John 2:13-22

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Preacher: David Helm

[0:00] Tots and teen kids can go to their classes now. Psalm 122, a song of ascents of David.

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, the tribes of the Lord, as was decreed for Israel to give thanks to the name of the Lord. Their thrones for judgment 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. The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, when we set out on this summer journey in the Psalms, I likened the Psalms to that majestic portion of God's word that rises with all the spiritual stature of the Colorado Rockies.
[1:38] The Rockies. And I alluded to the fact that when you begin to come onto the Rockies, for as far as the eye can see, there are peaks of splendor.

And so it is in the book of Psalms. 150 unique mountaintop peaks of splendor. Well, now we are three weeks in, and my opinion hasn't changed.
I am thrilled each week with the task before us of looking into the songs of ascents. Psalm 122 has a particular uniqueness.
From my vantage point, the uniqueness lies in the sheer number of trails it offers for exploration. The topography of this psalm is so richly varied. And its wonders opening up on so many fronts, its vistas so grand, that it could, this psalm, in my opinion, hold us in an affectionate love for God all summer long, in and of itself.
[3:02] I can only say that because I have the joy of each week sitting down with the text and pouring over it, trying hard to do my own translation of it, watching what is emerging from it, and being captivated by the varied trails of exploration.

It reminded me, this psalm did, of moments when I was a boy, when we would actually camp in the Colorado Rockies. I don't know if you've ever done that. This is certainly the time of year for traveling and hiking and climbing.
There were times where we would settle into the campground and get our tent on the mountain's pleasant edge, and we'd sit by the fire at night, and we'd pull out the maps provided for us by the rangers, and we would begin to mark out and chart out our course for the four or five days that we would be in this particular region.
Which trails we would climb. You know, if you haven't camped, you need to know there isn't just one path on the way up. There are so many varied and captivating trails.
Some took longer than others. There are times we'd do an all-day trip, and that would require careful planning and food and those old canteens that sat on your belt and sweated throughout the day.
[4:33] Other days we'd do what were half-day wonders that might lead to a pleasant mountain lake or a meadow. I can still see my dad pulling up with a hamstring pull in a mountain meadow as we cruised by him and beat him in a race for the first time in our life, and him limping all the way back to base camp.

I can remember the kinds of trails that had a canopy of forest cover, and there was considerable overgrowth, and if you hadn't brought your sweatshirt with you and tied it on at the outset, you were sorry later, because certain trails actually seemed to almost go into crevices and almost find their way into the rock before reemerging at some shimmering waterfall with even a chill in the air and mountain rock ledges that seemed as if they'd been there for hundreds of years ready for kids to

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jump off of into swimming holes.
I remember all of those different, varied trails. And then, of course, there was always the one that led to the summit by way of the upper ridge.
I wanted you to see a few of the trails that we could have preached on had we been in this psalm all summer. And then I want to spend the bulk of our time on one summer trail.
Let me show you the trail, the first one we could climb today had we all the time at our leisure. I call this trail David's Ascent.
[6:14] Walk from our campground and find our way to this pathway and David's Ascent, it would be called. Look at the title. You'll find it there, Psalm 122.

A Song of Ascents of David. In fact, then, this is the first of the songs of ascents that is attributed to anyone. There are 15 in number.
We're looking at them all summer long. But this is the first one with the author's attestation. David. In fact, he is listed, and we'll see this later in the summer, as the author of four of the 15.
The other psalm, Songs of Ascent, that goes by an author is given to the place of Solomon. David's Ascent.
I began to think about the context in which he would have written it then. I began to think about what we already know of the Songs of Ascents. This certainly, of all the 15, fits perfectly into the pilgrimages of the three annual feasts, doesn't it?
[7:23] Which we spoke of two weeks ago. I mean, we find his name in this psalm, and we find the very word going up, or the Songs of Ascent, the incline.

We actually find that three times, both in the title, and then in verse 1, let us go up. The same word there in verbal form that you'll find in the title. The ascent.
Let us go up. Or in verse 4, to which the tribes go up. Indeed, when we looked two weeks ago at the historical setting, most likely posited for all of these songs, it was those annual, three times annual pilgrimages into Jerusalem, and that last trek up the hill, the incline.
And the wording fits perfectly. This song would have been sung then easily within reach of the gate, and finally arriving, verse 2, our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem.
As if it was written to be sung upon entry. All the tribes going up to give thanks to the name of the Lord.
[8:38] And then I thought of David again in regard to some of the historical context in which this song would have been written and what it would have meant to him. He was, of course, Israel's greatest king.

