

Psalm 134

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 January 2022

Preacher: Bing Nieh

[0 : 0 0] psalms 134 and it reads like this come bless the lord all you servants of the lord who stand by night in the house of the lord lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the lord may the lord bless you from zion he who made heaven and earth this is the word of the lord good morning happy new year lord is faithful let me just first rush to thank all those who prepped the building to be here this morning as i arrived sidewalks were shoveled or plowed the salt was laid so thank you to so many of the deacons i just uh i just had to clear out my car and that almost deterred me from going to time i also i guess i had to preach well let's pause and turn to the lord in prayer father we come to you this morning and as the snow has covered our sleep we are confident that the great god can cover this room that you can meet every need that you can lift every countenance that you can supply what is lacking and you can strengthen what is weak and so we turn to you and ask for your word to go forth the word has promised that as it goes out it is effectual so would it accomplish all the purposes for which you send it out this morning we pray these things it was the final evening of the celebration multiple days of celebration have already transpired and it was the evening of the final festivities the city of jerusalem was certainly filled to capacity and it was the last night of assembled worship before the people dispersed to their respective homes the next day we can say it was the closing ceremony it's not difficult to imagine psalm 134 to be the song that accompanied the closing ceremony that final evening it is the final track of 15 songs that we have looked at beginning in psalm 120 they're called the songs of ascents they are songs for the journey it's historically believed that as the people of israel made their annual pilgrimages to jerusalem they were these songs were sung by the jewish worshipers finding their way three times a year they were instructed to go to jerusalem whether it be to celebrate the feast of unleavened bread passover or the feast of weeks possibly representative of the giving of the law at sinai or the feast of tabernacles to commemorate god's faithfulness in their one race they were to travel to jerusalem this album began in psalm 120 and we find god's people at a distance in mishak and padar with the traveler looking through the hills or upon the hills in psalm 121 approaching their destination zion

the city of god where his temple stood now on the final night they're looking after the celebration they are looking ahead to going home having assembled in worship they were now to disperse into the world and as we spend our time together this morning my hope is that what emerges is a template for our assembling and our dispersal our coming together and our going forth our gathering and our scattering we are to pattern ourselves in much of the same way the people of god or people of israel did so in this song here for us is a template a practice for the christian in preparing for this time together one author has actually asserted that in this song is found the very purpose of all life to bless god and to be blessed by god to bless god and to be blessed by god it's certainly the theme of the text it's mentioned three times once in each verse it's a picture of blessing ascending toward god and blessing descending to us as god's blessing comes down our praise goes up as our blessing ascends his blessings descend it is if i may use the phrase the circle of life it is certainly the circle of blessing as one has titled it it brought to mind that diagram that probably happened in an elementary school that diagram of the water cycle you might think you might recall it very vividly a picture of the earth's ecosystem you have a mountain set of trees there's a lake and there are the key terms labeled across the picture key features precipitation what falls from the sky the evaporation what moves up toward the sky what comes down finds its way back up and continues and this is what we're supposed to get a sense of in this song the text breaks itself into two parts verses one and two that are simply titled blessing god and verse three blessed by god it's a life of blessing a life of giving blessing and a life of receiving blessing firstly let's take a look at verses one and two blessing god the psalm opens up with an invitation and an exhortation to bless the lord it's a call you see that come assemble gather together it's a summons it's directed to all the servants of the lord who stand by night in the house of the lord the old testament gives us glimpses of israel's worship that happened not only in the daytime but we also know it happened in the evening as well musicians were to play in the morning as well as in the evening these worship services were led and conducted by priests who had responsibilities they were to care for the temple in the morning as well as the evening they were to they were to you might recall some of these responsibilities they were to make sure there was fresh bread on the table in the morning as well as the evening the candles were always to be lit in the morning as well as the evening and regardless of whether there were people in the temple or not the priests had their duty to maintain the temple whether they were alone or among others it was their priestly duty to maintain the rituals associated with the temple even after hours

