

Pslam 84

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Date: 04 September 2022

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[0:00] I'm one of the members here at Shoreline, and I get the pleasure of bringing the bread today.! I pray that we would feast on this bread.

! So what is this psalm about, Psalm 84?

Well, the ESV Study Bible, which is a great study Bible, says this. This is a psalm celebrating pilgrimage to Jerusalem in order to worship at the temple. It focuses on the delight of going to worship at the temple.

The purpose of singing the psalm is to cultivate that delight. To open the eyes of the hearts of God's people to the staggering privileges of being a welcome guest in God's house.

And to consider that wickedness offers no rewards in comparison to the richness and pleasure of God's house. So church, it's my prayer that all of us, myself included, might have our time together result in a cultivation of our delight in worship.

[1:30] I just want to use the laser pointer. A cultivation, that's the last time, of our delight in worship. That's our goal, okay? Today's goal, it's very clear.

May this 84th Psalm serve the purpose for which it was written. So my plan, how we're going to go about this, looks like this. First, we're going to observe these 12 verses and the psalmist's delight in worshipping in the presence of God in the temple.

And then we're going to consider our own level of delight in worship. The reason I chose the psalm was because I was really intrigued by the language in it. And I was drawn to how the psalmist describes his delight in worship of God.

And the more I looked at the psalm, the more I noticed that in comparison to what the psalmist is saying and his level of delight, mine really paled in comparison. And it begged the question in my heart, well, why?

You know, we are created to delight in God and worship. Worship, we have to believe this to be true in order to move forward with this psalm. We're created to delight in God and worship.

[2:40] The heart and the attitude and the affection that we see in this psalm is not an exception to the rule, folks. It's to be the norm for God's people. What we're going to read, what we're going to see, that's supposed to be how worship is.

And if you just read the psalms, it's everywhere in the psalms what this delight should look like in worship. So many times I've asked myself, well, why don't I worship like David or like the psalmists do?

So the third thing we're going to do is identify what hindrances lie in the way for my worship and my delight in worship. I've entitled our three sections today, the worshiper's longing, the worshiper's journey, the worshiper's blessing.

And here's our big question. Do you delight in going to God in worship? That's the big question we need to be able to answer that I want us to ask ourselves today.

And then the follow-up is, well, what might be hindering your delight? And we'll come back to this question many times today. But before we begin, let's pray. Please bow your heads.

[3:49] God, open our eyes and soften our hearts to the hindrances which keep us from delight-filled worship of you.

Lord, would you cultivate anew an affection and desire for delight in worship. God, use my words. Transform our hearts for your glory, for your name's sake.

Amen. So we're going to start moving through our passage and look at our first of three section. The worshiper's longing. Verses 1 through 4.

And we're going to go ahead and read those verses in Psalm 84. If you want to turn there or open your app or whatever you do. Psalm 84, 1 through 4, reads this way.

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord. My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.

[4:53] Even the sparrow finds a home, verse 3, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young. At your altar, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.

Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise. Each verse here in this first section contains a reference to the temple.

We see dwelling place, courts, altar, house, and gives us insight into what the longing of the worshiper is for. Verse 1, he's longing for the dwelling place of the Lord of hosts.

We see this phrase, Lord of hosts, 261 times in the Old Testament. And it denotes that God is the universal ruler over every force, whether in heaven or on earth.

What a dwelling place the universe's ruler must have, huh? And what an honor to be able to approach this place and worship. Could this worshiper have any greater longing?

[5:54] I would give a resounding no. In verse 2, details how he's longing for the Lord's dwelling. He's longing deeply. Yearn and faint, we see.

Heart and flesh shout for, possibly better rendered, cry out to God. With all of his being, the psalmist longs to be with God in worship. And this is familiar language to us.

If you were here last week, recognizable parallels found in Psalm 42, which Pastor Mike preached on last week. As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God, is what Psalm 42 says.