He had intimate experiential knowledge of what it was like to arrive at last in Jerusalem. His journey into this particular city was a long one.
He was anointed by Samuel as the one who would succeed Saul on the throne while still an adolescent boy. For years he was on the run in the hills and he slept in the caves as Saul sought to take his life.
For seven years and six months he reigned over a portion of God's people from Hebron. It wasn't until all of those years and years and years slid into his rearview mirror that his men said, let us go up and take for ourselves the city named Jabez for that was its name.
And capturing it he changed it to Jerusalem and claimed it for his throne. And he would reign from this city for 33 years.
[10:02] It was from these walls and these gates that he would leave for battle and enter again with victory. It was through the gates of Jerusalem that David would dance before the Lord with all of his might when he brought the Ark of the Covenant in.

It was these gates that he left under the onslaught of Absalom's rebellion and returned only to see a runner entering the city to tell him of his son's death.
David's ascent is a trail within this song that would be useful to us all.
For your life like David's is long and your desire to be home and at rest is yet before you. And your trials are many.
But like David the sweetness of entering into the house of the Lord still brings gladness to your heart. David's ascent is worth a day.
[11:29] There's another trail within the psalm that I think we could explore. I would call it Jerusalem's Gorge. Jerusalem's Gorge is for me like those trails that I took as a kid that went deep seemingly into the rock only to come out again into newness of life and sunlight.

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There is a depth to this psalm that extends beyond our time today. Think of the very word Jerusalem. This is Jerusalem's Gorge.
Verse 2 Our feet have been standing within your gates O Jerusalem. I mean all of the weight of the psalm rests upon the name of the city. Verse 3 Jerusalem built as a city.
Indeed it goes on in verse 6 pray for the peace of Jerusalem. And if you and I were to have time and it would be especially beneficial for us if we'd never studied the scriptures before we would see that in God's plan of salvation that is in history as he progressively reveals his plan of salvation this city this place gives way to all of his promises promises that are fulfilled in Christ.
And this trail through the song would lead you from place to person and you would begin to read the song and you might even in this coming week with all of its symbolic imagery leading to the person of Jesus Christ.
[13:18] You think of what John said to the woman at the well in John 4.20 Neither on this mountain Mount Gerizim nor in Jerusalem will you worship but a time is coming and he says to her when he says I who speak to you am he is already here when God's people will worship the Lord in spirit and in truth and place and city and Jerusalem and promise and Pentecost all of it erupting to move beyond place to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ which then when you begin to read the psalm and you begin to see that all of the tribes are going up to give thanks to the name of the Lord you begin to see how the name of the Lord is the center of the psalm in verse 1 let us go into the house of the Lord verse 9 for the sake of the house of the

Lord but verse 5 or 4 we give thanks to the name of the Lord Jesus above Jerusalem indeed it makes sense when you begin to look at his own ministry how in Luke chapter 13 verses 31 to 35 he speaks of this place as the place which kills the prophets oh Jerusalem who puts the prophets to death they did not understand the significance of Jerusalem in the coming of the sun Jerusalem's gorge would be a wonderful trail for us to hike together it would help us put our Bibles together and it would help us understand in a biblical theological perspective what God is doing from the beginning to the end even when you begin to see what happens on this other trail we could look at I would call it heaven's heights you know revelation 21 and 22 where the new Jerusalem comes down from heaven prepared as a bride for her husband so that this place represents in a sense the dwelling of God with us and therefore the person of Jesus as the one who receives the throne of judgment set verse 5 the throne that was there from the house of David he becomes grand and glorious and you tread this path through Jerusalem's gorge and you come out into the sunlight of the Lord this would be a great trail for many of us this summer who need a fresh understanding that God dwells with us and an experiential heartbeat that understands the depth of
I was glad when they said to me let us go up to the house of the Lord for Jesus is the house the chief cornerstone he is the city he is everything to us so you could travel David's ascent Jerusalem's gorge heaven's height I want to spend the moments that I have left on what I think is the most enjoyable of journeys for today it's what I felt I should preach on today I call this trail the house at the summit I want you to hike up Psalm 122 with me one verse at a time one switch back after the other take a look at the book ends of the text do you see verse one let us go up to the house of the
Lord verse nine for the sake of the house of the Lord and one begins to see in verse five that the house of the Lord is equated with the house of David there is no distinction in this song between that which is the Lord's and that which emerges from the house of David and what is this house at the summit it's simply the church it's the church I want you to turn just for a moment to first Peter I know we traveled in first Peter a couple of years ago but just to refresh your memory it might be good to put your eyes upon the page first Peter chapter two where see we see the imagery of the house of the Lord not only being moving forward to the person of Jesus Christ but to the people whom
[18:34] Jesus Christ loves and who are his own so it says in chapter two verse four as you come to him that is Jesus a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious you yourselves!

