

Psalm 84

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[0:00] Amen. And Father, we pray, may only your word be spoken and only your word heard.! We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

! Please be seated. It is wonderful to be here to celebrate and celebrate our Lord on this, the first Sunday of the new year.

Isn't it great? Because being the new year, it's always wonderful. We look forward to the new year.

We always look forward to it, particularly this being the first Sunday.

We can look at each other and we can really celebrate because the new year always brings freshness. We enter that age-old practice. They're the last week of the previous year.

What do we do? We start making New Year's resolutions. We start thinking about, you know, there's all the publications, talk about the celebrities that have died in the past year.

[1:03] We look back and we think about what has happened. And then we look forward. There's always that freshness that we always get from the new year, isn't it? And with that freshness, then, it is so wonderful the way God works things out.

Because we have the most appropriate psalm to look at and to pray this morning. And we prayed Psalm 84.

Psalm 84. And we can follow along in your pew Bibles. And that. And if you're not sure where the book of Psalms is, just look. It's right in the middle of it.

Okay. You open it up. If you always play Bible roulette, you always come up with the Psalms or Isaiah, typically is what it is. And so you find the Psalms right in the middle. And Psalm 84.

We're going to look briefly at Psalm 84 because it truly is a wonderful psalm to begin our new year with us. Because in it, God tells us about being transformed.

[2:04] About transforming our lives, the expectations that we have. And we're allowed to place them before Him and begin this year afresh. Begin this year in new ways.

Because with this year, we have all the new wonderful ideas that we have. Let's do a little poll here to begin with.

How many of you made New Year's resolutions? Or resolutions, excuse me. New Year's resolutions. Anybody make New Year's resolutions? Really? I mean, and so on. Wow.

There's not a hand either. You're very ashamed. You don't want to admit it. And so on. But we do.

We like to think. And we think about what we can do to improve ourselves. And typically, it's like, I'm going to lose weight.

Or, you know, it's not so much now. People say, well, I'm going to give up smoking or something like that. There are a number of things that we start doing to try and get ready.

[3:01] That's what the new year brings. And we get into the routine. By January, fine. We've probably forgotten all the resolutions we made four weeks before.

And we're starting to get into the routine. And things are just starting good. And, like last year, right away, we hit February.

And God threw us a, not a curveball, a screwball. Okay? If you're familiar in baseball, a screwball is a curveball that's actually backwards.

And so it just, it totally, it is one of the most difficult pitches to throw. Nobody throws it anymore.

Okay? In that. But it literally, it literally, it's like a curveball, only it does the exact opposite of what.

So it is such a, such a difficult pitch. God threw a screwball at us. And what happened? Right? We now had the pandemic.

[4:00] Everything got shut down. All kinds of stuff. You know, it became fashionable to wear masks. It didn't take very long before the marketing folks came out with the different types of masks.

Logos and teeth and things like that. And they said, well, we can't eat with those. And so they started making the kind that you can suck through the straw on and all these things. You know, it just really, really screwed us up. And what did people start doing then a year ago? They started saying, I want things the way they used to be. I want things the way it was. Isn't that? How many of you said that? How many of you heard it? You go out on social media and you saw, oh, come on. When will it be old again? When will things be normal again? We like that normalcy. We started crying out. And what happened?

[5:00] We started yearning. We want it the way it used to be. Isn't it amazing? Typically, it's only the adult, the older adults that said, boy, I remember when I was young, you know, and I walked uphill both ways and four feet of snow to school.

We want the old thing. But no, this was the young kids. We want it the old way, Dad. We want it the new way, Mom. They started asking for things to be normal.

They were yearning. Our hearts were yearning for that. In fact, one of the most overused terms came about. New normal.

New normal. New normal. We just wanted things to go back the way it used to be. But as Christians, we have a yearning.

As disciples of Christ, there is a yearning in us. Not to go back to the way things used to be. But in order to move closer to God.

[6:09] We echo what the psalmist gives us in Psalm 84. And right at the beginning of the psalm, the psalmist prays.

And this psalm of ascent is what they call it. One of the Korah psalms in this area. The psalms. And it says, the psalmist is yearning. We read where he says, How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts.

My soul longs. Yes, faiths for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. The psalmist is looking forward.

The psalm probably comes out of a time during the exile. Yearning, remembering what things were like. In Jerusalem. At the temple.

The psalmist is yearning, saying, And I just want to be there in the temple. I want things to be what they used to be like. Just like we were calling.

[7:11] We want things the way they used to be. We want things to be nice. Don't we? We want them to be calm again.

But you know, as Christians, we realize that when we say that, When we seek God, we want to restore that relationship with God.

And we recognize that the sin that we have within us has separated us from God. You know, we look back on Genesis 3.

