

Psalms of Ascent - Psalm 133-134

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[0 : 0 0] my name is Eric if I've not met you I'm one of the pastors here I get the privilege to teach on most weeks and I just want to welcome you and share with you that we're excited you're here to worship with us to see the glories of Jesus and all that we do together as a body and I also want to invite you back next week because next week we got two big changes the first big change is we will be in the gym that's where we will be gathering we're going to set up in there in anticipation for the eighth which is the following week where we have invited the neighborhood in large numbers we're praying for a good turnout there so we're going to be in the gym it's the second thing about next first thing about next week the second thing that's going to be different is we're not going to be in the psalms of ascent anymore this is our last week studying through this series next week we're going to start a study in the book of colossians and in that book our focus is the splendor of Jesus colossians is a fantastic book it's simple it's short but it's so sweet and it highlights the splendor of Jesus Christ so as a church we get to marinate in that together and I'm excited for that but next week we're going to start that series actually not with a sermon like whoa

I know different but we're going to do a scripture reading and scripture reading is simply where we take God's word we open up our bibles together and we're going to read through the entire book of colossians together at a nice slow understandable easy pace so that we can all just take in the whole book all at once and I'll talk a little bit about background context can explain what the book is before we do that but next week I'm really looking forward to reading the book of colossians with you so if you want to prepare yourself ahead of time go ahead and read it this week I encourage you to do that but as for today we get to finish our series in the psalms of ascent and throughout this series we have noticed the purpose of these songs why they're called the psalms of ascent at the top of each of each psalm is because they would be sung by Israel as they are marching up to Jerusalem Jerusalem elevated on a hill going literally physically up to the hill to to God's temple to worship him but also there's a spiritual symbolism of our hearts getting ready to praise God ascending to him as we come to him in worship and we have taken quite a journey haven't we we have walked with Israel proverbially through the journey of going to God with our heart soul mind and strength in order that we might worship him together that's why Israel ascended the hill to worship him at the feast that the Lord commanded and we too have gone through all of the different ups and downs psalms of lament psalms of praise that this collection has brought us and last week if you remember we finally made it to the city of David but this week is the true destination in this section this psalm 133 134 we arrive at not just the city of David not just with the people of God in Jerusalem but we arrive somewhere really specific and it is where God can truly be found and for them at this time in this day and in this age that was the temple and the temple was a place where God's presence dwelt in a place called the holy of holies behind the most sacred veil and as people came to the temple they would ready their hearts to praise him his song to praise and worship the Lord with their hearts of thanksgiving but also to come before the Lord with a right heart made through sacrifice to bring their animals that the priest might take them and offer them up as an atonement of sin that was one of the major functions of the temple so when the people come to celebrate these feasts they're coming in anticipation that we will meet with the Lord when we get there and he will unite us under the same banner and that's where we find ourselves today and before we read these psalms one more time I just want to point something out that I think will help us understand this psalm I really believe that unity is in short supply in our world today don't you politically it's pretty easy to see I try not to open up my news app I try to keep it closed because I get discouraged I don't know about you but even when I choose to do that to try and understand and see the world and be relevant and make sure I know how to pray and encourage people even myself when I open up that app all I see is division division is a term that