Like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house that's the phrase! the church is the house of the living God to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ for it stands in scripture behold I am laying in Zion that is Jerusalem a stone the place is now inhabited with the person and the person the Lord Jesus Christ is a corner stone chosen and precious and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame!

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So the honor is for you who believe but for those who do not believe the stone that the builders rejected has become the corner stone and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense they stumble because they disobey the word as they were destined to do and then from there he begins to speak about those of us who were being built up into this spiritual house as a chosen race a royal priesthood a holy nation a people for his own possession those who had not received!
mercy now receiving mercy those who were not God's people now they are God's people we are the house of the living God that when the Holy Spirit takes residence in you upon your profession of faith in Christ he inhabits you your house is a temple to the living God and you individually are a stone put into the wall like these Chicago bricks Jesus Christ himself being the corner stone and it's not inanimate it's living breathing three dimensional relational brothers and sisters in Christ God's family now when you begin to see that as I want you to for the remainder of our time we begin to look at Psalm 122 through that lens or upon this trail and we begin our walk and this then is it a song of a sense of David I was glad when they said to me let us go up to the house of the
Lord our feet have been standing within your gates oh Jerusalem gladness is the affection David has for the church the people of God were the delight of David and as it is for David it ought to be that way for us we are standing here today in this very hour within your gates in other words if we are found in him then when you and I gather together we are with him and we have sweet fellowship and communion that is unlike any other organization you'll ever join unlike any fraternity to which you have ever belonged unlike any accomplishment that you might ever achieve this family is the family of the living
[22:13] Lord and so he says let us go to the house of the Lord but he says I was glad I was glad I was glad and so we begin to say to ourselves does this describe who we are are the people of God my delight am I so eager to arrive that I might look someone in the eye and hold someone by the shoulder and treasure them for they are possessions of the Christ to be with one another to love one another to have that gladness it seems to me that in some sense our understanding of the gospel which we have believed can be measured by the gladness with which we come and our gladness within the family here is an indicator of our satisfaction in heaven recently

I heard someone say you know when we think about heaven we normally think about all the accoutrements of heaven will there or will there not be golf courses what does it really mean that he'll wipe every tear away from our eye oh won't it be great to speak with aunt so and so again and all those things are treasured but never forget that your gladness in these relationships is an indicator of your readiness for those gladness I was glad when they said to me let us go up into the house of the Lord verses three and four after we see the delight of David in
God's people we see a description of that people this is the church read it this way 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 a description notice multiple tribes bound together firmly you know it's interesting this phrase here bound firmly together together is used in the Hebrew in Exodus 26 when God is giving to Moses the directions for the tabernacle and he begins with the tent of meeting and in the tent of meeting there are to be these curtains and the curtains are to be made of ten big curtains that are sewn together with purple and blue interweaving lace and the ten then are sewn together so that they would be just the words here bound firmly as one in other words they will be coupled together that's the language here now think of it in regard to the tribes that what you don't have here in the church you don't have uniformity you don't have a call here to everyone being of one tribe you have the tribes you have this patchwork of
God's people this quilt imagine all the people here today as panels in that patchwork sewn together firmly coupled together together it wasn't long ago I stood in a big compost heap for an entire county and I took a picture of this aged man who was standing in a contraption that he called a trailer which was held together it was 50 years old his trailer single axle held together with strapping and he told me it was time for new walls and I said I think you're probably right this is the most rickety thing I'd ever seen in my life wasn't bound together very well and as he was standing on it and I asked him if I could take his picture with my cell phone because he was such a character right out of a novel all of a sudden the ball in his trailer began uncoupled it began to pull and it popped off and I thought how long has this guy been driving he didn't even care to put the thing on correctly uncoupled is never a good idea when you're heading to the compost pile uncoupled in church is never a good idea not having strong walls isn't a good idea inappropriate strapping isn't a good idea one not uniformity but but one that's the idea here the church is unified it is completely put together

