

Psalm 122

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Preacher: David Helm

[0 : 0 0] Psalm 122. Please stand for the reading of God's word. 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. There 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. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Well, good morning. My name is David Helm. I'm one of the pastors here at Christ Church Chicago, and if you are visiting, we extend our warm wishes to you. We're so glad that you're here in our church and part of this larger community. Presently, I'm reading a book on architecture, in particular, the role that architecture plays in giving voice to the values we admire. At one point, the writer states, quote, the buildings we admire are ultimately those which extol the values we think worthwhile. At a different moment, he pens, we build to keep a record of what matters to us. And as it is in architecture, so it is in Psalm 122. We don't have someone designing buildings on a drafting table, but a songwriter composing lyrics upon which he extols certain virtues. Take a look at Psalm 122.

Here we find the songwriter grabbing hold of the architectural centerpiece of Israel. Jerusalem itself. The house of the Lord, you'll see in each of the three stanzas. So we have a songwriter grabbing hold of Israel's architectural centerpiece, her city and the place where they commune with God.

And in those words, he extols what he values most. I'm going to be preaching today to persuade you that the things which made him happy when he considered the house of the Lord will be the characteristics of our very home. That which made him glad ought to characterize our congregation.

And indeed, there are virtues embedded in the text. I want you to see the first stanza. It seems to present to us an overarching picture of a glad-hearted king. Let me read it again. Song of Ascents of David.

[3 : 4 9] 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. Oh, Jerusalem.

A glad-hearted king as he considers the house of the Lord and being present in the city of Jerusalem.

What is it that he sees? Well, notice, first of all, the title gives us the songwriter, the lyricist, in this case, David.

That which made the writer glad was not merely that which made a commoner glad or a citizen of the city glad. That which makes this writer glad is indeed a revelation that the king himself, the anointed of the Lord, is happy.

Happy when he considers something concerning the house of the Lord, something concerning being within your gates, oh, Jerusalem.

[4 : 58] Now, notice, he's not merely happy with the architecture of the city. He's not lost in simply the beauty of a building.

There's so much more here. What makes him glad is actually dwelling there in the presence of his people.

Take a look at the text. Let us go. That's what made him glad. Not just that he went, but that we went.

That there was a community of citizens, subjects of the king, who were now making their way through the gates of the city.

Not merely the house of the Lord, but being in the Lord's house with men, women, children.

[6 : 00] Children, infants. Infants. Indeed, when the call to worship came, he was glad. For in his gladness, he understood and felt that when the Lord's anointed is in the Lord's house with the Lord's people.

Therein I am glad. Not an empty home. Not an empty home. Not devoid of citizenry. Not merely beautiful furnishings or architectural highlights.

No, his face lit when he saw the architecture of the soul, the assembly of God's people. How about you?

How about me? I am preaching to persuade you that the virtues embedded in the psalmist's understanding of the house of the Lord will be the values that are entrenched in our own soul.

What is it that makes you glad? Truly happy. A happiness that has a longevity beyond the experience itself.

[7 : 22] What is it that you can do or who is it that you are with where the afterglow of that evening stays in ways that feed your soul rather than diminish your heart?

Remember, when I was a student, a football coach said it as clearly as he could to us. You are who you hang around with. You will be like the people you're happy with.

And so even now, this fall, at the outset, consider even over the next week or two, who am I with?

What are we doing? And what is it that would truly reveal the gladness of my heart? For this psalm, the gladness of the king is wedded to being amid the people who are following the Lord.

In the presence of his own home. The psalm goes on in the second stanza, not merely to present a portrait of a glad-hearted king, but it reveals in verses 3 through 5, those attributes, those virtues, which he found laudable.

[8 : 58] And the first is, right there in verses 3 and 4, the beginning of verse 4, the city itself was performing the function for which it was built.

That's what made him glad when form followed function. And what was the function? There it is, 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.

Notice that last little phrase, as was decreed for Israel. As though he is standing with an understanding that in the past, God had a plan for this city.

God had a plan for his own house. And that plan, that original intention, that authorial intent, that design on the table was fulfilled as the tribes were going up, as the people were coming in.

Did you know that even Solomon's temple had 12 gates on it through which one would enter? Did you know then that in the past, Exodus 34 or Deuteronomy 16, God's people were to be journeying three times a year up into the city.