literally means double vision seeing things differently and then how we respond to that leads to division unity is in short supply people will look to different policies different candidates different platforms to find something they will stand on that ground as we've seen in the past few election cycles unity is not a priority in this country right now but not just politically how about culturally I feel like right now in our culture we have become a culture that is littered with eggshells what I mean by that is you bring up the smallest topic with someone with good intent just to start conversation and I have found myself even being the defensive one but also being surprised at how upsetting certain topics can be to people culturally there's a lot of things we can bring up and talk through that lead to division but also spiritually it's like unity is in really short supply people leave churches leave one another's fellowship families I've experienced this recently siblings that you're shocked to find that there's major different viewpoints and in our pride and my pride I can't take that viewpoint to handle it well so what do I do I lash out and and get angry at my sibling that they would hold such a view I contribute to this disunity just as much as everyone else but I really feel as though we're living in a time where unity is truly in short supply but today in psalm 133 and 134 we get to be encouraged and we're going to learn the following both of these psalms are pointing to this truth that unity is the basis of good gathering unity is the basis of good gathering so let's read psalm 133 we'll do them one by one here we'll do psalm 133 together and then we'll do psalm 134 and we'll see how they they mesh together in one image so read with me again psalm 133 it says this behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity it is like the precious oil on the head running down on the beard on the beard of Aaron running down on the collar of his robes it is like the dew of Hermon which falls in the mountains of Zion for there the Lord has commanded the blessing life forevermore now this is one of my favorite psalms because of how incredibly positive it is why is it so positive why is everything so happy it looks like the people are just overjoyed David as he writes this is overjoyed with just joy and happiness and goodness as he he writes about well here's why again psalm 133 and 134 is the finale of the psalms of ascent meaning as the journeyers the the pilgrims the pilgrims excuse me they come into Israel and they walk into the place of worship they look around and they see we've all made it we're here we're finally at the place that we've been coming to this whole time and oh man now we get to sing now we get to worship but I want to point out the the structure of this psalm it employs a poetic device called parallelism and parallelism is a device that will take certain stanzas or lines of the psalm and pit them against or excuse me with one another to convey the same thought in multiple ways so here's what you see in verse one you see the blessing of present gathering behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity now look at the last line of the psalm for there the lord has commanded the blessing life forevermore and this is the first parallel both of these the beginning and end of the psalm are talking about when the people of god dwell together there's a blessing but then you have the two middle verses that are also work like a parallel two images first is of oil running down on the head or the beard of somebody named Aaron we'll talk about that in a minute but then also you have the second image which is like dew of hermon which is on a mountain that falls and here's what's so cool this parallelism shows us our big point here unity is the basis of good gathering so let's look first let's look at verse one and kind of break down what it's talking about because it leads us into this whole idea that unity is the basis of good gathering first line behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity first thing i want to point out right off the bat here is this the word good this is the same word used throughout the entire old testament over and over and over again but do you know where the first time this is used is god saw that he made and behold it was good but here's what's so astounding god also uses the same word here good to describe the negative the negative of good when we are lonely he says in genesis 2 then the lord said it is not good for the man to be alone why does that matter because here in our psalm we see this image of it is very good when brothers sisters the family the people of god that's the image here when they get together and they experience community and fellowship in unity that is the definition of something that is good and the lord even says that the that the dawn of man when he creates all things and creates man in his own image he says about man it is not good that you are alone and i understood this verse incorrectly i think for such a long time i took that as primarily meaning that the lord says it's not good that a man does not have a wife that is certainly an application because right out of this he makes eve but it's more than just it's not good that we're not married because then you're single you're condemned okay so what is it that is really being said in genesis 2 it's not good that the lord is saying it's not good that man and woman humans that i've created in my image to be by themselves and not have fellowship how do we know that's true because the lord himself has

fellowship within himself it's one of the most beautiful images of the trinity father son holy spirit in perfect unity and fellowship a picture of how we are to pursue that so here's what the psalm said it's good it's part of god's design that we would dwell together with unity and that's what i want to talk about next is unity israelites from all over the land would travel to the same place with the same heart seeing the same songs to worship the same god in the same place that is unity and yes on sunday mornings we see a picture of this too that whether we live out in medical lake or in north spokane or in the valley or right here on the south hill we all drive here together to do the same thing to be unified in the same place with the same worship of the same god but let's be honest we're not driving we're driving in cars miles a few maybe 10 15 20 miles the israelites are traveling hundreds of miles on foot the image of unity here is astounding that they all come from all over to one small little place called the city of david just to worship together that is the picture of unity and we have to ask the question why would they do that is it really that good to spend all that time and energy and and money and misery traveling through the desert to come to one place just to worship for a week or a few days