The worshiper's learning, yearning, is rooted in his recognizing a void. He isn't questioning what he feels. He knows and is quite familiar with the feeling.

When we want water, we want water when we feel thirsty, and food when we feel hungry, right? So we know in things like that we have to fill these physical voids that we feel and sense as humans.

[7:05] And so, the psalmist senses a strikingly familiar spiritual void and knows where it can be fulfilled with God in worship.

So that's verse 2. And then there's this section about birds. What's up with the birds? Now, it's supposed to produce a giggle.

It's okay if you did. What's up with the birds? It's kind of an unexpected twist. Verse 3.

Longing to be nearby the temple, the psalmist considers the birds home and perceived safety, rest, and acceptance as they raised their young close to the temple of the Lord.

There's a comfort and a peace felt in these verses, isn't there? It's like a deep breath, almost.

Nearby the temple is where the swallow and sparrow feel at ease.

[8:03] The psalmist has a similar feeling and longing for himself, not just for the temple in general, but specifically near the altar, as we see in verse 3.

The place of sacrifice. The place of sacrifice. Which allows man access and ability to approach a holy and perfect God and find acceptance from him through sins atoned for by the bloodshed of worthy sacrifices.

And so verse 4 concludes this first section with an appropriate statement, it seems like. Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise. Blessed for certain.

Worshippers of Almighty God, the Lord of hosts, creator and sustainer of the universe, who fulfills the soul's deepest spiritual longing and thirsting with rest, acceptance, and peace that are offered upon the altar of grace and mercy.

What response is adequate other than never-ending praise from the lips of the worshiper? Those who dwell in the Lord's house have no greater and no more worthy utterance than praise upon praise, friends.

[9:15] Do you delight in going to God and worship? You know, a critical piece to understanding this first section of the worshiper's longing is that the longing isn't for the splendor of the temple building itself.

It doesn't end there. But it's a longing to be in the presence of God, the awesome God who indwells the temple. Those who long for the presence of God, sorry, those that delight in going to God and worship, long for the presence of God.

Do you, church? So we talked about identifying hindrances, so here's our first shot at it. What could be some hindrances that would keep us from longing for the presence of God like the psalmist did? Maybe we fail to see God for who he is. Sorry if I'm blocking those words. Maybe we see him as a transactional, vending machine type of Lord.

I'll give credit to Jordan Leach from five or six years ago in his sermon. He talked about this. A vending machine God. I'll go to him when I need him, right, if he's got what I'm looking for.

[10:34] There's no delight in this. There's no relationship. Maybe we don't see God for who he is as the powerful God, but we see him as non-powerful and unimportant and distant.

And we don't see that he does impact our life in real time, right? The here and now. Our God is active. Psalm 46 says, God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Or maybe we think God is unwilling to care about us. He simply doesn't care. He doesn't have the willingness. And I would say, does the Lord of armies, who knows the number hairs on our head, who also gives what is needed to those who ask of him, like a caring father, see Matthew chapter 7, does he actually not care?

Is he actually unwilling? No. No, he's not. Another hindrance could be not recognizing our spiritual thirsting.

Isaiah 55, 2 says, why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me and eat what is good and delight yourself in rich food.

[11:56] Do we solve our spiritual thirsting and hunger with physical solutions and retreat to sin as a means to help fill our voids?

We don't recognize our thirsting. Maybe we make little of our sin and so our longing for the nearness to the altar doesn't really mean much.

And when we think too much about ourselves and too little of God, what purpose does the cross serve, friends? And finally, maybe we lack spending time with God to foster praise.

If we seldom sow, we'll seldom reap. Are we surprised by this? Or if we don't tend to garden and then the weeds that grow up that we're hoping aren't there, they start to choke out the vegetables or whatever you planted, fruit, that we hope for.

Well, why do you treat a personal God, a relationship-based God, impersonally and casually? the worshiper's longing is for God himself.

