

Glory in God's Presence

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[0 : 0 0] Amen. Turn in your scriptures to Psalm 122. Psalm 122 and stand with me as we read from God's word.

I rejoiced with those who said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord. Our feet are standing in your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is built like a city that is closely compacted together. That is where the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, to praise the name of the Lord according to the statute given to Israel.

There the thrones for judgment stand, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. May those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels.

For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, peace be within you. For the sake of the house of the Lord, our God, I will seek your prosperity.

Let's pray together. Lord, we thank you that you've spoken to us in your word. You are our kind heavenly father and you train us through your word.

[1 : 2 6] We are thankful to have it in writing tonight. We are thankful that you've preserved it for us. We're thankful that we have a preacher to bring it to us. And Lord, we pray that as you do, that you would train us in holiness, that you would shape our lives more into the life of Christ, into the likeness of our Savior.

We pray this so that you may be glorified, that you may receive the praise you deserve, that your word would return to you with the purpose with which it was sent.

So, Lord, honor yourself through your word now as we hear it preached. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Let's hear as the word's preached. Well, good evening.

My name is Colin Horn. If we haven't met, it's good to be with you tonight and to be able to open God's word together. I count it a great privilege. I bring greetings from First Baptist Church in Warsaw.

Well, tonight we are looking at Psalm 122. I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord. A few months ago, my son Bodie and I, we took a flight to California.

[2 : 5 3] And on the return trip back, we were going from California, had a layover in Minneapolis. And on that return flight, it was a three and a half hour flight, Bodie was in my lap and it was going to be a long flight.

There was a man who was sitting next to us. He had the middle seat. And we got into a conversation together. And I was asking him kind of where he was going, if Minneapolis was his final destination, what his plans were.

And it turned out that, no, Minneapolis wasn't his final stop. It was going to be Nashville, Tennessee. And I said, well, what takes you to Nashville? And he said, honestly, I just need to get away. I just need to kind of have a reset.

I didn't ask him, like, do you mean, like, are you permanently moving there? But he definitely was saying, I need to just kind of clear my head. Life in San Francisco, for whatever reason, had been tough for him.

He ended up moving seats. Very kind of him. He found another middle seat so that Bodie could have a seat. And that was lifesaver. But he had to get away. It's much like the Southwest slogan, want to get away.

[3 : 55] There was something to that idea of, I need to leave this place, and I want to go anywhere. You could blindfold me, throw a dart at a map, I'll go there.

Well, maybe even tonight you have an adventurous side to you, and you're thinking to yourself, I would love to just get away. If it was maybe the winter, we'd feel a little bit differently. I want to get away. I need to go anywhere.

Well, where would you want to go tonight? David, the writer of Psalm 122, he knew where he wanted to be. David wanted to be in Jerusalem.

David said, I don't want to just go anywhere. I want to be in Jerusalem. And we're going to see in this passage that David gives us, he gives us three reasons under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for why he wants to be in Jerusalem.

And we should take note of these three reasons, because they are three good reasons for us as well. So if we look at Psalm 122 together, you should hopefully be there in your Bibles.

[4 : 58] You will see that it is part of a collection of psalms. They are called the Songs of Ascent. And so the people of God would be singing these psalms to one another, much like we kind of sang to each other tonight.

They would sing to one another as they were traveling to Jerusalem for a festival, a pilgrimage. So God's people on the journey to Jerusalem singing these psalms.

Now, this one is really important because it kind of comes at the conclusion of three psalms that tied together. So if you look at Psalm 120, it's the first one in the Songs of Ascent.

And it's fitting that it's first. Because in this one, the songwriter, he is not in the land, the promised land. He is not in Israel.

He is living in a foreign land. You can see that in like verse 5. Woe to me that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar.

[6 : 02] Too long have I made my dwelling among those who hate peace. I am for peace. But when I speak, they are for war. And so we see in this first song of Ascent that the psalmist, he's crying out.

He's in despair. He is grieved because he is living in a foreign land among people who are God's enemies. And he wants his suffering to end. And then we see Psalm 121.

And now we see one. And this one's maybe a little more well-known as well. And we see the song that speaks of how God keeps his people. And they're on the journey to Jerusalem.