[13:46] and the answer is yes and we need a biblical vision of why this is so important they remembered the lord that saved them together they plead to the same lord with supplication they lament all of the the sufferings that they experience together their worship is united and unity is simply the agreeing upon of beliefs it's one easy way to define it here and here's what israel has in common they have a god in common they have a history in common they have a lineage in common and they have a redemption in common the lord is our god who made us who has called us by his name who has made us a people and who has redeemed us and freed us from our enemies that is our god and we will come together and worship so here's the two images you see in verse two let's talk about these quickly it is like the precious oil on the head running down the beard on the beard of aaron running down on the collar of his robes it's like the dew of hermon which falls in the mountains of zion and here in verse two and three you're going to get two pictures and the point of these illustrations or these analogies is to convey the goodness of gathering in unity how good is it?

let's see well oil in the old testament was used for the following reasons to honor to be hospitable and to consecrate let's talk about those really quick olive oil is and still remains was and still remains one of the most expensive valuable resources in the middle east why?

it's hot it's arid people would walk through the desert and live the entire day in the heat of the sun what do we need when we're in the heat of the sun in the summer and we maybe we're thirsty and our body is starting to dry up under the sun we get chapped we can get cracked skin I don't know about you for here it's kind of reversed isn't it?

in our house our feet crack and our hands crack and our lips chap in the dryness of the winter I don't know about you guys that's why we have humidifiers in the winter in the summer it seems to be a little better but we know the feeling of when your body it feels dried up oil was one of the most valuable resources because it was used in food it was used in consecrating like we're going to see in a minute but also it was used as a balm and here's what's so amazing it was customary to wash visitors feet and pour oil on their head for the purposes of hair and skin care and the blistering heat that when someone came into your house you would have oil ready to give to them that they could use like chapstick like Burt's Bees on my chap lips or like Tiger Balm on my cracked feet literally that's one of the uses of oil and when you walked into someone's home it would be like if you have a cold home here's a blanket to stay warm that's maybe what you do today our house is pretty cold we offer blankets here if you offered someone oil as they walked in out of the heat oh man you were loving them well but also oil was used for consecration in 1 Samuel 16 there's a passage where Samuel goes to this little farmer

Jesse son of Obed and he the Lord directs him to the youngest and he says come here boy David comes over what does Samuel do this is almost exactly how it happens alright the Lord has told me to do this you ready he takes oil and he pours it on David's head and sometimes the image of consecration we can think of is like you take it with a hand and you like wipe it on it no no no no here's what consecrating with oil looked like an entire vat ready and the oil just goes all can you imagine the mess if you didn't understand who Samuel was what he was doing why the oil is important in the Bible this would be like what are you doing you'd just be sticky oil but here's the beauty of why this was done if you're sitting here and you go why would you dump oil on some imagine if you took vegetable oil and just started dumping it on your why would you do that well

when Samuel did that he anointed David secretly as who king of Israel the Lord's chosen oil consecrates with the Lord it's a symbol of I have set you apart for my purposes and here we see specifically a guy named

[18 : 30] Aaron and here's the heart of this passage a consecration of a priest now again we're in Jerusalem the temple is enacted the tabernacle if you will the ark is in there the people have come to worship at this tabernacle who are the ones that are in the temple given the duty specifically of directing worship of Israel and allowing for atonement of sin the sacrificial system the ones that go and meet with God on behalf of the people and bring his presence to them it's the priests listen to this Exodus 29 this is the Lord's calling on the priests of Israel I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar remember consecrate means to set apart Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests I will dwell among the people of Israel and I will be their God and they shall know that I am the Lord their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them here's what the Lord just said I've got a tent that I want my people to me at the tent

I will dwell among them through who the priests that I have set apart and how does how are the priests set apart well in this passage you see Aaron and likely this is a David's one that wrote this likely this is an image of David calling back to when Aaron was consecrated as a priest at the hands of Moses here's what happened Moses anointed Aaron as the first high priest in the temple God had set apart Aaron and Moses did the same thing that David got he took oil and he poured it on Aaron and what was Aaron wearing the priestly garments here's what's so beautiful about this picture in this verse it says that the precious oil that was on Aaron's head that ran down his big beard down his priestly garments all the way down soaking him in oil oil a precious resource like it says it's a picture of goodness how because the