[13:13] And if that's our honest longing, may the Lord of hosts help us to stop at nothing in order to receive that. Lord, break us from these hindrances.

Well, let's turn our attention to the next section. We've got verses 5 through 9, section 2 of 3, the worshiper's journey.

Read again with me in the word. Psalm 84, verse 5. Blessed are those whose strength is in you and whose hearts are their highways to Zion. As they go through the valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs.

The early rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength. Each one appears before God in Zion. O Lord, God of hosts, hear my prayer.

Give ear, God of Jacob. Behold our shield, our God. Look on the face of your anointed. This section we see progression from longing for God to actually journeying to him.

[14:25] Verse 5 details the pilgrimage to Zion or Jerusalem. In this case, Zion was where the presence of God was. In this case, Jerusalem. God commanded of his people to pilgrim.

Deuteronomy 6, 16, 17 says, three times a year all your men must appear before the Lord, your God, the place he'll choose, the festival of unloved bread, festival of weeks, festival of tabernacles.

No one should appear before the Lord empty-handed. Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the Lord has blessed you. So this was an actual trip.

If you're a New Englander, raise your hand real quick. If you're a New Englander, yeah, thanks. You can put your hands down. I thought going over the Gold Star Bridge was far. I don't know if you feel me there.

New Englanders, we take for granted that people from other states, mainly the Midwest, have to travel far to get places that should be a lot closer. So this really resonated with me.

[15:28] So this is a legitimate pilgrimage, right? This is a journey, right? Twelve tribes of Israel spread throughout. Journeying. This is a trip. A lot farther than the bridge, back of snack, you know?

It's expected that all of God's people would follow this command to pilgrim to Zion, yet as with really any command we see in Scripture, there's going to be three groups of command followers.

So there's going to be the people who simply ignore it. There's going to be the people who do it but reluctantly. And then there's going to be the people who do it with yielded hearts, submitted hearts. And verse five says, blessed are those in that third category, those whose hearts are set on the pilgrimage. Blessed are those that are in, that are fully on board.

This is what we're seeing. And God wants our willingness, right? He wants our willingness, which is actually not that hard when the journey's easy.

[16:33] But verse six, our text indicates that the journey to Zion, to worshiping God the way he commanded it, is anything but easy. And the exact meaning of the valley of Bacchae, I'm probably saying that wrong, is uncertain.

But it could be translated as weeping. The valley is a place of dryness, sorrow, and difficulty, perhaps literal or perhaps figurative. But regardless, the journey's difficult, is what we're supposed to understand.

But there's hope for the worshiper on his journey. Read on in verse six, they make it a place of springs. The autumn rain also covers it with pools.

One commentator says, the word picture seems to assume a dry journey through a difficult place made passable by God's provision of springs of water and early rain.

This is one reason that verse five calls those whose hearts are set on a pilgrimage blessed. So we see a second provision by God also in verse seven.

[17:42] God-given strength. It says, blessed are those whose strength is in you. This worshiper's reliance is on the strength of God, which comes only from God, and is meant to help the worshiper accomplish the command at hand.

The strength from God is lasting from strength to strength, not waxing and waning, not moving from strength to fatigue to strength. Only through the strength of the Lord does the journey go from dreary to joyous, from a valley of weeping to celebration.

Finally, verses eight through nine, the last verse of this section of the worshiper's journey, we see the psalmist beckoning the Lord of hosts through prayer. God of Jacob is the term that he uses.

One resource says the psalmist grounded his plea in the long history of God's dealing with his covenant people. The same God who blessed and was faithful to Jacob will also be faithful to his people today.

Here we see the psalmist recognize the need for intervening in protection of Yahweh, the one who has proven himself to his people time and time again. And he beckons God to provide for him along his pilgrimage as he has with generations before.

[19:03] And part of God's intervention along the journey to Zion is through the blessing of a God-appointed king who protects the pilgrims, leads them as a nation to God and rules in a way that might allow for God's promises to David and Israel as a nation to continue to be poured out.