And God is their keeper. God is the one who goes before them. God is the one who neither slumbers nor sleeps. My kids love that thought that God doesn't sleep. He will keep you.

And so the psalmist is now on the journey to Jerusalem. Then we get to Psalm 122. And now David, the psalm writer here, he has arrived. David is in Jerusalem.

[7 : 02] And he rejoices. And why does he rejoice? Well, let's look at those first two verses together. I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord.

Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem. So David has arrived. And he rejoices because for the first reason that he wants to be in Jerusalem, it's in Jerusalem that God's presence is found.

He says, I want to be at the house of the Lord. So what's he talking about there? What is this house of the Lord that he wants to go to? Well, that is the tabernacle in David's day.

The temple was not yet built. The tabernacle was like this mobile temple. And yet the tabernacle was incredibly significant. If we re-round a little bit and went farther back into the Old Testament, we could read of the construction of the tabernacle in Exodus 25.

And I'll be honest, if you went there and you were reading that, you would think this is a little dry. There are parts of like, wow, there's a lot talked about here. A lot of dimensions, a lot of building of poles. And what's going on here?

[8 : 06] But there's something very significant about this. Because here, God is laying out how his people are to construct his earthly dwelling place. This is where God's presence would be found in a special, particular way.

Because we know that in one sense, God is everywhere present at all times. And yet in another sense, God speaks of being specially found in a certain location. And for God's people in the Old Testament, it was in Jerusalem.

Because there, the tabernacle was found. And within the tabernacle was the Ark of the Covenant. And that's where the Ten Commandments would be found. At one time, that's where Aaron's staff was placed.

That's where manna from the desert was put. And so the people would consider the Ark like, this is where God's presence is especially found. Like, it's not just in the tabernacle structure.

But God's presence is here at the Ark of the Covenant. But actually, it's not even just the Ark. We can even go further in and consider the cover to the Ark. Depending on your translation, you may have it read the mercy seat.

[9 : 09] And God gave special instruction for how that was to be crafted. He said, you're to overlay it with gold. And then you're to put these two angels, cherubim, onto the cover.

And they're to face each other. And their wings are actually to touch. And where their wings touch, there I will speak to you.

So there is where God's presence was found. On the tips of those wings, other places in the Old Testament talks about it like his footstool, the cover to the Ark. It is like God's heavenly throne room.

And the earth is his footstool. And here he is at the cover of the Ark in the Holy of Holies, in the tabernacle, housed in Jerusalem.

And David says, we're going there. In fact, we've arrived there. We've made it. I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord.

[10 : 06] So God's presence found in a special way. Now, when we think about David, we know that he especially had a unique relationship to the Ark of the Covenant.

In 2 Samuel 6, we read of when David had the privilege of actually bringing the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. He had conquered the Philistines. He had conquered his enemies.

They had taken the city from the Jebusites. And now Jerusalem was God's city, the city of David, David having conquered it.

And David brings the Ark in. And in 2 Samuel 6, we read this. And when those who bore the Ark of the Lord had gone six steps, David sacrificed an ox and a fattened animal.

And David danced before the Lord with all his might. God's presence is David's greatest joy. God's presence is David's greatest joy.

[11 : 02] And so he longed to be near to God. Just as he wrote in Psalm 1611. This is one of my favorite verses in the Bible. We read, So David, he lived it.

He experienced it. And he was glad to go to the house of God. God's presence. It's not just David's greatest delight. It's to be our greatest delight as well, isn't it?

We delight at the thought of being in God's presence. Now it looks a little different for us today. You may have had an opportunity. I know at least one person who's told me about a time they got to go to Israel, who's here tonight.

But you maybe haven't been to Israel. I have not been to Israel. I have not been to Jerusalem. But that's okay. Because God's presence isn't found uniquely there today.

We're going to see as we continue in this psalm, God's presence is found in us and among us. We can enter into his presence. In the word, in prayer, we come into his throne room.

[12 : 10] Hebrews teaches that. All over the place in Hebrews, we read of having confidence and access to God. That is a privilege that we have because of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because Jesus went before us, died on the cross for our sins, reconciled us to God. Now we come into his throne room and we have Jesus as our advocate.

