

Our Soul's Longing

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[0 : 00] Who will reign forever? Please turn in your Bibles to Psalm chapter 84.

Psalm chapter 84. This sermon is inspired by some of one of my specific readings on places where we see the gospel so clearly in the Old Testament.

I really believe it is apropos for us at this time with all that is before us, whether it be our frustration, our loneliness, our hurts, even in our joys and successes.

More than anything else, I believe more people now are offended by someone telling us when we can meet and when we cannot meet.

These are unique situations for some of us. For those who live in different countries and at different times, they know exactly what this is all about.

[1 : 37] But this psalm is a psalm written as a man comes to the temple. It is written with that understanding as he comes before the temple of God to offer his sacrifices.

And I really believe in this time, even though we cannot gather together, we can indeed worship together.

We have this ability through the blood of Jesus Christ that allows us to enter in to the inner temple. To come before the Lord, both with song, with words, with tears, with prayers. And nobody else has that.

So please read along with me. Psalm 84. To the choir master. According to the geteth.

[2 : 52] A psalm of the songs of Korah. How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts. My soul longs.

Yes, fawns for the courts of the Lord. My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. Even the sparrow finds a home.

And the swallow a nest for herself. Where she may lay her young. At your altars, O Lord of hosts. My King and my God.

Blessed are those who dwell in your house. Ever singing your praise. Salah. Blessed are those whose strength is in you. In whose heart are the highways to Zion.

As they go through the valley of Bekah, they make it a place of springs. The early rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength.

[3 : 52] Each one appears before God in Zion. O Lord. God of hosts. Hear my prayer.

Give ear, O God of Jacob. Salah. Behold our shield, O God. Look at the face of your anointed.

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 dwell in the tents of wickedness.

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.

O Lord of hosts. Blessed is the one who trusts in you. When I ask you the question, what does it mean to be in the presence of God?

[5 : 01] What do you think about? I think with everything going on in our world today, it's easy to get confused. It's easy to forget.

It is easy to get distracted. But the main desire of a follower of Christ, a follower of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, a worshiper of the one true God, is to have a desire to be in his presence.

A longing to be in his presence. This psalm is a description of a man going to Jerusalem, to the temple, to offer sacrifices to God.

This writer tells us that the greatest thing in this life is to enjoy a godly life. That there is no greater place in all of creation than to be in the presence of the Lord.

Verse 10, This longing is not just during the good times, but the low times as well.

[6 : 40] For there is no greater blessing than being in the presence of God. How lovely, verse 1 begins, is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts.

My soul longs, yes, faints, for the courts of the Lord. The innermost being of this writer longs to be in his presence.

Can you say the same? Can you say that as far as you are concerned, the ultimate desire for you is to be in the presence, the loving, kind presence of God?

Do you consider God better than life itself? Do you want to?

Do you want to have that longing? This morning I want to cover four truths that are essential for us to understand what this longing is about, how it is created in our hearts.

[8 : 01] That this is a longing that comes from the deepest depths of our souls. It's something that we desire even as we struggle with loneliness.

We struggle with boredom. We struggle with fear of loss, life, health. We struggle with the loss of work, our friends.

During this crazy COVID time, some family lives have been improved, praise God. But for those of us who aren't always blessed with living in the same household as our family, it has been a struggle.

For some, it has been a time of spiritual renewal. For some, it has been a time of spiritual renewal. Others have felt more distant than ever before. The sermon that I want to preach today is that we still, even though we cannot gather together, we can be one with one another in our longing, the deepest longing of our soul, we can still have true worship before God.

So there's four truths that enable us to have this. The first truth is that true worship begins with knowing God, right?

[9 : 40] We must know God. Any question of true worship must evolve around the idea, the subject of God. Notice verse 3 and verse 5 states, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God, blessed are those whose strength is in you.

Verse 3 says, At your altars, O Lord, my King and my God. In the Old Testament, there was no other way to God other than coming to the temple, to the priest who acted as the mediator, who offered sacrifices for your sins and a myriad of other issues that they would offer before the Lord. In fact, some historians say that the temple was more like a butcher business that there was just constant animals.

It was a slaughterhouse being offered unto the Lord as people would come worshiping, seeking forgiveness, seeking the Lord. This temple was the place where the blood of animals was spilled. And you watched these animals dying that represented your sin.