The welfare of the nation was bound up in the welfare of the king and if the king was one like Hezekiah or Josiah had effected a great reformation.

The psalmist might well feel that the religious privileges which he prized depended on the continuance of the king's life. So upon initial look at these verses five through nine, the section could seem confusing or unrelatable to us.

After all, Acts chapter seven and 17, Matt, tell us God does not dwell in a temple made with human hands. So what's the deal?

What is our journey and what is our destination or temple? In regards to our temple, the church is called the temple of God in 1 Corinthians chapter three.

[20:17] In God's spirit, secondly, indwells the hearts of his children, our bodies being the temple or dwelling places of God's spirit given to

us, 1 Corinthians 6, 2 Corinthians 6.

In regards to our journey, if the church is the temple of God, then there are obvious parallels to meeting with other believers who comprise the church in our Sunday service or weekly community group gatherings, joining together and praising God as one.

On the flip side, pertaining to number two, the believer's entire life is a long journey, continuous journey, is it not?

Filled with spiritual highs and lows, abundance and drought, sorrow and joy, each moment, day, week, etc., is a journey and opportunity for pursuit, not to a physical destination, hear me, a pursuit not to a physical destination, though, but a spiritual destination, to arrive at a state of worship and a heart of worship, a mindset of worship, engaging in meeting with God one on one.

We have to see this to understand how this applies to us. I've seen this question before. Do you delight in going to God and worship? Those that do find joy in the spiritual journey, their pursuit of God.

[21:54] Do you, church? What could be a hindrance to our journey to God and worship? Well, unfortunately, we could be half-hearted journeyers, like a half-hearted Israelite who made their journey to the temple with reluctance or out of habit, so also we can have a lukewarm pursuit of God's presence, both in our local church gatherings and in our personal pursuit of time with God.

Perhaps competing pleasures and other time-consuming activities have given a stiff arm to our most important and most worthy pursuits, which end up frankly being placed on the back burner or at the end of the day's list of priorities.

Or maybe we've allowed the difficulty of life's dry, weary valleys to convince us that enduring in our spiritual pursuits like church and community groups simply aren't worth the energy and mental strain, especially when we're already maxed out, right?

Anyone who has ever had a job or has children or a spouse or has ever existed understands that life brings you to the max. I think I included everyone there.

I said existed, so. Life pushes us to the edge. Maybe we fail to lock into the strength upon strength that the worshiper has access to.

[23:39] Maybe we fail to consider the God of Jacob, his long history of faithfulness to his people through covenant, continual pursuit of them, and he's a forgiving and merciful God who welcomes back those who fail and those who have been unfaithful to him, even if it's been days or weeks or years or a lifetime.

Finally, praying in the one-on-one time with God might not even be on our radar. How could it when you consider all the things that are going on in life, how could talking with God and reading the Bible again be helpful?

The journey's hard. The worshiper's journey is seen, verse 5 through 9, as very much a real concept to us, even to the modern reader. How easily our pursuit of God and worship can become void of delight when we become hindered by hang-ups along our spiritual journey.

Lord, break us free from these hindrances. Our final section is the worshiper's blessings, verses 10 through 12.

In our first two sections, we looked at longing for God, then actually journeying to meet with him in worship. And now we'll consider the blessings the worshiper receives as a result of their pursuit.

[25:11] Let's read verses 10 through 12, Psalm 84. I love these verses. For a day in your courts is better than a thousands elsewhere.

I'd rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. The Lord God is a sun and a shield.

The Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you.

Verse 10 contains possibly the most recognizable line in this chapter for many. Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere. What an incredible statement.

This is literally the verse that drew me to this psalm months ago. The anticipation that has been building through this psalm thus far seems to reach its climax with this one concept.

[26:25] One day versus one thousand days. It's about three years. How could he make a statement like this?