And he says, they're with me because they're covered in my blood. By faith, they have been now joined to me, united to me. And we get to enter into God's throne room.

So we don't have to make a trek across the ocean to go to be with him. We can have his presence. In the word, in prayer, and as we gather together as God's people.

What a privilege that is to consider. That God's presence is found in us, among us. As we read his word, as we pray, we should remember David's words.

[13 : 04] We should be fueled by his words. I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord. So that's the first reason that David wants to go to Jerusalem. It is because there he finds God's presence.

Here's a second reason that David wanted to be in Jerusalem. It's because there he found God's people. So we're going to read verses 3 and 4. Actually, 3 through 5 of Psalm 122.

So David wanted to be in Jerusalem because there God's presence was found.

But he also wanted to be there because there God's people were found. Now remember, the people of God were journeying to Jerusalem, probably at a special occasion as they're singing this psalm.

And so they are coming together in more than just the regular ways of these are the people of God that I kind of associate with on a normal basis. Now this is like hordes of believers who are coming into Jerusalem, droves of God's people coming together.

[14 : 20] And David rejoices as he's coming to the city. It's like there's just other believers just flooding in with him. So I tried to think of an analogy for small town Midwest Indiana.

This was hard. Like when do we experience anything to that degree? The Blueberry Festival, right? The Blueberry Festival. I thought that was fitting. I remember the first time that Casey took me to the Blueberry Festival.

Never been to Plymouth before. We parked at a Taco Bell. And I thought, why are we at Taco Bell right now? I thought we were going to this festival. And then we walked like three miles to get to the entrance to the Blueberry Festival.

And then it was swarms of people all there because they adore blueberries. And it's weird, but good for them. Blueberry Festival. The closest thing to God's people flooding into Jerusalem.

But that pales in comparison, right? We're laughing. We're laughing at the thought of like that's our best illustration. Yeah, I mean, we can't envision what that would have been like for David to be standing in Jerusalem.

[15 : 24] To be able to see the tabernacle, the place of God's dwelling. To see God's people coming together. And they're not there for blueberries. They're there to worship. They're there for God.

They are united together in their love and their affection for him. And we see how David almost just seamlessly transitions from looking around.

And he sees the ornate buildings, the structure of the city. He sees the city itself. And he just seamlessly transitions to not just how impressive the city is.

How grand the city is. How built up the city is. But he just transitions to the people. The people that are found in this city. They're bound together to praise God.

Bound together to give thanks to the name of the Lord. This is good for us to hear. It's good for us to hear of the ways that God's people want to be together.

[16 : 28] Because we live in a world where it is so easy to live in isolation. Not even try to. It just kind of happens. With modern technology.

With the ability to travel as we can now. We can very easily disconnect ourselves from people. And live very isolated lives. And so here we see this song that God's people would sing together as they're going to Jerusalem.

And they want to be together. Their desire is to be with each other. And to worship God together. Not to be in their little home with their phone.

Doing their thing. Having some kind of experience just by themselves. They want to be physically with God's people. To the best of their ability. They're going to make that journey to be together.

God's people. Found in Jerusalem. In the presence of God. And so we see here. How they're bound together. How God's people are going up to Jerusalem.

[17 : 28] Bound together. Now we've been bound together too. Haven't we? If you read on in the scriptures. Read into the New Testament. The Bible uses lots of different analogies.

To help us to see how we have been joined together as the church. First Peter actually uses temple language. Similar language that we would think of with Psalm 122.

First Peter says in chapter 2. You yourselves. Like living stones. Are being built up as a spiritual house. To be a holy priesthood.

To offer spiritual sacrifices. Acceptable to God. Through Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 12. Also talks about God's people.

In relationship to Jesus Christ. And in relation to each other. Like a physical body. So Jesus is the head. And we are the body.

[18 : 25] We're members of the body. Ephesians 4 builds on an analogy. Ephesians 4 says we are to grow up in every way. Into him who is the head. Into Christ.

From whom the whole body joined and held together. By every joint with which it is equipped. When each part is working properly. Makes the body grow. So it builds itself up in love.