worship was to continue even when no one was there it was ongoing regardless of convenience and schedule whether it was the morning or evening the lord deserved worship and so it went on if he be the god that neither slumbers nor sleeps then his worship ought to ascend even when the majority of the city was slumbering and sleeping he was sleeping you see similar to the sentinel i've never been there but i've read it similar to the sentinel that's placed the tomb of unknown soldiers every 30 minutes seven days a week 365 days a year the soldiers rotate unending whether the cemetery is open or close whether anyone sees it or not it was part of it's part of their duty and in the same way the priests for the priests is part of their duty now the commentators are a little bit divided on who's being called to this praise who's supposed to participate we see it here in verses one and two it's individuals who stand by the night the house of the lord they're encouraged to lift up their hands to the holy place to bless the lord was it merely the priests who had this graveyard shift or could it possibly be during festival time that the the courts of the temple were packed with the crowds of the people was an early evening service where there were bystanders where the temple grounds were filled with participants young and old and this invitation to bless the lord was given to all or was it late night where it was just the priests doing their duty it's not clear and whether it be limited to the priests or open to all the participants the summons is the same bless the lord stand and lift up your hands in prayer and praise now before we proceed we have to answer this question what does it mean to bless the lord the root of the word actually in the original language closely identifies with kneeling to bow down in reverence and humility humility there it canner writes to bless god is to acknowledge gratefully who he is to bless the lord is to call to mind the glorious things that he has revealed about himself as well as the glorious things that he has done to bring ourselves to love to kneel and worship and adoration to bless the lord means to to to attribute to god what he says he is to recount the wondrous things he has done to lower ourselves to humble ourselves to prosper ourselves and to lift him up now before we proceed as we think about blessing god this is why it's vile for christians to know the god that is revealed in the bible we cannot bless the god we do not know i cannot adore whom i'm unfamiliar i mean imagine a dear friend who was recently engaged and they come to you and they're ecstatic and they and you ask them well tell me about your fiance tell me about your fiance and your expectation is they would tell you all about their fiance about their physical characteristics about their attributes about their character about their qualities about their traits and in the same way for those of us who love the lord we are demons

who are able to speak the the actions and the characteristics of god his traits his qualities we must speak of who he is and how he's revealed himself to be here here to bless means to tell and to celebrate his omnipresence that he is holy present in every place especially present with the believer as he has told us that he would never leave us or forsake us or his omniscience his complete and exhaustive knowledge of all things past present and future so that the unfolding of his will is perfect whereby we can say that we know that in all things god god works together all things together for good for the good of those who love him and have been called according to his purpose his omnipotence his might his greatness that all might and power belong to him and all opposition will succumb to his greatness and that even the humanly incomparable or uncomfortable powers of sin, death, and hell will be dispelled his goodness that he is always constantly seeking our wealth our welfare and well-being his holiness that he is separate from us demonstrated separate from evil and demonstrate demonstrating moral perfection his righteousness he always acts justly and rightly and there's so much more his mercy his mercy his mercy and his grace his slowness to anger and his abundant abounding and steadfast love and faithfulness his forgiveness and you see it's important that when we bless the Lord we actually know what we're blessing about that is why we come and we sit under his word that is why he is involved in our lives that's why he gives us experiences to assure us of his presence and his faithfulness to bless him and to bow before the God of the Bible it is the acknowledgement and adoration of God see being the final song in this album it actually communicates the goal of the pilgrimage the goal of the pilgrimage the goal of the pilgrimage from let's say a family that's far in the remote regions of Judea all the way culminating in the temple grounds what is the goal of assembling in Jerusalem?

well we assemble many of us with family and often times you know someone may have said oh we're going to Jerusalem to be with family to celebrate the festivities to exchange pleasantries to receive and give gifts to share meals and certainly those are true for those are all displaced by the ultimate goal of gathering to bless the Lord to bless the Lord and I'm going into year 7 and I can say my desire to the onlookers and the neighbors and the callers what goes on in that building?

[16 : 05] did they really spend that much money to restore that crumbling structure? are they really meeting in the they were assembled on grass yards gravel lots and now in a basement what happens in there?

is it just a social problem? where we get to embrace friends and meet face to face? is it a place is it a place where I send my kids so they'll develop some moral compass to live life?

is it just a building where they can check off a checklist and stamp their stamp and say they've done their duty? their duty and what transpires within this people within this building is not a social it's not a it has some aspects of moral formation but that's not the primary we get to bless to bless the Lord that is the goal of this gathering every single Sunday morning we are reenacting these festive gatherings on Sundays to bless the Lord so that every unbelieving neighbor might know why are you in there?

to bless the Lord so come let us worship and bow down let us kneel before the Lord our maker I will bless the Lord at all times his praise shall continually be in my mouth oh magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together my soul makes its boast in the Lord let the humble hear and be glad what is the business of Christ's church to come?

the Lord well secondly verse 3 blessed blessed by the Lord we are not only to bless the Lord but we will find we are blessed by the Lord the third verse in the psalm is a petition before God it is the request that Lord I have blessed you I have looked upon you and I have responded in praise and adoration now would you look upon me and graciously act look upon my needs and meet them look upon my inadequacies and overcome them look upon my lack and supply them what I have done will you do what I do would you reciprocate would you reciprocate the people are called to bless the Lord and now the Lord is called upon to bless the people the people acknowledge the presence of God in their lives now God would you acknowledge our presence in your life it's a reciprocal relationship that emerges in this psalm and you can imagine as this album of 15 closes and the festivities wind down petition is an invocation for God to bless it is the desire for God to look favorably on my life you can imagine