And we call it the fall. Actually, it's more like a crash than a fall. But we look back and we are separated from God. And we realize that we are separated from Him.

And we long for that relationship. Which is one of the most difficult things about what this past year has been. Is the idea is we had to break off relationships.

[8:15] We couldn't spend time with others. If we're huggers, we couldn't hug somebody else that were next to us. We couldn't even shake hands. Things like that. We had to do the little elbow thumb.

You know, things like that. We had to social distance people. Humanity is made to be in relationship with each other and with God.

And we were forced to acknowledge that. God took us out of that routine. And we are suddenly faced with a very difficult situation.

Just like the psalmist who is longing. Longing for God. So we soon became individuals who were longing.

Our hearts were longing for God. Our hearts were longing because we recognized that things were no longer the way they should be.

[9:13] They were no longer the way that they could be. We longed for the presence of the Lord. And all we wanted to do was to sit in His presence.

All we wanted to do was come to church. And sing. And share. And pass the peace.

And pass the peace. And pass the peace. And pass the peace. And pass the peace. And pretty soon somebody up front will say, Come on folks, we have to finish the service. Pass the peace some more. We just want to be in relationships with each other. And we're reminded. When we read the beginning of this psalm.

The yearning. It's just like Tevye. In Fiddle Around the Roof. In that wonderful song. If I Were a Rich Man. Where we get a glimpse into this man's heart.

[10:08] His desires. And as he's walking around. He's milking the cow. Or he's talking with that. And he said. Oh he said. You know.

If I were a rich man. Right. And he's dreaming. He said. I would have a big fine house. With rooms by the dozen. With chicks and ducks.

And his wife Goldie. Would look like a rich man's wife. He's dreaming. But in the last stanza. We see the heart of Tevye. When he says.

I would sit in the synagogue. And pray. And maybe have a seat. By the eastern wall. And I discuss the holy books.

With learned men. At several hours each day. This would be the sweetest thing of all. That was the yearning.

[11:08] That's the yearning. That we experienced. The yearning to be with God. And we just wanted. To be.

Have that. Be part of that. And that's. The description. That's the way the psalm begins. In the presence of the Lord. Our God.

But. Knowing that we are separated. From him. In the immediate situation. That the psalm was written. As probably know. That the psalmist. Whoever wrote it. Couldn't.

Couldn't be right there. There was a separation. Just like us today. As disciples of Christ. We know. That we have the separation.

From God. And somehow. That needs to be bridged. Somehow. That separation. We need to take care of that. And the psalmist.

[12:02] Focuses. On how to get beyond. That separation. Looking at verse 5. Said. Blessed are those. Whose strength. Is in you. And in God.

And whose heart. Are the highways. To Zion. It's a matter. Of the heart. It's a matter. Of the heart. To. To be bridged. To be able. To make it.

To spend time. With the Lord. Lord. And we seek that. When our lives. Aren't right. What do we do? We start trying to figure out. Ways to do it.

Many people turn. To different substances. Could be alcohol. Could be drugs. Who knows. What it is. But that's why. So many of those things.

Take root in us. Because. We're seeking. Searching. For more. And more. And more. In this age. Of the internet. It might be. Pornography.

[12:58] It might be. Something else. We're always. Searching. For that. We want. That relationship. We want. To have. Something. To fill. That void. As Augustine of Hippo.

Wrote in confessions. When he said. Our hearts. Are restless. Until they find. Their rest. In you. And we're still. Trying to figure out. How to find. That rest. In fact.

One of the things. Scholars today. They're looking. At the effect. Of Facebook. Many of us. We turn. To social media. We turn. To Twitter. We turn. To Facebook. And YouTube. And we're spending.

More and more. And more. And more. Time. On Facebook. How many. We look at this. And we say. Oh. This is wonderful. I just got a new friend. On Facebook. Yay. This is wonderful.

Even more so. Great. When we're brave enough. And we put a post. Out there. You know. We get out there. And we take our thumbs. And we do all this. And so on. And then one of our friends. Look down. And they say. Okay. There it is.

[13:52] And they give us. The thumbs up. Okay. They give us. The thumbs up. And we see a like. So. What is the reaction? What is our reaction? When you get a like.

On a post. That you do on Facebook. Yay. Yay. Yay. This is great. Our world is complete. That bridge. Of meaningfulness.

Has been. Gulf. Right. Has been. Come across. So what do we do? Unfortunately though. Scholars today. Are finding. An inverse relationship.

The more people. More time. People spend. On social media. The more depressed. They are. We seek.

To bridge. This. Gap. Of relationship. And even. That which is. Right in front of us. Isn't solving.
[14 : 52] The problem. It continues. It continues. And the psalmist. Reminds us. That. No matter.
What we do. We can get.