[11 : 17] Today, it is no longer like that. For you and for me, there is no altar. Instead, we are able to come by the only one true sacrifice that is for eternity.

We come through the blood of Jesus Christ. The only way we can truly worship God, know God, is in Jesus Christ.

John 14, 6 says, I am the way, I am the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me. This was the claim of Jesus.

It wasn't follow my role models. It wasn't follow these rules, these philosophies, these precepts of life and you will be good with God.

No. You must know me. If you believe that you can come to God in any other way other than the blood of Jesus Christ, you are mistaken.

[12 : 34] Not only do we have to come through Jesus, we must also realize that we come through his broken body and through his shed blood.

Hebrews 10, 19 reminds us, therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain that is through his flesh.

Jesus, by dying on the cross, giving his life up for you and for me, allows us to come into this inner altar, this sanctum of worship.

You see, the fact of the matter is not enough to know who Jesus is, but to understand the sacrifice he made for you.

A big part of knowing God is knowing the truth about God. It is understanding that objective truths matter.

[14:01] Our feelings, on the other hand, and our experiences mean nothing when it comes to knowing God. We can feel happy all we want, but that doesn't always result because of a true knowledge of God.

Because we have to rely on the character of God. We need to rely on his greatness, his majesty, in his glory.

To do so, we are absolutely lost. Our salvation is based upon the work that Jesus did on the cross for us, not how we feel.

And it's really easy to get away from this. Our feelings drive us. We can sometimes feel so very far from God when we are exceptionally close to God.

We live in a society that espouses the feelings of goodness, of greatness, of feeling warm, cozy, fuzzy, whatever kind of name you want to put on it.

[15:17] often, when our sin is presented before us, we don't feel good. We fight it. We feel the ugliness.

We feel the weight. But as we're broken because of that sin, we find ourselves closer to Christ. You may not know it, but the 18th century songwriter, Charles Wesley, he was the brother of the great preacher, John Wesley. Charles wrote, Hark the Herald Angels Sing, Christ the Lord is risen today.

He wrote the hymns, And Can It Be, Oh for a Thousand Tongues to Sing. He wrote over 1,000 hymns. But he was burdened his whole entire life, scared, frightened, that he may not be saved because of his feelings.

It's interesting, George Whitefield, the famous preacher, who is one of the main architects of the American revival in the 1700s, lamented, oh how he wished that Charles would accept and put his faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross rather than how he felt on any given day.

[16:55] And what he's driving home is our faith is based on the objective work and truth of what we know of Jesus Christ as preached in our Bibles.

This is what's taught us. It is good to know God. We live in a time where we can listen to multiple sermons, read multiple books that all exalt, bring glory and worship to the Lord, which gives us greater understanding of the Bible.

It's an incredible time we live in right now. in a time unlike many other times we have more time to read, study, and we can use that to our advantage to draw us closer into communion with our Father.

So the first truth we need to accept is that we need to know God, not as an experience, but an objective truth which drives our experience.

the second truth about worship of God is that when we get to know God, we come to a true understanding of ourselves.

[18:10] You see, Christianity has these two truths. When you know God at this end, we begin to know ourselves at this end.

We can start with God, but it leaves us incomplete. You see, right thinking about God leads to right thinking about us.

Now, what is this truth about ourselves that we need to know? What is this truth about ourselves that we need to understand? I believe the author of this psalm captures it perfectly.

take a look at verse three. Even the sparrow finds a home and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young at your altars, O Lord of hosts.

The author is comparing us to swallows and sparrows. We'd probably feel a lot better about it if we were compared to the mighty majestic eagle that we see around here or perhaps a hawk or a falcon, but he doesn't.

[19:41] He uses the word sparrow and swallow as we come before God and his altar. Note where these swallows and sparrows keep their nests, where they will bear their young, where they will feed their young.

Their nests are close to the altar. it is a safe place. The sparrow understands that the safest place we can be is at the altar of God.

It's Jesus is the safest place. The sparrow understands their need. my question for you is, do you recognize your need for Jesus?

That you need Jesus? That you need to worship Jesus as a believer in Christ? The fact of the matter is this theme rings out through all of Scripture.

we have a need. Matthew 9, 13 says, for I came not to call the righteous but sinners.

[21 : 21] In Mark 2, 17, Jesus says, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick, I came not to call the righteous but sinners.

sinners. And again in Luke 19, 10, for the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. Do you recognize yourself as a sinner?

