

The Blessings of Gathering to Worship

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[0:00] Psalm 84. Psalm 84. We'll read the entire psalm. How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty!

! My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young, a place near your altar.

O Lord Almighty, my King and my God! Blessed are those who dwell in your house. They are ever praising you. Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. As they pass through the valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs. The autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God and Zion. Hear my prayer, O Lord God Almighty. Listen to me, O God of Jacob. Look upon our shield, O God. Look with favor on your anointed one.

[1:10] Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

For the Lord God is a sun and shield. The Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.

O Lord Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you. So I bring you the greetings from Neuchâtel and Payens Church.

Many people wanted to be in our place and to be here for the wedding, but they could not come and could not be with us today.

So they bring you their greetings. As we begin this preaching this morning, I would ask you to think about the reason that brought you here this morning.

[2:15] Why are you seated here on your seat in this church building instead of being in your warm bed?

Or jogging in the forest? Or I don't know what. Is it a habit? Is it the fear of what others might say if you would not come?

Is it just the desire to meet another person? Boyfriend? Girlfriend? Or is it the thirst of God? Love for Him and His church that brought you here? In this psalm, we discover how to come to church in a way that pleases the Lord.

To understand it, you have to go back six or eight hundred years before Christ. At that time, God had appointed only one place for His people to meet and to sacrifice and to adore Him.

[3:41] That was Jerusalem. That was Jerusalem. That was Jerusalem's temple. So what did you have to do if you were living in Megiddo, 50 miles north of Jerusalem, or in Beersheba, 50 miles south of Jerusalem, when you wanted to adore God and give Him a sacrifice, offer a sacrifice?

You had to go up to Jerusalem. You had to go up to Jerusalem. And there were no cars, no motorways. You had to go up to Jerusalem.

And when God appointed Jerusalem as the place of worship, He also appointed rules for it. He said that every man had to go up to Jerusalem three times a year for the feast of Easter, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.

That's what says Exodus 34, 23. Three times in the year, all you men shall appear before the Lord, the Lord God of Israel.

[4:57] And as much as possible, they had to go up to Jerusalem with all the family. Some of them had to walk a long way in the heat and dust to adore God for a few days before going back home.

And it is this kind of pilgrimage that this Psalm 84 is talking about. In verses 1 to 4, we find the pilgrim at home.

In verses 5 to 8, he is traveling with all the pilgrims, going to Jerusalem temple. And in verses 9 to 11, he is praying in the temple before going back home.

And if we can do a strict parallel between the experience of this pilgrim and our life today, it's because since the ascension of the Lord, the meeting of the church has replaced the worship in Jerusalem.

We don't need to go to Jerusalem. Maybe we want to go once to see what it looks like and what is Israel's country. But we don't have to go there to worship God.

[6:22] The meeting of the church is the place that God appointed for us to come and worship and adore Him together. So this psalm is a psalm for us to help us to come to church with a good attitude.

Because the gathering of the church is the special place where God blesses especially His people. The blessing of singing together to His glory. The blessing of praying together to our glorious Lord. The blessing of bringing our offering to this great provider. The blessing of listening to His word. The blessing of sharing the bread and the wine.

And enjoying the fellowship with one another. And so on. We could go on with the blessing. That's the place where we are today. That the Lord wants to bless you, bless His church especially.

[7:37] This is why we can say that this psalm speaks about the blessing of gathering together as a church. That's my title for this morning.

The blessing of gathering together as a church. Now that we have understood that these psalms can apply to us, we can start to look at the verses.

In the verses 1 to 4, we see the longing after the worship. The longing after the worship. In these verses, you find the psalmist alone at home.

All the verbs are in the singular. He speaks of just himself. He's alone at home. And you have the opportunity to open the door of his home and enter his house.

And what do you see when you find him there? You find a man who longs after the courts of the Lord. His soul, his heart, his flesh, all what he cries out to the living God.

[8:58] He feels such a great need to go to worship God that he can say, My soul finds. In other words, if I cannot go, I will die.

He's hungry. He's hungry. He's hungry. For the living God. For the God who has life in himself. And from whom all the blessings come to him.

If you had entered the house of the psalmist, that's what you would have seen. A man in whom spiritual aspirations were there in his whole being.

Now, if this morning an unexpected guest had arrived to your home, what would he have seen?

Men, women, children, longing after the meeting of the church?

[10:17] Or only routine, sleepiness, contestation, complaint about going to church?

So how is it possible that such aspirations were inhabiting the psalmist?

Considering the trauma and the sacrifice it was for him to go there. It could take one week, two weeks to go and worship God. And walking and hard time.

Verse 1 explains it. It's because the tabernacle of God was lovely. Was dear.

