

From Strength to Strength

23 February 2020

Psalm 84

Pastor Shawn Gendall

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
– CG Mission Statement*

Icebreaker: When was a time that God brought unexpected joy into your life?

Worship: Read and pray through Psalm 84:

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.
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!
Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
in whose heart are the 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, O God of Jacob!
Behold our shield, O God;
look on 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!

Bible Passage & Guiding Question (*The following question is intended to help frame your discussion. Keep it in mind as you read the bible passage and review the sermon summary together.*)

Bible Passage: Psalm 84

Guiding Question: What does it look like to experience God's peace on our journey as followers of Christ?

Sermon Summary

The Psalms are the songs of the children of Israel, offering deep insights into their joys and fears, their expressions of worship, their raw and honest questions about where God is and what He is like. They are also the songs of Jesus; He proclaimed them often and prayed them always. And so we should allow the psalms to weave their way into our hearts. Because their story is ultimately the story of the Gospel – of Jesus our victor, leaving His home to rescue us... and now us, the citizens of Heaven, living for His glory as we await His eventual return.

As our church looks to the journey ahead, our Father calls us – through His psalms – to one of the deepest and most profound of His spiritual gifts: peace. This is a deep, abiding peace; a peace of reconciliation between us and God. Psalm 84 offers three ways for us enter into this peace of wholeness / shalom:

To Dwell. “Blessed are those who dwell in Your house... ever praising you” (v4). We cannot hope to enjoy the peace of God if we give Him less than the first place in our hearts. Therefore, when we find ourselves in dark or difficult times, we have to worship our way out of them, dwelling in our Father’s house because we trust Him (Is 26:3-4). We are a worshipping community. Together, may our minds remain steadfast as we exalt our eternal God.

To Serve. To live out our worship of God in the way we serve one another. “Blessed are those whose strength is in you... as they go through the valley they make it a place of springs” (v5). As our worship-of and trust-in our Father overflows, may each of us live out of this abundance to make the world a better place for those around us.

To Trust. In seeking peace, it is essential that we trust in God (v12). We may never see every injustice resolved or wrong made right. We may not experience healing from our wounds. But God calls us to trust that in Him every injustice will be resolved, every wrong will be made right, and every pain will be healed. As Calvin Miller wrote, “The glory of life in Christ lies not in the quality of our present but in His nearness as we move ever more certainly toward His great pronouncement over our lives, ‘Well done, my beloved child!’”

Because of the cross and Christ’s resurrection, the dwelling place of God is with His people. Because of Christ, we remain in Him and He in us. And so, as we look to the journey God has set before us, may we take to heart in the Apostle Paul’s words: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4: 4-7).

Discussion Questions *(It’s better to wrestle deeply with a few good questions than to gloss over many.)*

- What makes God’s dwelling place so lovely? Why does our soul long for the courts of the Lord?
 - Do you long to worship our Father? Why or why not?
- Comment on the phrase in verse 10, “Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere!”
 - Where is “elsewhere” for you? What is it about that place that attracts you?
- What are 3 ways to experience God’s blessing (to be made happy and whole) according to Psalm 84?
 - How do those traveling through the Valley of Baca (mourning) gain strength as they go? Vs 5-7.
 - What does it look like to experience God’s peace on our journey as followers of Christ?
- Looking at verse 11, which says the Lord is a sun and shield to us:
 - What are the attributes of the sun that teach us who God is and what he is like?
 - What are the attributes of a shield that teach us who God is and what he is like? See also Gen. 15:1.
 - What are situations where we can see God as our sun and shield?
- Which verses and in what ways do verses in Psalm 84 bring peace to you personally ?

What Can We Be Praying For?

Divide into groups of 3 or 4 to pray for one another’s prayer requests. Mid week check in on one another with a text, phone call, or cup of coffee together.

Engage & Experience

In his sermon, Shawn recommended that, in times of grief and uncertainty, we “worship our way through it”. As a response to this call, please consider praying daily, with thanksgiving, for “every dispensation of God’s providence...when it is summertime say, ‘The Lord gave, and blessed by His name.’ When it is winter say, ‘The Lord hath taken away, and blessed be His name.’” (Charles Spurgeon) Continue gathering in worship with the people of God. In your private Scripture reading, consider focusing on Isaiah 40 and Romans 8, which are beautiful reminders of God’s providence and power.