Do you recognize yourself as sick? Do you recognize yourself as lost?

lost? Because if you do, this is a good thing. This means you understand your need for Jesus. Like the sparrow and the swallow who need to be hidden in order to raise their young, we need Jesus.

[22 : 38] See, our whole salvation begins with an understanding that we have a need. So what characterizes us? What is there about swallows and sparrows that this author characterizes to us?

Well, the first one is we're small. We're small. Sparrows and swallows are one of the smallest of birds. What the psalmist is saying here is that I see myself as one of those little swallows and sparrows.

Are you aware of your smallness? And I'm not talking about your insignificance, about truly how small you are.

Have you thought about this earth, this world, this galaxy, this solar system? When we think of the mountains that are around us, we just look, we see the beauty.

What would it take to climb there? Immense energy, planning, and skill. small. We are small.

[24 : 00] John Piper is famously known for saying nobody goes to the Grand Canyon to have big thoughts about themselves. We are small.

But not only are we small, we are actually insignificant. once we get to thinking how small we are, in respect to everything that God has created, we become aware of our identity.

Let's be honest, for some of you, you haven't hit that 50 year old mark, the body doesn't work the way it used to be. You might have seen, I put a kind of a funny story on Facebook, I finally got to ski Whistler, been looking forward my whole life to skiing it.

I was only able to ski it for maybe an hour. My legs broke down, my body had never experienced steep, and I've been skiing for 20 years of my life, every day in and out, not so much the last 10 or 20 years.

We break down. We start to see that we're not eternal. The fact of the matter is, most people are not known beyond two generations.

[25 : 30] I can tell you a bit about my grandfathers, but I know absolutely nothing about my great-grandfathers. Nothing. I don't even really care to look into it.

Very few of us will do great deeds that will outlast us. if you do not believe in God, how more so are you truly insignificant, for there is no eternal value to your life.

So when we have a need, we're recognizing we're small, we're recognizing we're insignificant, and the third thing that we are recognizing is we have no home.

Note the sparrow and the swallow find a home close to the altar. What the author is meaning by not only a home, a dwelling place, but within that he finds a purpose.

Every man or woman searches for some type of home, a dwelling place in which they can live their purpose.

[27 : 00] This begins when we start to ask questions. What is life? What am I doing here? What is my purpose? The fact of the matter is I believe we see this question being asked more in a place like Squamish than anywhere else.

There is so much false religion, false idols surround us because they see something that is greater than themselves and it's great and it's beautiful and it speaks to a God who is majestic and all powerful, but they still don't know what it means.

so they carve wood and stone and they draw up philosophies to make themselves significant in light of the eternal.

Man's always been doing this. In fact, before World War I and World War II, man believed that science would solve all our problems. that it would bring out the best and goodness of man.

In fact, the more advanced we get, it only demonstrates how cruel and horrible we are as people. We fight more and more wars.

[28 : 29] Science was supposed to bring a stop to all that ails us. If anything is clear today, that is not true.

Diseases remain, wars remain, and after a certain point, man gives up. They escape. They escape through some, it's alcohol or drugs, some could be gambling, giving themselves over to anxiety, pursuit of money, trying to find out their own purpose.

Some even battle for extreme sports, trying to push the limit as if somehow that will reveal a purpose that will allow them to live eternally.

the reality is, at some time, it all ends. Doesn't matter how smart or not so smart you are, how educated, not so educated, purposelessness affects everyone.

[29 : 51] So when you've come to understand that you are small, you are insignificant, and you have no purpose, it's actually a good thing.

it's almost as if you are naked before the Creator, nothing to hide, nothing to offer, nothing to give.

You see, it's only at that place when we understand our need for God can we truly worship God.

So this is our third truth, that true worship begins with enjoying God. It's understanding we are helpless. The fact of the matter is sparrows and swallows know they are helpless.

Once in a while we'll get a few hundred, it seems like we'll descend in our backyard and it's almost like you can see their heads moving back and forth because they are completely defenseless against any other bird or predator that's out there.

[31 : 24] And at the slightest snap or change in the wind, they're gone. And sometimes I like to see that, I want to see how close I can get just to watch them.

They're fascinating as they're feeding, they're quite beautiful. And where are their nests? they're hidden away. What's interesting about the nests of eagles, they're usually in plain sight at the top of big trees or poles because they have nothing to fear.