Lord has set apart Aaron by his loving kindness his holiness he's chosen Aaron that he would be consecrated and the oil this beautiful pleasant thing that was used to comfort and to soothe and to encourage and love others that is what's used to consecrate Aaron and he set apart to serve the Lord on behalf of his people but here's the beautiful thing about this image why is it so important that Aaron has been consecrated with oil because Aaron symbolizes the priests and the priests symbolize the ones through whom God experienced the presence of God they acted as mediators they would go and meet with God and come out and God's presence would be with his people through a right mediation because God is holy those that must go in must be consecrated as such but here's what's so amazing

Jesus is called our great high priest in Hebrews and through his mediation we all come to God as consecrated and this image is meant to say like the oil that is put upon the one that God has chosen and the feeling of acceptance and love and kindness from that God that he would set me apart and want to dwell with me that is what it's like to dwell with other people but then there's a second image here's the second image it's like the dew of Hermon which falls on the mountains of Zion now Mount Hermon this is another great analogy Mount Hermon is 9,000 feet above sea level 125 miles north of Jerusalem and here's what was known about Mount Hermon it was known for heavy precipitation and accumulation of moisture which in this climate in this day in this area of the world any precipitation any moisture that naturally occurs anywhere is highly valuable just like oil so here's what Hermon was known for in the summer months

Jerusalem hot dry and need desperate need of moisture in the morning moisture would set upon Hermon because it's one of the highest points of the area and that moisture would sit on the mountain everyone would look up and they would feel the moisture coming down from the mountain as the day progressed people would just stand and feel that moisture and be able to even go up and at some points one commentator wrote they could even harvest moisture from the mountain but all that to say here's what the image is pointing at that the moisture of the mountain that comes in the morning the dew and satiates and comforts the dry people in the dry land with moisture it refreshes the people of God and so here's what we have from these two images when we gather together in unity it's like the pleasantness of oil being set apart by the

[23 : 58] Lord and received by him and the refreshing comfort of dew moisture flowing down from the mountain when we're in a hot dry weary land both of these images come back together point back to when brothers dwell in unity meaning that good gathering is refreshing it's a breath of fresh air it's a balm to the dry foot to the chapped lips and this psalm actually inspired St.

Augustine if you know who that is to found monasteries of brother friars so that they might experience God in close fellowship with one another this is the psalm that inspired him to say we

need to get brothers together to experience fellowship but then finally the last verse here says this for there the Lord has commanded the blessing life forevermore and where's there well in the previous verse talked about Zion so where is it that the Lord commands the blessing which what is the blessing we're going to talk about that life forevermore and here's what's so amazing in verse one we see how good it is when brothers dwell together in unity and the picture is now anytime that we as Israel get together and worship the Lord as one collective people it is so good it's like when you experience the oil of the Lord he sets us apart like he set apart the the priests it's like the dew that comes off the mountain refreshes us when we're feeling dry and in desperate need of water that's what it's like when we gather together and worship right everyone that's what David's saying but here I love this at the very end of the psalm the site is now not set on just our gathering here it's set beyond it's set to a time and place where we will gather forever forevermore is a future time to come God's commanded blessing is that we would have life in him forever unified as his people gathered with our brothers and sisters now and there

Revelation 7 9 says after this after these things I looked and behold the great multitude which no one could count from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues standing before the throne before the lamb clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands they cry out a loud voice salvation to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb that great multitude is all of us and there will be a day life forever more the blessing the Lord's going to give us is what we have now in eternity and here's the great reality of what Jesus has done we have all been consecrated to God to enter into his presence through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit like Aaron received that consecration through the setting apart of the oil that you are now unto me able to enter my presence so too through the work of Jesus Christ we have something called a priesthood of all believers that you and I are all priests of God able to enter into his presence freely because he dwells within us and this image celebrates the presence of God among his people and the unity that that brings what is our most base unifying condition church oh we all have Bibles in our hands that's pretty unifying that we have similar viewpoints on spirituality and you know praying we need those are all great things that unify us we love to come and sing that unifies us but what is it that is the most base unifying condition that no matter what we may do live speak see in the world it will always be true of every single person that has believed in