An impressively deep, true satisfaction and unsurpassing joy must be at hand. an overwhelming pleasure must be what this psalmist experiences when he goes to God and worship at the temple. To him, being a doorkeeper on the very threshold of the temple courts, even on the outskirts of where the action is happening, was better than any amount of time living the lifestyle with all the perks, the inside scoop, an endless amount of fleeting pleasures of wicked people.

But how is that possible that he comes to this conclusion? Verses 11 and 12 are where it all comes together. It's possible that he comes to this conclusion because he has given direct blessings from God himself.

And friends, he is reveling in, he is absolutely glorying in who God is and what he has blessed him with.

[27:47] That's what we're seeing here. He is overcome even at the threshold. This is why he longs for and journeys to worship in the presence of God.

Look at what God offers. I want this. I hope you do too. Look at the blessings in verse 11 and 12. Our God, he is a sun and a shield.

The sun gives life, sustains life, and illuminates the whole earth. It is majestic and unsurpassed in purpose and importance.

He is a shield. He defends the life that he has given and keeps it from harm, preserving, sustaining, and saving. Next, we see favor and honor.

Favor and honor. This is the Lord of hosts we're talking about still. What level of favor and honor does the greatest force in the cosmos have to offer?

[28:52] Something extraordinary. Are there any words to describe? Just messing up. nothing good does he withhold.

There is no need unmet. None left asking for more, but there is an ability to actually be fully content. And when God does not withhold any good thing from those he loves, and we must not forget those who love him, Romans chapter 8.

The blessings are given to the one who walks in a worthy manner, as verse 12 says, those who trust in him. do you delight to going and going to God and worship?

Those who do revel in their multitude of blessings. Do you, church? What could be a hindrance to our reveling in these blessings?

There's just one in this section. We prefer dwelling in wicked tents. As simple as that. There's such a great fleshly pleasure in wickedness.

[30:22] It's not easy to decline. It's not. Is it not Satan's goal to make sin as appealing and as desirable as possible? He prowls about attempting to devour, 1 Peter 5 8.

Hating sin and choosing not to engage you with wickedness is not as simple as saying no thanks when someone offers you something you don't really want anyway. For me, it's the dessert menu at a restaurant after I've eaten too much food.

It's not easy. It's easy to say, nah, I'm good, thank you. It's not easy to do that with sin. This thing is falling apart. We're good. It's a battle, isn't it?

Ephesians 6, we wrestle against powers in the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. So when we dwell in wicked tents, we don't revel in or receive the blessings of being in worship in God's presence that the psalmist is talking about.

We can't dwell in the house of the Lord and the tents of the wicked at the same time. And so unfortunately, we simply don't receive the blessings that the worshiper of God is designed to receive in worship.

[31:43] We don't finish the journey. the way that God intended it with great pleasure in worship in his house. And when we don't receive the culmination of the longing and the journey, which is the abundance and the multitude of blessing that God gives to the worshiper, we simply won't have delight in going to God in worship, will we?

What would be the point? Because the core of the psalmist's delight is in the fact that he receives and enters into the presence of God with his blessings.

We cannot prefer sin and expect to reap the blessing of the worship in the presence of God also. Remember, nothing good does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.

God will be the God will be no. And so when we prefer sin to God, our answer to the question we've been asking all morning will be no.

Because there will be nothing lasting to delight in and to revel in. Our potential delight and blessings will have been choked out by the hindrances that so easily entangle us.

[33:03] And our engagement with our local church gatherings and our personal time with the Lord will lose its appeal and delight. What hope is there for us?

to overcome these hindrances and delight in going to God and worship as he intended us to, to receive the abundant blessings and enter into God's presence and worship.

What hope is there? Anyone know? Anyone have the answer? What hope is there? Don't be ashamed. We're a family. It's a person.

He is a deity. Anyone? It's okay. Jesus Christ, okay?

Jesus Christ. It's okay. Christ is our hope. Well, but we don't see Christ in the Psalm 84, Matt.