But a sparrow or a swallow, they have much to fear for. fear for. Our biggest tragedy of today is that we're not fearful enough.

That our worship has been desecrated by our lack of fear. fear for. We get caught up in the lie that we believe we are living the favored life because we are enjoying good health, we have good kids, good job, good money.

We are looking to things other than God to provide meaning and purpose to make us feel happy and to make us feel good. And this happens to those who attest to be lovers of Jesus.

[32 : 54] And it's easy to get complacent. We start to believe that outside appearances are more important than inward disposition of our heart.

We get more excited about our children's morality than their actual love for Jesus. We start to look at the good life.

As you know, Pastor Dave references a lot. But is it truly a worshipful life? And usually God needs to use something to make us understand this.

Sometimes we get ill, we lose a job, we lose our status. sometimes an accident may happen, death may visit our family.

Today, I see this bitterness because our freedoms are being taken away and we do not like it. Even in the midst of a pandemic, where it's good that we love others by protecting them, we still fight it.

[34 : 19] But when everything is great, we tend to think less about God rather than more about God. God. The other big thing that I believe that plagues our Christian community is that we design our own little Christian idols, our own little Christian actions, our own little Christian things that seem really right and good.

And if we can hold those, we somehow feel that that is a true right reflection of our worship of God. I'm going to give you an example.

It's a modern day cultural example that we've actually seen come from beginning to end. It's a sad story.

Perhaps you guys know the story of Josh Harris. Josh Harris was a pastor of a fairly large church. He had written many books before he was in the age of 30 years old.

He was a big advocate of homeschooling. He was a conference speaker. He was an author. He's written books on how to study your Bible, how to deal with lust in your life.

[35 : 40] But one of the books that really put him on the mark was it was called I Kiss Dating Goodbye. And it was this whole philosophy that our modern system of dating, of going from one person to one person to one person as we are seeking a spouse, was somehow teaching us to divorce one another.

And it was teaching people to leave one another. So he writes this book in his 20s and it becomes a big deal, becomes a bestseller. It's studied in thousands upon thousands of churches because it sounded so good.

It began with purity, which is a great thing. And through this book, this whole subculture resulted. Purity contracts.

They were contracts that a father and mother would make with their children. They'd get purity rings. They'd make these deals that they would never date, never marry, that they would save their first kiss on the altar of their wedding.

They just made this really big deal about it. And there were some really great principles about this book. But what happened after is that Josh, and he ended up making a movie about this, a documentary, people who followed the precepts of his book.

[37 : 12] Life didn't always turn out the way it was supposed to. That just because they saved the first kiss for their husband on the altar did not mean that they were going to have a blessed life.

Some had horrible marriages. The waiting for sex did not mean that it would be a healthy sex life when they were married.

And this documentary demonstrates people that were hurt. And they were almost trying to hold Josh responsible. what was interesting is that virginity became the hallmark of Christian righteousness over absolutely everything else.

And there was these stories of people who had perhaps slept with their wives before they got married. They were because they read these books and practiced these principles. they were living in absolute horrible guilt for 20 years.

And what was so ridiculous about this book is that it forgot about the cross. It forgot about the altar.

[38 : 33] It had raised this part of Christianity above all else that somehow you didn't need the cross. If you could do all these fleshly things you would almost have no need for the blood of Jesus.

They forgot about the good news of the gospel. The good news that exists that sin and shame can be done away with that God forgives us of our sins and he allows people who have had sin in their life live incredibly godly blessed lives.

The fact of the matter is Jesus Christ wants to be held in higher esteem than anything else. Yes, your dating life, virginity, or any purity principle, or other worship principle.

If Jesus somehow gets shoved aside, it's no longer true worship. The sad reality is that Josh, who taught on chastity, purity, morality, and honesty, the enemy came and took him away.

In the last two years, his marriage crumbled, and he has walked away from the Christian faith. As you know, we've been preaching that there is a world system that fights us.

[40 : 23] There is an enemy who controls that world system, but there's also an enemy that lives within us. There is sin that resides within us, and its nature is twisted and perverted.

And when we want something, it always tells us it's good. We always begin with the assumption, I love God, I worship God, therefore my heart must be good.

But the Bible never ever teaches that. In fact, it always tells us that our flesh and our heart is corrupt. We'll always want sinful, selfish things. things. That not only do we have a world against us, our flesh is against us as well.