[19 : 50] I've celebrated for a week I've met with you I've cried my deliverance grandfathers and great grandfathers have told of your preservation of your people thanksgiving I've watched sacrifices take place I've seen the blood of bulls and goats in my stead and I've been reminded that you provide and are present with your people and as I go God as I leave this place would you continue to go with me would you bless me see the invocation in verse 3 is the desire of every worshiper every worshiper wants to know that the Lord is with them is on their side the Lord who made heaven and earth they're not seeking blessing from a monarch or an empire but they would go to the one who had at his all of heaven and earth blessing would come from the one without any limit hindrance impedance or restriction the implication of this would be that there is no circumstance so dire there is no room so dark there's no need so great or situation so hopeless that God could not somehow and bless if you truly are the God who made all and earth then send me anywhere in heaven and earth and put me in any situation in heaven and earth and I can be assured that the Lord of heaven and earth can meet me there and somehow redeem that circumstance that's what the

Psalm is saying this is why we call upon the Lord the Lord we often think of blessing as financial or material prosperity but it's so so much more than this it's wholeness it's gladness it's joy it's sometimes manifest itself strength and difficulty or contentment and lack blessing is the favor of God to enrich you in any circumstance and life the psalm began with the Lord as the object of the blessing and as the song closes the Lord is now the subject of the blessing he is the one who blesses it moves so marvelous marvelously the request goes something like this may the power that I've acknowledged your knowledge your omnipotence your omnipotence your grace your favor your mercy all of that that I praise you for may it now in verse 3 slide to my life that's how the song moves may the God that I bless his character his attributes his being may it show up in my life frankly it's a pretty terrible trade isn't it

God I come to you I bless you with all my being the God who is abundant and has all things has no lack has no need and in return you are mine prayer prayer people laughing with great we go to the one who made all things as people who need all things the psalm makes it clear that the source of blessing is the Lord but for Israel the people of God it would proceed it would come from it would come from a particular geographical location the psalm is very geocentric and by that I mean it's very location specific it mentions Zion in verse 3 place is very important it mentions it in verse 2 as well the holy place and for the third time it mentions it in verse 1 the house of the Lord the psalmist understood that God is the source of blessing but the pipeline or the channel from which it goes out is from Zion that's where God dispenses his blessings and that is why for the Israelites it was so important to take part in these annual pilgrimages they were significant to travel to Jerusalem was significant not only to bless God but but to be blessed by it it's this this feeling of if I can just see it if I can just taste it if I can just feel it if I can just hear it if I can just stand in it

I would be blessed if I could just think that and for those of you familiar with the history of the Bible or Bible history this is why it was so tragic when Jerusalem was besieged when the temple fell and the worship system ceased because for the people of God they could not conceive a blessing without a temple with no temple there was no worship without the building there was no blessing blessing yet God's plan is not forwarded no longer would blessing be confined to a place it would now be dispensed through a person and you know where I'm headed it would come through a person namely the Lord Jesus that every blessing that you receive in your life is from God is tethered to the Lord Jesus it is no coincidence that when Jesus arrives in Matthew's

Gospel and he begins preaching and he preaches about the blessed life for he himself was the source of all blessing it is no coincidence that the apostle Paul he understood this when he makes the outrageous declaration that in Christ every spiritual blessing is found for in Christ we have received our greatest blessing blessed are those who lawless deeds are forgiven whose sins are covered blessed is the man whom the Lord does not count his sin see what the psalmist could not foresee was that blessing would no longer proceed from the places on rather it would come from the person of Jesus it is therefore on the grounds of Jesus that the end of each Sunday worship service whoever is up here closes a service and gives a benediction or a bestowal of blessing that the blessing

[27 : 26] I'll give to you this morning is not on the grounds of the fact that we're indoors though we celebrate that but on the grounds that in the Lord Jesus that all blessing is yours all blessing is yours whether it be in a grass field a gravel lot a grandiose building we acknowledge that it is not the place that is the channel of God's blessing but it would be the person of the Lord Jesus so as we gather this is our temple we assemble and blessing rises and our petition is blessing would descend that while God above blesses his people below bless him and it is not meant to it is not meant to we cannot think of it as transactional it's not that I bless God so somehow he blesses me in return no it's mutual it's certainly relational it's ultimately covenantal our blessings rise while his blessings descend and to illustrate this in conclusion

I just want to show you this that you have your Bibles your whole Bibles I know some of you just carry around the Psalms but turn on me to Luke's Gospel the last chapter in Luke's Gospel highlights this this cycle of blessing this circle of blessing this circle of blessing Luke chapter 24 Jesus has died resurrected and he is about to ascend and Luke notes this for us which I think which I think so marvelously captures Psalm 134 Luke 24 verse 15 then Jesus led them out as far as Bethany and lifting up his hands he blessed them and while he blessed them he parted from them and was carried up and so here you have it divine blessing on God's people and what is their response and they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple blessing

God as the blessing came down the blessing may that be the state of this congregation blessed God for we have been by God Father we come to you this morning we give thanks we give thanks we give thanks and in the mystery of God that we have found we have we are those who have encountered a person from this person flows every spiritual blessing may we embrace may we worship may we bless may we kneel and bow down so father as we look to the days would we be known as a congregation all the perceptions of what a church is that bless and Lord Jesus we ask these things