[34:05] This is Old Testament. Oh, yeah? We can see Christ through all of Psalm 84, and here's how. You ready for this?

I've bolded the print that is indicative of Psalm 84. I hope that you can see it. You see, the ruler of the cosmos, the Lord of hosts, has sent his son, and he's become for us a sacrifice.

He died on the cross. Oh, man. Let's start again. Our hope is Christ. You see, the ruler of the cosmos, the Lord of hosts, has sent a son, and he's become for us a sacrifice.

He died on the cross, and his blood was shed like on the altar in the temple, which granted Israel, now us, access to God. But this sacrifice ended the need for any future sacrifice. And the separation between God and man, which is why our God no longer dwells in temple made with human hands.

No, now he dwells in us, if we trust him by faith. And when we do, Christ gives us new life, and that comes with new longing and desires, desires to be with God in worship.

[35:15] Because now we have eyes to see the Lord of hosts for who he is. And once we see him, our hearts begin to long deeply and ache for him. And we're able, because of Christ, to recognize our hunger and thirst, our longing as a spiritual void that must be and can only be filled in the presence of God and worship.

And so scripture's command to come and worship God is something we look forward to, so we journey. Because of Christ, we see our lives as a spiritual journey, a journey towards worship, the goal of being God's presence and unending praise.

And although our lives are filled with great difficulty, and our spiritual journeys go through highs and lows, valleys of weeping, do not dissuade us in our pursuits. Dry and weary times that are made rich and reign in abundance.

Because Christ gives us strength, and Christ gives us access to the strength that God has for us to complete our journey of worship. He does not leave us on our own, but he prepares us and strengthens us for the journey which he has called us to.

Not only that, God gives us access to him through prayer and appoints for us a king, King Jesus, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, who on this journey is the mediator between us and God.

[36:29] And he protects us and guides us. He ministers to us along the way through his word, through our fellowship with him, and through the brothers and sisters that God has intentionally put on our lives here at this local church and throughout the world.

And the spirit that he has put in our hearts ministers to us as well. The God of Jacob is our fortress. We are not going on this journey alone. The anointed king is with us. And when the anointed king is with us on our journey, we will endure.

We will become, because of Christ, be able to despise and hate sin that overcomes the devil. To overcome the devil, to hate the appeal, to dwell in the tents of the wicked, and not give in to our fleshy desires.

And our heart's longing will be for God's presence, even as a doorkeeper in the temple. Thanks to Christ, one day in the presence of God and worship will be greater to us than a thousand days

elsewhere.

And we will reap blessing upon blessing. We will glory in our God who is a sun and a shield, who gives life and protects, who grants favor and honor, and withholds no good thing from those who walk in a worthy manner, which his son Jesus has modeled for us and taught us in his word.

[37:38] And because of our Christ-given new longing and desire and endurance on our journey, we can walk in a worthy manner, where once we were lost without hope, now Christ has given us the ability to trust God, in faith, and receive the multitude of blessing in God's presence and worship as he intended us to not only here and now, but also infinitely more in the life of come.

Somebody say amen. I said somebody say amen. Amen. Do you delight in going to God and worship?

What might be hindering your delight? church, I pray that we might have eyes to see that we have the ability to delight in going to God and worship, just like the author of Psalm 84, and can be freed from our hindrances to worship thanks to Jesus Christ, who transforms our longing, sustains us on our journey, and supplies us with blessings through him for the glory of God the Father.

Hallelujah. And church, I hope our time together today will be used by God to cultivate delight in him. Pray with me.

Lord, you alone, our good and you alone are our God. God, would you use today to cultivate a deep, fulfilling delight in going to you in worship?

[39:20] Would you use our brothers and sisters, and through the power of your Holy Spirit, open our eyes to the hindrances that keep us from you? For delighting in you in worship is the very reason we were created, that you receive all glory and honor from our lives.

For your name, for your glory, amen. Amen. Why don't you stand with us?