Cherished to his heart. To whom do you usually say dear? Or darling? To your wife. To your wife.

[11:22] To your husband. To a person specially close to your heart. This is exactly why the psalmist is in such an attitude to go to the temple.

Because he knows he's going to meet with the God he loves. His God who loved him so much that he gave the promises of salvation in Old Testament.

He's not attracted by the architecture of the temple. But by the one who dwells in that place. You could be tempted to neglect the church meeting.

Because of the building. But you have a nice building here. But you could be tempted to neglect it.

Because of the people who are there. All are sinners.

You are a sinner. I am a sinner. And it's not always easy. To live as sinners. One beside the other.

We could have good reason not to be here.

[12:40] Maybe because someone got us upset. Or did something wrong with us. But we don't come first for the people. We come because God is there.

He calls us. And he asks us to be here. And to give him all the glory he has to receive. Why such love for the church should be new?

It's because as John said. It's impossible to separate the love of God. Than the love of brothers and sisters.

He says in 1 John 4.20. If someone says I love God. And hates his brothers. He is a liar. For he who does not love his brother.

Whom he has seen. How can he love God. Whom he has not seen. Love the church. Love your brothers and sisters.

[13 : 48] That the way you show that you love God. Love the meeting of the church. Then by the illustration of the sparrow. In verse 3.

He helps us to understand. Why this temple is so dear to his heart. What does a mother sparrow look for. In order to build her nest.

She looks out. For a calm and secure place. This is why. I don't know if you do that here. But in Europe.

If we don't want to have pigeons. Or other birds. On our windowsill. We would put aluminum paper. And nails. And many things. To make them scared.

And no rest. So they will go away. But what's wonderful to see here. Is that he says.

[14 : 45] The altar of God. Is a peaceful place. Because the sparrow can. Can make her nest. At the altar of the Lord.

But I don't. I don't think it was really peaceful. All these lambs. All these Levites. Working. And all the blood there. It was not peaceful at all.

But he can use this illustration. Because he understood. The meaning. Of the sacrifice. There. On the altar. That was where the peace with God would come.

Through the sacrifice. Of the lamb. Not of all these lambs. But through the sacrifice. Of the lamb of God. Our savior Jesus Christ.

So the psalmist was already. Seeing the promise. Accomplished. In the sacrifice. Of the lamb. This is why we don't have any more.

[15 : 52] Altars. In our churches. Because we don't need. To make this kind of sacrifices. The Lord came. He was the last.

To give his life. For us. To bring us. Peace. With God. And when we understand that. It should encourage us.

To come and meet. With the church. Because. That's the day. The place. When we remember. Especially. That the Lord. Gave his life for us.

And that we can. Praise God for that. Together. Together. This is why we long. After meeting. Together. As a church. Longing. Longing. After the gathering. Together. Together. As a church. Comes when we understand. All the blessing.

[16 : 46] We have in Christ. So. If you don't feel. Homesick. About the gathering. Of the church. When you are at home.

Just examine. Just examine your heart. It might be. Because you don't understand. Or believe. The richness. And the glorious salvation.

We have in Christ. And all you have in him. That was what you have to. You could see.

If you had seen. This pilgrim at home. Now. The way. To the gathering. Together. Now. The pilgrim. Is leaving home.

And walking. To Jerusalem. Temple. That's verses. Five to eight. Now.

[17 : 43] The pilgrim. Joins. All the pilgrims. And they walk. Together. And we see that. Because all the verbs. Now. Are in plural form. There are many of them.

Walking. Together. To the temple. And what we notice. Straight away. Is that. God's blessing. Doesn't wait. To. Doesn't wait.

To come over them. Until they are in the temple. But the blessing. Come. As they walk. God starts. Giving his blessing. To these pilgrims. As they are on their way. What. Would you need. If you had to. Walk. So far.

To go to. The temple. You would need. Strength. Because you know. That. Strength. Tends to diminish. As you walk. But what does.

[18 : 38] The. The psalmist. Notice. In his walks here. It is. That. His strength. Is growing. Instead of. Diminishing.

And as he walks. He becomes. Stronger. That's what. Verse. Seven is saying. They go. From strength.

To strength. How is this possible? Because the strength. That. Makes him walk.
Is not a human strength. It is God's strength. We see that in verse five. Happy are those. Whose strength. Is in you.

The strength. Of the Lord. Here is a rich promise. For us. Sometimes. On Sunday morning. Or before the midweek meeting.

[19 : 32] Aren't we tempted. To stay. In bed. Or to say. I'm just. Too tired. To go to church. Other time.

When we think about. Our pilgrimage. On this earth. And. The long way. We have to go. Until we meet the Lord. We can say. Oh. I'll never make it.