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in all of its distinctive nature all of its distinctiveness is treasure that's held up to which the tribes go up the tribes of the
Lord and this indeed ought to more and more and more characterize Holy Trinity Church not uniformity but unity and that unity is in Christ and it's the unity of Christ that enables me to understand that I am enriched in my life when I am fastened to your life and you to others and ourselves all to Christ as this great canopy as it were think even of the tabernacle how it was the meeting place of God and man and now it represents this great tapestry of the people of God together sharing life with one another and for what reason verse 4 to give thanks to the name of the Lord he is the centerpiece we gather to give thanks we attach our lives to one another to give thanks because our thanks shared is greater than what we could ever do singly on our own what a trail we're not even halfway up the mountain and we've already seen these wonderful things that gladness is to be the mark of the
[29:24] Christian when they come into the assembly of God's people that unity is to be our mark that we are to be enriched and we ought to treasure the uniqueness of and that we ought to always be giving thanks to the name of the Lord I think in one sense you reach the halfway point in the song interestingly in the Hebrew this word I was glad at the very outset is Sama and then when you get to verse five the lead word is Shama which is this throne for judgments!

that are set and it's an intended play on the gladness now gives way to its source which is its justice the justice of God the judgments of God the thrones of the house of David are set and secure and our thanks goes up and our unity is retained and our gladness rises why because justice reigns in this house and behind these walls we finally have a Lord worth living for a king worth following and it comes from the house of David Jesus of Nazareth the Christ our great Savior we ought to be marked by the judgments of God and then these great great movements in this second section verses six to eight where there are prayers for peace look at this verse six it's a very famous one the first half pray for the peace of
Jerusalem listen the way it sounds in the Hebrew I can't pronounce Hebrew very well but just listen to it this is just beautiful it sounds something like shaloo shalom jerushalam three simple words and it just it's just music pray for the peace the well being the completeness the wholeness of the church now I know there are a lot of things for you to be praying about you need to be praying for the welfare of the church C.H.
Spurgeon said something to the effect that any who cause injury to the church he says they ought to suffer for it but for those who sustain the peace of the church they ought to be rewarded and you and you sustain the peace and purity of the church through your prayers when you became a member of Holy Trinity Church for those of you who are one of the questions that you are asked to respond to is will you in a sense seek the purity and peace of the church how do I seek the peace of the church right here you pray for our wellness for our wholeness for our completeness for our deficiencies you are not wasting your time when you fall on your knees at night and say oh Lord please help our church this is a great thing pray for one another by name look at his prayer his prayer is listed may they be secure who love you dear Lord please bring the security to those who have found you to be their peace may peace be within your walls may security be within your towers for my brothers and companions sake
I will pray peace be within you what a great great thing to treasure for our church that we would be known for our prayers and that our prayers would be for peace and security and then verse 9 for the sake of the house of the Lord our God I will seek your good not only is he praying but he's preparing to do to be active I will seek your good I will seek your welfare look at that look how if you just put the ends of the psalm together gladness goodness gladness is the way he feels toward the people of
[34:34] God gladness is what begins to emerge within his heart and soul when he finds himself in the presence of God's people a pleasure begins to fill his mind when he sees the unity of the church the diversity within the church the call to give thanks within the church the justice of the church his prayers are for the church but his activity his life is given his pursuit that would be the word is for the church's goodness is this your pursuit is this my pursuit this ought to be our pursuit the goodness of the church what a glorious song to sing I want to close just by saying that it's hard for me to read this song without coming glancing kind of glancing over to the trail called

Heaven's Heights final destination Jerusalem to that moment when we'll all say long road now complete hazards now behind presence of Christ forevermore how sweet my Lord how sweet I

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can't think of a better thing to do at this point than to share a meal with you as we have been coupled together firmly the meal is actually called the table of thanks giving and so when the scriptures say that we come together for the purpose of giving thanks in the name of the Lord this is this is the meal that he has left us this is what he has given the church the sign of his presence and it's open to all of you who have professed
Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord it's open to all of you who have renounced the endeavor of the accumulation emulated wealth that would enable you to stand before God outside of Christ we need this table this is the table of thanksgiving this is the sign of our union with him and with one another it is the great leveling ground for us all but it is the elevated summit before we sit down in heaven I'm going to pray and read the words of institution before until

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