All kinds. Of resolutions. We can do. All that. We can make. All the wonderful. Resolutions. And
have all the. Wonderful intents. And make all the. Most wonderful. Goals. That we have.
For the year. To improve ourself. And we can do that. But. Until. Until. Until we. Place those.
Resolutions.

Until we. Take. X. Y. Or Z. Or whatever. It is. That we want. To accomplish. Until. We take them.
And we place them.

At the foot. Of the cross. Psalmist. Reminds us. That we. Can't do a thing. If you look.

[15 : 46] At verses. Six. And seven. Of this verse. What do we say? As it goes. As we go. Through
the valley. Of Baca. They make it. A place. Of springs. The early rain. Also covers it.

With pools. Now you look at that. And you say. I don't see anything. About the cross. Right there.
Right? I don't see anything. About new year's. Resolutions. But in a nice. Poetic way. In the
Hebrew.

Language. When we see. That term. And say. The valley. Of Baca. It's a play. On word. What does
Baca. Mean in Hebrew. Means weeping. The tears.

The tears. Until our hearts. Break. Until that happens. You're still going to struggle. See that word.
Occurs. It's at 141 times. In scripture. The vast majority of them. Are in the Old Testament. And
sometimes.

[16 : 45] When it talks about weeping. There are tears of joy. If you look at the story of Jacob. And
Israel. That's where that idea.

Of weeping for joy. Can be when it says Baca. And Jacob. Relating when he sees Rachel. And his.
And. And other things happen.

Those. That's when all those joyful things happen. But an interesting point. About that word. This
word. Only. In the Israeli culture. Is it associated.

With a broken heart. Because we've offended God. Only there. No other culture. You're not going to
find it. Any other culture like that.

Do they associate. The weeping. With. Breaking God's heart. The sin that we cause. And. Cause
God to weep.

[17 : 41] So us. As we place. Our desires. Our wants. Our needs. This desire for a relationship.
And we place it at the foot of the cross. We're reminded back.

In Psalm 44. In Psalm 42. When they write. My tears have been. My food. Day and night. And while
they say to me. All day long. Where is your God?

These things I remember. As the. As I pour out my soul. How I would go with the throngs. And lead
them in procession. To God. Which shouts. Glads. Of songs. Of praise.

Of multitude. Keeping festival. Just like the psalmist here. We see this yearning. In the.

Remembering the good old days. He's in the temple. Wire.

Cast down. Oh my soul. Why are you in turmoil. With me. Within me. Hope in God. For I shall again.
Praise him. My salvation. And my God.

[18 : 36] And again. The psalmist. In Psalm 43. Praise. Send out your light. And your truth. And
lead. And lead me. Let them bring me. To your holy hill.

And to your dwelling. And then I will go. To the altar of God. To the God. Of my exceeding joy. And I
will praise you. With a liar. Oh God. My God. So us.

Until we lay. That burden. Until we put. Our resolutions. Until we put. That separation. At the foot of
the cross. And seek out. Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Weeping. With a broken heart. That yearning. Place that yearning. For him. At his feet.

Recognizing. That at the foot of the cross. And in the empty tomb. Is the answer to our longing. Just
like.

[19 : 36] The psalmist. Is longing. To be in the presence. Of the Lord God. Remembering what it
was like. Wanting to be in the presence. Longing in the temple. So. We.

When we place. Our resolutions. When we place. Our brokenness. When we weep. Over. That
separation. That longing. That expectation. That desire. That we have.

We place it. At his foot. And we say. Lord. Take it. Because I can do nothing. Especially. In this
time. Now.

I don't know. How many of you. Or so on. But I have found. Over the past few years. During. The Christmas season. And so on. I can be. Very melancholy. I sit down. And I look. You know. And we had our granddaughter. With us. And she was playing. And so on. And then her father came. And picked her up. And she went off. It was like a light switch. In my heart.

[20:37] Boom. I was missing her. And I just said. Lord. Help me with this. Help me. Because I can't.

Live like this. All the time. What is it. That we have. In our lives. That we are holding on. To. What resolution. Is it. That we are trying.

To put forward. And try and do. In our own power. That we need. To let go of. That we need. To weep over. And give it to God. And give it to him.

What is it. That we are controlling. What is that passion. What is that yearning. In our hearts. The year after year.

Day after day. Week after week. Do we relive. And we live again. And again. How long are we going to. Keep on doing this.

[21:36] Thinking that this is just. Some unanswered. Unanswered. Aspect. Of our lives. Look at verses.

Eight and nine. In our psalm. Lord God of hosts. Hear my prayer. Give ear. O God of Jacob. Behold. Our shield.