It's just too long. To walk. All these years. Faithfully. To see the Lord. One day. But we have a wonderful promise. Here. That it is the Lord.

Who gives us. The strength. And as we. As we walk. As we go. He will give us. Strength. And strength. And strength.

Until the end. Of our life. And also. For. Our meeting. During the week. You think.

[20 : 36] Your strength. Will diminish. If you. Go. If you. If you. If you. If you go to church. Sunday. Or midweek meeting. But if you are.

His child. Have confidence. In him. Put him. First. Give him. Priority. To the gathering. Of his church. And you will see.

He will honor. His promise. I'm sure. Many of you. Experienced that. You felt weak. To go to church. You had confidence in him.

You came. And you were stronger. When you came out. Than when you came in. That's. The Lord's. Way. Of doing things. What would you need.

Else. If you had to go. This long way. From your place. To Jerusalem. You would need. Assurance. Assurance. Assurance. About the way.

[21 : 36] To follow. Assurance. Of his presence. In the. Dangerous. Path. There's nothing. Worse. When we work. In the mountain.

That not knowing. If we are. Walking. In the right direction. It's not bad. To walk. Even if we have to walk. Many hours. But if you're not sure.

To go to the right place. You cannot just. Walk. With all your strength. And it's the same. In our life. Isn't it? Often.

We. We need. To have. God's direction. And to be sure. We are walking. In the right direction. In our life. And that's what. The psalmist. Tells us.

Is he. Here. Sorry. Verse five. Happy are those. Whose strength. Is in the Lord. In whose heart.

[22 : 31] Are the highways. To Zion. The French version. Says. He has. In his heart. Ways.

Which are traced. So that he knows. Where he goes. This means. That even. If sometimes. He's insecure.

He knows. That his ways. Is prepared. By God. That God. Hold him. Him. In his hand. Even.

If he has to go. To. Difficult time. Because it's called. About the. It's. We. He tells us. About the valley. Of Baca. Which means.

Valley of tears. Verse six. What does. That valley of tears. Become. Verse six.

[23 : 27] As they go. Through the valley. Of Baca. They make. It. A place. Of springs. The early rain. Also. Covers it.

With pools. Even. In hard time. The Lord. Is there. He takes care. And he can. He can. Change. This. Hard time. In blessing. Time. And at the end. We see. All these pilgrims. Arriving. To the temple.

And what do they do? Verse eight. Oh Lord. God of hosts. Hear my prayer. Give. He. Give ear. Oh God. Of Jacob.

They come there. They arrive. In the temple. And they pray. And they praise. The Lord. And let us look at the. The content. Of that prayer.

[24 : 22] In verses. Nine to twelve. We've seen. The longing. After. The gathering. Of the church. The way. To the gathering. Of the church.

And now. The blessing. Of the gathering. Together. The psalmist. Is praying. In the temple. How does he address God?

Verse nine. Bless. Behold. Our shield. Oh God. Look. On the face. Of your anointed. He knows.

He cannot come. In front of God. On his own. He knows. He has to come. Covered. By the righteousness.

Of the anointed. So he comes to God. And said. Don't look at me. Look at him. Look at the Messiah. It's.

[25 : 19] Through him. And because of his work. That I can come. To you now. That I can pray. He knows.

That the Messiah. Is. His shield. So he comes. To God. Counting. On his mercy. Because of Christ. Who accomplished. Complete salvation. For him. And with this assurance. In his heart. He can express. The blessing. Of being in the presence.

Of God. Verse 10. For a day. In your court. Is better. Than a thousand. Elsewhere. I would rather. Be a doorkeeper.

In the house. Of my God. Than live. In the tent. Of wickedness. A day. In your court.

[26 : 17] Is better. Than a thousand. Elsewhere. In other words. I prefer. To be one day. Worshipping you.

Than a thousand. That means. Three years. On the beach. In the mountain. Anywhere else. I would rather.

Be a doorkeeper. In the house. Of my God. Than dwell. In the tent. Of wickedness. In other words. I would prefer. To be. At the humblest.

Place. The. The. The. The. Door. Was the place. Where handicapped. People. Came. Just to beg. For some money. I would prefer.

To be at that. Place. As a handicap. Just begging. For money. In your house. Than to have. All the richness.

[27 : 18] Of the world. What priorities. My dear friends. One glimpse.

Of God. Is more valuable. Than all the pleasures. Of the world. The crumbs. Of the table.

Of the Lord. Are more precious. Than the banquets. Of the kings. You see. It is in the gathering. Together. In the. In worshipping. The Lord. With the people. Of God. That the psalmist. Finds. The right.

Priorities. In his life. And that he can. Affirm them. In prayer. And it is still. The same. Today.

