitants within the city are at each other's throats. We've seen this in our own country, haven't we? Just over this weekend, over this

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week. We've seen this over many decades in our country. We have the strongest, most powerful, best funded, trained, resource provisioned military in the world. We're able to project power by sea, by air, by land, all over the world. Overcoming powerful, dangerous enemies on all kind of battlefield environments.

What good is all that power when we're rotting on the inside? I'm not diminishing the military, not at all. I love the military, I love our law enforcement. I love all of that. I love those things, but what good is projecting power abroad when our country tears itself apart on the inside? Listen, David, as king, understood that. When he had to evacuate Jerusalem at the threat of Absalom, he understood that this place is tearing itself apart. And it was only the grace of God that united that nation together under his leadership again. He wept for the sheep of Israel.

And so David prays for the peace of that city. He prays for the security of those who love Jerusalem. He prays that they might have ease, they might live in quietness, in happiness,

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that they might enjoy the blessing of God and the prosperity of his favor. His prayers here aren't self-centered. He's not thinking about his own, like, I'm a king, I know that coups end poorly with kings having their head removed from their shoulder. He's not thinking about that. He's not, his own peace and prosperity is beside the point, he'll go live in caves and rocks, and mountains if he has to. He prays this for the sake of all those who love the house of the Lord.

That's leadership. He's not thinking about himself, he's thinking about them. Because of that shared love and passion, these people he counts as his brothers and friends. He sees his personal benefit accruing from the benefit of their blessing and joy. That's leadership. And that's the heart of every true believer. Is that how your prayers go? Are others on your mind? Do you pray for the peace and the unity, the harmony, the happiness of this church and all true faithful churches? Do you pray for our unity, harmony, our joy, as individuals, as families? Or are your prayers mostly about yourself? I'd say hold up your hand if you're guilty, but it's all of us, isn't it? It's what we tend to.

That's why we need this correction, this reminder, get back on track. John Calvin says this about that, "If we would order our prayers aright, let us always begin with pleading that the Lord would be pleased to preserve this sacred community.

Whoever, confining his attention to his own personal advantage, is indifferent about the common wellbeing. He not only gives evidence that he is destitute of all true feeling of godliness, but in vain, desires his own prosperity and will profit nothing by his prayers, since he does not observe the due order."

I like how he puts prayers in the, in the, in the frame of a due order. Our prayer life needs to be ordered, disciplined, aligned, structured for the good of others. He not only prays for his fellow worshippers, brothers, friends, but he prays for the house of the Lord itself, verse 9. So as you might expect, in David's prayers, his love for his neighbor is joined with and completed by his love for his God.

Here again we see the same themes that show up all through Scripture and are really the bedrock of all the law and the

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gospel. Love for God, love for neighbor, these two loves are inseparable companions. Wherever there's true love for God, you'll find love for one's neighbor. Wherever you see love for one's neighbor, you'll find true love for God as well. And I also might add, whenever the one of those loves is absent, so is the other. No matter what's said from the lips, from the mouth, the love David describes here isn't based on mushy feelings, it's not based on indistinct, indiscriminate sentimentality, his love takes action in spiritual discipline. It's one that, it's a discipline, by the way, that nobody else can see.

It's one that only God knows, the living God, who sees all things. He's omniscient, and he sees what is unknown to other people. God knows David's prayer life, he examines it. And his love is a love that's practiced in secret. It's unseen by anybody else. It is the most powerful way though of loving one another; namely in an attitude of sincere disciplined prayer for their good.

We pray for the peace of Jerusalem. We pray for the sake of our brothers and friends. We pray for one another. We pray for

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# GRACE CHURCH



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the good of God's chosen place of worship. Beloved, we pray for this church. Spurgeon said, "If we're glad to be called by others to our Father's house, how much more glad shall we be to actually go there. We love our Lord, and therefore we love his house. And pangs of strong desire are upon us that we may soon reach the eternal bode of his glory."

We're happy when we see numerous bands ready to unite themselves with the people of God. The pastor especially glad when many come forward and, ask him, ask of him assistance in entering into the fellowship of the church. No language is more cheering to him than this humble request, "Let us go to the house of the Lord." Friend, if you're not happy in the house of the Lord that God has joined you to on earth, one wonders if you'll ever be happy with what he's prepared for you in heaven, you say, oh but heavens filled with perfect people. Beloved, this is what it's ordained for now. With all of our warts, all of our sins, all of our imperfections.

God doesn't save perfect people. He redeems sinners just like you and me. He redeems sinners with lots of sins and he covers them with a grace, covers them with a love in the savior,

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Jesus Christ. We're assured of better things in this church. We're confident that God has filled your hearts with longing, gratitude, and all prayer as you participate in the fellowship of believers here at Grace Church, Greeley, Colorado.

Let's pray. Our Father, we're so thankful for the heart of David. So thankful for his passion for you. He is the sweet psalmist of Israel. He is one who loved you. He was not a perfect man. He was, he was a sinner. He, he fell so precipitously, but, but Lord you have raised him up to be a model worshipper.

And we're so thankful to follow his lead in singing praise and giving glory and honor to you in the name of Jesus Christ. Thank you, Father for bringing us back together, it's been so long. We have longed to be together. Just, just to celebrate this simple format and most particularly now, to partake of the Lord's Supper. We're so grateful to belong to him, to be reconciled to you, be at peace with you, no more enmity. Please prepare, prepare our hearts even now as we give our attention now to the Lord's Supper. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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