And then we lose the battle when we begin to think that we are stronger and no longer need to come before that altar, is when the fall begins.

sins. How many of you who've been overcome by temptation in sin believe that you could stand up to it?

[41 : 34] You believed you were strong enough. You believed you would never ever fall for that temptation. You believed all those things, you went into that situation and you fell.

And some of you, it's not once, it's twice, it's three times, it's four times. The only freedom that you have is coming to that point of realization that you are utterly, completely hopeless.

That you are completely defenseless. That you are but a sparrow and a swallow.

and that absolutely everything else in this world is both mightier and stronger than you.

Have you come to this realization about how truly weak and small insignificant you are? have you known any success in your moral struggles?

[42 : 54] Have you come to know what it is to fight with all of your might and yet you go down and down and down every time when you're confronted by the enemy?

this brings us to the fourth characteristic of quality worship.

You need to know that the greatest prize you have is your soul. It is your soul. look at the way these swallows and sparrows live. Instinct tells them that they need to find their nest where they will lay their eggs feed their chicks in a protected place. They will hide they will guard they will feed them they will protect them. What is your most priceless thing that you have?

[44 : 02] marriage your health your children all of the above the fact that the enemy can take all those things away.

The most precious thing you have is your soul. God created each and every one of us as living souls. Our bodies will die but our souls will live on.

2 Timothy 1.12 says but I am not ashamed for I know whom I am believed and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.

What Paul is saying here is no matter what is going on in life whether it be beatings robberies shipwrecks false teaching wicked gossip about me no matter what I am going to be okay because God has my soul and my soul is committed to God this is to be our call as well so here we have these swallows and sparrows are actually provided with this housing how much more does God have for us Matthew 10 29 are you are not two sparrows sold for a penny and not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your father but even the hairs on your head are all numbered fear not therefore you are more value than many sparrows if you do not have a purpose have a home God has it for you Jesus offers you this eternal life for your soul with him

Luke 23 42 and he said Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom and he said truly I say to you the thief on the cross today you will be with me in paradise you see this is the gospel the God who created this world this solar system this galaxy this universe he knows you and we are invited into this temple where a home a purpose is made for us and within this purpose we find rest with God we don't need to struggle against him the question I have for you are you willing to give up your effort you see what's so amazing about

[47 : 00] God is we don't come to him as big or significant or with a purpose we're to come to him small insignificant and in need of a purpose we come to him with our failure we come to him with our shame we come to him in our helplessness and we come to him in our restlessness Matthew 11 28 30 Jesus says clearly says come to me all who labor who are heavy laden and I will give you rest that heavy laden that's the person who's trying to do everything on their own even righteous deeds somehow trying to please God he simply says take my yoke upon you and learn from me for

I am gentle and lowly in heart lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light for those of you who are struggling with sin whether it be moral sin sexual sin any other type of sin our first response is to be shameful and to see you know what I'm going to buck up I'm going to come I'm going to get strong I'm going to go out boldly that's not how it's done it's come to Jesus Christ with nothing your soul has to matter you see if you want safety for your soul there is only one place it can be protected where it can be protected from sin this world and Satan and that is found in the house of the Lord if you want to find this rest this cure for your restlessness your lost sense of purpose it has to begin with knowing the truth of God it needs to be followed with accepting the truth about yourself you need to know the truth about your helplessness you need to know the truth about your soul my prayer is that you can honestly dwell in the house of the Lord and say as the psalmist does for a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere I'd rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness seek Jesus protect your soul dear loving gracious holy majestic heavenly father my prayer is that each and every one of us who hears this sermon who reads this verse would find a purpose to their restlessness of life may it be filled with you and you alone not

Christian things not moral things but you Paul said his only goal was to know the Lord Jesus Christ may it be our desire our burning desire father we are helpless we are insignificant we are small yet we have a mighty God who conquered sin and death not to show us the way but he did it for us that if we would place our faith in him and accept this truth to worship him our souls will be eternally secure father I believe these times will pass we will be able to gather together to encourage one another to worship with one to lift up our voices in praise to enjoy fellowship and meals together but we can still come into your altar to not only be forgiven to be protected to be cared for and love may we hide ourselves in the cleft of the rock protect us oh lord from this world this evil one in the sin that reigns within us bring your eternal truth to bear upon us thank you for your cross upon which all our sins have been crucified in your most holy and heavenly name amen you you you