[28 : 13] It is in the gathering. Of the church. That you will be able. To set the right. Priorities. In your life. Because it is in the gathering.

Of the church. That you will see Christ. More and more. Jesus Christ. In your eyes. And yet. That you will start to love him more.

And loving him more. You will love less. Other things. It is there. That we meet with God. The God who is.

As he said. It said in verse 11. Who is. A sun. And a shield. The God who enlightens. Our soul. And warms up our heart.

The God who protects. Us. In all. Our situation. In life. It is here. In his church.

[29 : 13] That we meet. With the God. Who gives. Grace. And glory. Verse 11. For the Lord God. Is a sun. And a shield. He bestows favor.

And honor. No good thing. Does the Lord. Withhold. From those. Who walk. Uprightly. The God. Who makes us. Partakers of his glory. And who transforms us. Little by little. To the perfect image. Of his son. Jesus Christ. He is there.

You meet him. He works. In your life. In the worship of God. We meet. With God.

In a special way. This is why. We should. Enjoy it. A thousand times more. Than.

[30 : 11] Anything else. How does that sound to you? What did you think. Before.

Of the worship of the Lord. Before today. This psalm. You see. Should encourage. Each one of us. To. To. To love. This special time.

We have together. Because. We meet. The Lord God. In a special way. Some people. Would say. Maybe it's here. The same as in Switzerland.

I. I will be. In fellowship. With you. Walking. In the mountains. On Sunday morning. Or skiing. That's not real fellowship. To fellowship.

We have to be together. And we cannot. Just live our Christian life. On our own. We need the church. Because that's the place. Where God.

[31 : 05] Comes in a special way. To meet us. To encourage us. So make. The church. And the meeting. Of the church. A priority. In your life.

It's. It's. It's really necessary. For your growth. In faith. Once he has finished. His prayer. The psalmist. Is ready to go home.

He's ready. And renewed. In his confidence. In God. That's what we see. In verse 12. Oh Lord of hosts. Happy. Is everyone.

Who trusts in you. He understood. That. He doesn't need. To stay. The whole life. In the temple. To be under God's protection.

God. Takes care of him. Wherever he is. Wherever he goes. And this.

[32:02] We should also remember. As we start. A new. Week. Today. Sometimes. We would. Just prefer. To stay in church. The whole week. Because we have.

Difficult. People. To work with. And hard job. And so on. And so on. Oh. Can't we just stay. All together. The whole week. Pray the Lord. That's for heaven. But it's not for today.

We still have to go on. And stay. And work. And especially. This first day of the week. You see. We meet together. We get strength. From the Lord.

We are renewed. By the Lord. And then. We are ready. To go. Back. Into the world. And to be the. Light. Of the world. And the salt. Of the world.

So come to church. Be strengthened. By the Lord. And then go back. To this world. To be. The light.

[32:59] Of the world. May the Lord. Give you the grace. In your home. To long. After the gathering. Together. As a church. Because you.

You meet him here. May the Lord. Remind you. As you walk. In your Christian life. That he is. The one. Who will strengthen you. In your life.

And may the Lord. Make you. Delight. In the blessing. Of the gathering. Together. So that you'll get strength. To. To be good.

Witness of him. In this dark world. Amen. We'll pray. Heavenly Father. We have to. Come before you. All together. And. Confess our sin. We ask you. For forgiveness. Because so often.

[33:55] We. We don't. Long. About. Your church. Meeting. We don't. Long. After the service. And the meeting.

With you. And your church. Oh Lord. Forgive us. And help us. To see. How wonderful. And blessed. Is the time.

We can spend together. And how useful. Is that time. For. Our growth. In our. In our faith. And how. It helps us.

To be. Better witness. Of you. In this world. Oh Lord. We ask you. To bless each one of us. And to put in our heart.

A new love. For you. A new love. For your church. For the church. Meeting. Give us strength. Lord. To go on.

[34:48] To walk. Faithfully. In our life. Bless this church. Especially. Especially. And. Warsaw church. As they try. To be.

The light. In this town. In this country. Thank you. For. All the blessing. We have. To be. Together. And to work. Together.

For your kingdom. Thank you. For the links. We have. Between our churches. Thank you. For. Stephan. And Stephanie. And we ask you. To. Bless them.

In their marriage. And to. That they might be. A way. That will. Even. Give us. Close. Of relationship. Between our two churches. Thank you.

Lord. Because. We know. That you come. In a special way. In your church meeting. That you are meeting us. And through your spirit.

[35:43] You are showing us. More and more. All the love. You have given us. In your son. Jesus Christ. Oh Lord. Work in.

The heart. Of his. In Jesus name. Amen.