[10 : 24] They were to be gathering themselves from the furthestmost points of the realm. And as they came, as the tribes went up, as they entered into the gates, they were performing in that act of worship, the very purposes for which the buildings had been put up.

In other words, when they entered into the house of the Lord, the house of the Lord was functioning with the design for which it was built. So what was that?

What was this collective community that found gladness of heart in following the decrees of the Lord?

Well, there are two here in our same stanza. There are two further almost elements that you can see which speak to the things that he valued when he considered the house of the Lord.

Verse 4, Thanks is given to the Lord, and from her thrones, the righteous judgments of God are being made known.

[11 : 55] That's what's happening in the house. That's the purpose of the assembly. But let's slow it down and look at him. Giving thanks to the Lord is the purpose for which the people gathered in the house.

I wonder if you've been considering, well, am I going to go to church this year? And if so, for what reason? Am I going to return to church this year?

And if so, to what end? Is it important or not for me to gather with those who are seeking the Lord?

And what benefit? Notice in the text, the virtue that's extolled is they came to give thanks to the name of the Lord.

They came, let me slow it down, they came to give something to God that they possessed, rather than coming to get something from God that they wanted to have.

[13 : 21] They came to give, not to get. They came to give thanks to the Lord, to the name of the Lord.

They came to present their offerings of thanksgiving, thanksgiving, among which then their ties and their songs and their attentiveness to the reading of the scrolls and the exposition of the scripture.

Those were all elements of thanksgiving. They arrived to lift up their own voice. They came to give something from their own produce.

They opened their ears to hear what it was that would please him in the living of their lives. They came to give thanks to the Lord.

How about you? How about us? Why are we here today? What do you want from this hour? What are you hoping for, longing for, or extolling as virtuous?

[14 : 38] It could be as simple as that moment when a musical instrument strikes its chord and your voice enters into the sound of the assembly and we extol his name.

What a wonderful purpose for gathering, to give thanks to the name of the Lord.

So here they are, the tribes are going up, that's to be extolled and makes him glad. The thanks are being given. And notice verse five, the thrones for judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David.

If you're not familiar with the previous moments in the scripture, David was the king of Israel to whom the throne had been promised and whose heir was promised to sit on a throne of all thrones forevermore.

That through his rule, God's righteousness would be made known to the ends of the earth. So here he is, indicating that what makes him glad is that in this city, in this house, the thrones for judgment are set, the thrones of the house of David.

[16 : 08] People could enter into there and they would know, they would hear, they would learn what are the righteous judgments of God.

How many of us need to be conformed to an understanding of his voice, which is consistent with the teaching of his word, from which then we walk forth, demonstrating the righteousness of his ways, as the songwriter is penning the song, you can almost see the rising of his heart.

The emphasis of his opening line is now growing with intensity. I was glad. My soul was happy.

The people of God were in the place of God, worshiping the name of God, expressing thanks to God. And they were actually hearing of the righteous ways of God in which they would go forth and walk.

What a beautiful picture. A glad king. A great city. Conformed to her very purpose.

[17 : 40] And yet, something in the text begins to seem amiss.

One might call it an incompleteness to her praise. An unfinished work within the assembly.

I mean, the next stanza opens with a phrase that betrays the insecurity of the portrait that's been presented.

Verse six, pray for the peace of Jerusalem. May they be secure who love you. Peace be within your walls and security within your towers.

If not a direct indication that it lacked peace and lacked security. Certainly an indication that whatever this corporate community had, it was tenuous.

[18 : 47] It was temporary. It could be dispelled. Habit could be reaped. Peace could be lost. Security could be forfeited.

The safety of the citizenry could be depleted. The welfare of the house could come tumbling down.

Indeed, knowing that David is the songwriter, lends credence to the whole notion. Did you know that David himself, who dwelt in this city, who is glad at this portrait, nevertheless had to flee this very city for his own life, because his own son had disrupted the peace of his home and wanted his father dead.

There's every indication in the text that all the goodness that is here is not secure.

In fact, this is something that you need to take note of then, because God's purposes for Jerusalem went way beyond the building itself. He knew it would be inadequate to bring the security that he needed.

[19 : 57] He knew that the citizenry there could never give the peace that was required. In fact, he knew that he was more concerned with people than with places.