Jesus who what is it what's that condition redemption our sins have been forgiven Jesus is king and he's the lord of our life no matter what any of us do say that is true and that is what unifies us I want to encourage us to contribute to the unity of the church first by checking our pride and embracing selflessness consider the needs of others before your own this song talks about how good it is when we dwell in unity how do we get that unity by rejecting the pride of the heart a simple posture of serving one another builds a healthy church culture of you matter to me in the church second allow yourself to be dependent on others I see a picture here of everyone coming to the same place and they all came dependent on one another to get there what we desperately need in life is what we were made for to be dependent on one another not independent the independent Christian is on brand today unfortunately the lone ranger Christian that says I you know I church hasn't been my thing I've gone all these different I just haven't been able to figure it out and you know what make I'm okay just kind of doing my thing on my own I have been that lone ranger

Christian I see it growing but here's what I want to encourage us to not to fall into that trap the trap of it's just me and God and that's all I need from one perspective yes that's true but from another sense profoundly no it's not true it's not good for us to be alone and that includes the church being a part of it but then thirdly I want to encourage us to stumble over Christ in sound doctrine not theological posturing when we set out to produce our doctrinal confession at this church one of the things that we had conversations about was making sure that what we are uniting over are truths that we would die for and stand firm for the eternal truths of God's word pertaining to mankind God's salvation Jesus so here's the things that we stumble over and we are willing to say this is where our unity lies when it comes to belief the Bible Trinity God Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit creation man marriage the fall the law atonement justification sanctification the church the ordinances baptism Lord's supper Christ's return in judgment those are the categories in our doctrinal statement and we try to unify over that which is truly gospel but instead I think sometimes we can fall into the trap of dividing or theological posturing over things like eschatology important theological issues like Israel and the church spiritual gifts and if you're like me you've gotten into those discussions and at the end of them it's very rarely that I go I feel so unified we disagreed and I think I won the competition I think I won that argument but man I've won the brother no always it usually ends with man I feel at

odds with that person I'm not saying we don't talk about theological issues but in good spirit and in good faith instead though in the church we come together and we gather in when we're even we're not gathered all together when you're with another brother consider encouraging one another in that which is certain Jesus loves us he is Lord our joy to follow him let's pray let's read let's seek him those things and then finally on this psalm here I want to finish with this when we contribute to the unity of our church I want to consider ask you to consider what it might be to commit to a body and for us here at this church it's church membership and church membership is a means of biblical accountability and fellowship so we have a doctrinal statement I just talked about that's what we agree to believe together to maintain unity but then also we have something called a membership covenant which is how we agree to live together how are we going to love one another encourage one another in faithful Christian living those are two things that we use to maintain unity in the church how good it is to gather united by the love of Jesus here and how good it will be to gather there united by the love of Jesus in heaven now let's look at Psalm 134 I promise this will be really quick Psalm 134 let's read it together come bless the

[32 : 27] 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 and here again the point is the same unity is the basis of good gathering this is the final song of ascent and I believe Psalm 133 and 134 go hand in hand again the people are assembled gathered just like we're assembled right now in corporate worship they're assembled worshipping the Lord just in their context with the temple and as they have arrived at their final destination they are found singing here's what I want us to encourage us with the Psalm of Ascent that path that started in 120 in the wilderness of Kedesh or Meekar and Kedesh that journey has led all the way to here and now that we've arrived what will we expect to be left with what's the lasting image all right we worship that's great the last Psalm is people going back is that the last Psalm no it's almost as if we are left with a final song of ascent and here's what here's what we were intended to get the people are singing encouraging one another and speaking to one another in truth and in song and that's it just going to continue forever they're just going to continue to sing and encourage one another in the presence of the Lord that's how the song of ascent ends and that is so encouraging to me because at the temple the presence of the Lord can be found so here's what you see here's the context of this Psalm quite simply that people are standing around the temple around the tabernacle the servants of the Lord the Levites is what they were called they were in the temple leading worship because that's what they were called to do in Deuteronomy 10 says this at that time the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi the priests if you will to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord to stand before the Lord to minister to him and to bless his name to this day and then it's at first Chronicles 9 we see again now these the singers the heads of the father's houses of the Levites were in the chambers of the temple listen to this free from other service for they were on duty day and night and then finally you don't have to turn there but in first Chronicles 25 the entire chapter I'm not going to read the whole chapter it's very very long and while we know the chapter headings are not inspired those are put in by translators I love the chapter heading of the ESV for first Chronicles 25 listen to this ready David organizes the musicians it's an entire chapter and here's what it is David knows the