O God. Look on the face. Of your anointed. And we see. The answer. That God has given. The psalmist here. For a day. In your courts. Is better than a thousand.

Elsewhere. I would rather be. A doorkeeper. In the house. Of my God. Than to dwell. In the tents. Of wickedness. All the things. That are thrown at us.

By life. All those things. The psalmist recognizes. I'll just. Be a doorkeeper. In the house. Of God. That's fine with me. Because I've given it.

[22:29] To God. The yearning. That was there. Offered to God. In weeping. And then. Given to him.

All things. Can take on. The correct perspective. And there in verse 11. For the Lord God. Is a sun and shield. The Lord bestows favor.

And honor. No good thing. Does he withhold. From those. Who walk uprightly. The yearning. That the psalmist. Was seeking. Is found. In God himself.

And for us. As disciples of Christ. He has bridged. That yearning. He has provided. The answer. On the hill of Calvary. And in the empty.

Empty tomb. He realizes. That. It is. God himself. Who provided. The answer for us. And so now.

[23:24] We face the newness. Of the new year. As we go out. We're ready to go out. And face the weeks to come. Hoping for. If you want to call it this.

The new normal. Right. But guess what. My brothers and sisters. As Christians. There is. No. New. Normal.

Why. Because. If we remember. What it is. What happened to Israel. After. Moses went. And he led. The. Led the children of Israel.

Out of Egypt. You remember him. Charlton Henson. Standing in front of him. Right. And he said. Come on. Let's go. And they crossed through the Red Sea. And they got to the other side. And no matter what.

Edward Gene Robinson. Wanted. They had to stay there. No matter. No matter what. My brothers and sisters. There is no.

[24:21] Going back. As Jesus said. You don't put your hand. To the plow. And look back. No one. Is fit. For the kingdom of God.

We want. We like that idea. Of a new normal. But my brothers and sisters. When we give. Our lives to God. When our heart breaks. We give it to him. Our life.

Is new. As Paul said. It's not. It's Christ. Who lives in me. The old is gone. The new has come. As we step forward.

Into 2021. It is a new walk. It is a new blessing. It is a new. Exciting journey. That he has given us. It is not the old.

The old. Is the old normal. It's no longer. Normal. God hasn't given his children. Normalcy. He has given his children.

[25:20] New. Exciting. Lives. In Christ. Walking with him. Is things going to be. Are things going to be perfect? No.

They are not. No. They are not. They really aren't. Because we know. That we are struggling. In this pilgrimage. There are times.

When our hearts. Are going to be broken. And we are going to have to. Give the situation to God.

There are times. When. Our health. Isn't going to be. Quite right. There are times.

When. We are going to hear news. That is going to break. Our hearts. But. We know. That our Lord. Is there. That yearning.

He has answered us. He has answered us. And we give it to him. In weeping. In breaking the heart. In offering him. Our lives. He will put us. Back together again.

[26:17] He will. Give us the lives. New. Exciting. Lives. Not. Normal. That's bland.

That's yesterday's news. He wants to bless us. With new blessings. Each and every day. We live in an adventure.

The psalmist talks about. How. He yearned. In the valley of Baca. The valley of weeping. It's been transformed. For no good thing.

Does he withhold. From those who walk uprightly. That is our calling. As we move forward. From this. Walk uprightly. In the. In the heart. In the love. Of God. O Lord of hosts.

Blessed is the one. Who trusts. In you. That is our calling. To trust. In God. He is our yearning. He is our answer.

[27:17] He is the one. Who has given. To us. The wonderful life. And the calling. So we can walk in him. The yearning.

Of our hearts. Is the relationship. To live. In his life. And in his blessing. To see his face. Each and every day. Each and every moment.

Not turning around. And going back. The way things used to be. But. As we. Will walk. Forward. Under his.

Mantle. In his arms. Knowing. Through faith. Our sins. Our sins. Are covered. By the blood. Of Jesus Christ. That the tomb. Is empty.

A new life. Is in us. And a new life. Is waiting for us. Each and every day. And we can share. This life. With those around us.

[28:16] Let us do that. Each and every day. Because. The world. Needs to see. The expectation.

In our hearts. The world. Needs to see. Jesus Christ. In us. So that we. Can live.

Those lives. Because you know something. The world. Is still longing. They're still looking. They have that same. Learning. Looking for. The.

New. Normal. People. As God's children. We have a better way. Let's do that. Let's do that.

As his people. Let's do that. And offer to him. Our lives. Living. And shining. The light of Christ. As we sang earlier.

[29:11] This morning. The light of Christ. Has come into the world. And as we prayed. In our hearts. Shining forth. Let's do that.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.