He's more intent to speak to you today as citizens of the king than merely those who dwell in a particular city. Did you know that by the time Jesus comes on the scene, this transference begins to take place between Israel's adherence to all that Jerusalem was to convey, all that the house of the Lord was to promote, versus Jesus, who in himself now replaces that by way of motif in his own person, so that the woman at the well says, I know, I know as I'm thinking about going back to church, you say, you say I got to go to Jerusalem, Psalm 122 to worship God, well, here we say we got to go to Gerizim to worship God, and the itinerant preacher says, I tell you the truth, the hour is coming, and now is when you will neither go to Gerizim nor to Jerusalem to worship, for God desires worshipers in spirit and in truth, and in that one line, he reorchestrates our entire understanding of Psalm 122, our entire understanding of what God was doing with Israel, for in Israel, we saw things like on a flannel graph picture in Sunday school, but in Jesus, we see the person who actually brings it to pass, and so this, this Psalm, which is saying pray for peace, pray for security, is an indication that Israel,

Jerusalem, the temple, the place, is not enough, nor will it ever be, and so perhaps David then in verse 8 and 9 comes almost to a climactic moment in the lyrics, for the writer says, 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.

I think that that final phrase, those final lines are stunning in regard to what they reveal to us from the Psalm, for certainly David's peace was only temporary.

certainly whatever David put into that city didn't last. Certainly, God himself said to David, I've got stuff for your son after you and other things because you are a man of war, not a man of peace, and yet Jesus comes onto the scene so much later, and when he arrives in Jerusalem, according to chapter 19 of Luke, he says, when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace, but they are hidden from your eyes, and then he goes on to speak of his own death, and then he dies on the cross, and after being risen on the third day, he goes to his disciples and says what?

[23 : 40] Peace be to you, that there is in Jesus a peace, a shalom, a security that all of your own sacrifices will never meet.

There is in Jesus a different kind of peace. Jesus then most fully encapsulates the prophetic forwardness of these words.

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, look at it, what's the last word?

Good. The psalm opens, I am glad. The psalm closes, I seek your good. The gladness of the king is secured by the goodness of the king.

Good. And the goodness of Christ ought to secure the gladness of our heart.

[24 : 41] I said, I am preaching to persuade you that the virtues of the house of the Lord in this psalm are to be the values that are expressed in our congregation.

Let me just sit on it then, that when you understand the goodness of the cross, which makes perfect satisfaction for sin, it brings within your spirit a gladness of heart that alters the company you keep and the things you are thankful for and the righteous ways in which you walk.

all these things are transformed by the Christian message. Let me just say it, that your security, my security is in the sacrifice of Christ.

Our belonging to one another comes from our belonging to him and our belonging to him is because of his estrangement with the father.

Our peace comes by what he procured. our amity because he is our armistice. Our delight comes from his death and so our hearts rise with gladness because he has secured everything through his goodness.

[26 : 11] I was glad when they said to me, let us go up into the house of the Lord and the closing of the psalm. I will put my peace in it. I will seek their good, the goodness of God is what secures the gladness of the king and it is that gladness which ought to be the mark of our very gathering.

And so is it? Is it for you? Or is it welling up within you as you hear it today? Are we a people of peace and are we praying for it?

Are we secure and safe in the cross? Are you giving thanks to the Lord rather than seeking what you can get from others? Are you walking in his righteousness?

Are you executing his justice? Are you grateful for his throne? Are your feet happy in the house of the Lord? I love the way the psalm opened. Our feet were standing within the gates.

Is there a happiness of heart because you are at home with his people and you have found brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, young ones around you who like you want to hear and know from God?

[27 : 22] Are we a church bound firmly together who are functioning in accordance with the original form? Are you fulfilling the purpose for which you were made?

Are you? Are you? Are you? Are you? Fulfilling the purpose for which you were made? Oh, that our hearts would rise in gladness because he has been good to us at Calum.

What we build records what matters to us. and the lives we live with one another will demonstrate the virtues that are dear to us.

May they grow forth from the gospel which has been given to us in Christ. Our Heavenly Father, you are good.

and it took your son's own goodness to secure his own gladness. Something we cannot do.

[28 : 45] But we can give thanks for all that you've done. We can enter into lives with one another like tribes entering in through gates from different corners of the earth to celebrate you.

We can we can give thanks with our voice with our tithes with our offerings with our ears with our hands oh that we would be this great and glorious city Christ Church Chicago ever at the good foot of the cross in Jesus name we pray Amen that