Levites have been set apart to lead us the priest to lead us in right worship of God in the temple but actually literally to have instruments and to worship lead when the people come to gather so David takes an entire chapter the great musician he is like a band director like like a worship director like Pastor Josh does every single week he gets the whole group and trains them how to play music well and to lead the people in worship that's who we're talking about so they're standing in the temple and here's what the people say all of Israel says verses 1 and 2 you priests that have led us in worship that are leading us now as we sing we're calling upon you bless the Lord you who have stood there all night tirelessly worshipping God that was one of their jobs all night to stand and sing and be ready for the people to come you who have done that we encourage you and we're excited that you get to lead us we're excited to be here in verse 2 lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the Lord literally verse 1 and 2 is a call to worship and you'll notice every single morning that we gather we start our service with a call to worship and the point of that is to ready our hearts to elevate our hearts to ascend to God and yes even with hands and if you're like me I'm a good I'm a good grew up in a

Baptist church hands stay down a lot of time for me I want to encourage you it's right here in the word the people of Israel look to the Levite and say raise your hands when you worship the Lord that is good and it's right for us to do I pray we'll see some hands up and worship not out of duty or legalism but out of true joy that the Lord is good and he's among us so here's the call to worship Levites we're going to call you to worship to lead us in worship raise your hands let's sing together we're finally here and then here's how it ends verse 3 is the response of the Levites back to the people here's what the Levites say back to the people that they're leading in worship may the Lord bless you from Zion he who made heaven and earth here at LGC we start every service with a call to worship we end every service with a benediction Psalm 134 gives us both you people you have blessed us we have dwelt with you in unity we are unified around Jehovah God the one that has saved us he dwells here amongst us we have been by his grace able to represent him and to bring his presence to you through our mediating presence and now we all enjoy unity and goodness in him we bless you this is a picture of raw amazing selfless biblical community and I want to leave us with is this the same model we have the same obligation today brothers and sisters to edify one another and bless one another in corporate worship sing truth to one another pastor Josh is a fantastic job picking songs that are just absolutely chocked full of truth that elevate that elevate Jesus above all else that recognize God for the supreme sovereign loving God that he is sing truth to one another when you sing in between and even points during our service speak life to one another like we see here you raise your hands and worship we bless the Lord together the Levites bless you people there's a spirit of edification and encouragement and encouragement happening here so I want to encourage us to edify one another when we're gathered even during the service that's part of our job is to edify one another when we sing when we proclaim God's word to one another and finally I want to read this Hebrews 10 of 19 to 25 which is in many ways the perfect New Testament passage to summarize everything we've learned unity is the basis for good gathering therefore brothers since we have confidence to enter the holy place through the blood of Jesus by a new and living way that he opened up for us through the curtain that is through the flesh and since we have a great priest over the house of God let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for he who is promised is faithful and let us consider how to stir one another up to love and good works not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some but encouraging one another all the more as you see the day drawing near that's Psalm 133 and 134

right there we have arrived we've made the journey and now we are finally in the presence of God together singing and worshiping at his feet all good gathering due to our unity in Jesus unity is the basis for good gathering let's pray Lord I pray now as we even transition back to worship back to singing the beauty of singing I pray Lord that as we see in this this Psalm Lord that there is such a heart of unity here that the people would sing to the priests and bless them and encourage them and call them to worship and the priests would sing back to the people and give them a benediction Lord I pray that in our gatherings this would also be true the spirit of unity encouragement edification would all be found here so Lord as the rest of this service plays out as we gather together corporately every single Sunday may we recognize the goodness of our gathering that is found in you Jesus who has united us all under the same banner so Lord I pray that Lamsden Gospel Church would be a place that every single time we gather we experience good and pleasant gathering thank you for the people here thank you for the encouragement of these verses and these psalms and God I ask that you continue to encourage our hearts as we lift them up to you and worship now

Amen Amen Thank you.