So we are joined together. Like the people of Israel. Going to Jerusalem. Gathering together. We are bound together in Christ. And that has all kinds of practical implications.

So we encourage each other. We exhort each other. We forgive each other. We care for each other. We love each other. We bear one another's burdens. We sharpen each other. We serve each other.

All because we are bound together in Christ. God has made his dwelling in and among his people.

[19 : 22] And so in a way, this brings together the idea of God's presence and God's people. It's kind of a package deal. I remember in elementary school we used to play basketball on the playground. And sometimes when we were picking teams we would have like a package.

It would be like me and this kid. You pick me. You get him too. Package deal. Sometimes it's awesome. If you were picking teams you're like, I want both of those guys. Other times, not so awesome. Like I want him.

But I don't really want him. But I do want him. Do I take the sacrifice of getting him with him? Or do I just pick that one guy there? Do I take both or one? Here though, we get both. And both are wonderful.

God's people and God's presence are a package deal. Ephesians 2.22 says, In Christ we are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

So God's presence in and among God's people. What a privilege it is. Like really what a privilege it is for us to be together in Christ.

[20 : 27] Now that's not maybe how we always feel. There's a certain child in our household who will remain nameless. And this certain child has a habit on Sunday mornings, as was the case this morning, of saying something to the effect of, I don't want to go to church.

I don't want to go to church. And so we get to talk about why we do what we do as a family. Why we go to gather with God's people. Now I can't make my child feel the way that David felt about going to Jerusalem in Psalm 122.

But I can remind my child of truth that my child needs to hear. And, if I'm being honest, in those moments, I need to hear that too.

Like when I'm giving that little sermon to my child, in a lot of ways I'm just really preaching to myself, yes, it is good to gather with God's people, with all of the burden and baggage that may come with that, that I bring to that.

It is good to gather with God's people. And that's why we go to church, my child. That's why we go to church. I refuse to give away who this is. We gather with God's people, and that's a good thing to do.

[21 : 39] We rejoice that we can be together. Even when my heart wants to, the sin that remains wants to push on that, and doesn't want to embrace that. Well, let's try and get out as fast as we can.

Let's have as little conversation as we can. Let's not go as deep as we could. Psalm 122 reminds us, it is good for God's people to gather together. So, David teaches us that truth.

He wants to be in Jerusalem, because there he finds God's presence and God's people. And the third and final reason that David wants to be in Jerusalem is because there he finds God's peace.

Read again with me verses 6 through 9. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. May they be secure who love you. Peace be within your walls and security within your towers.

For my brothers and companions' sake, I will say, peace be within you. For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good. David wants good for Jerusalem.

[22 : 43] He seeks the good of the city. In many ways, even as he's saying these things, as he's praying for the peace of Jerusalem, it's demonstrating his love both for God and for man.

His love for God and for his neighbor on display as he prays for the peace of Jerusalem. He wants God to be glorified. And he wants God's people to be thriving in God's presence.

And that's best captured by the reality of peace. Now, in David's lifetime, Jerusalem had achieved a measure of peace, even more so in the lifetime of David's son, Solomon.

In fact, Jerusalem is called, understandably so, the city of peace. David had brought peace in many ways. Now, Jerusalem was also very well fortified.

In verse 7, David refers to its walls. They had impressive walls that surrounded the city, that hemmed the city in. Those were good defenses against foreign enemies. We may not think much of walls, but that's how people had peace of mind.

[23 : 50] They could go about their daily lives because enemies couldn't just come straight into the city and take it. And so people could enjoy the city. They could live and prosper in the city because they had a measure of peace.

Peace. They see the walls, and they know that we dwell secure, that the enemy is going to have a lot of work to get through those walls. It's not just those walls, though. There's also the hills that surround Jerusalem.

Those are natural defenses that fortified the city. So people lived at peace. So David sees peace, but he wants even more peace. He wants that peace to never end.

But if you read on in the biblical story, it does. That peace does come to an end. It's only a couple generations later. The kingdom is divided.

Enemies inside of the nation, enemies outside of the nation are literally tearing it apart. And that brings conflict. That brings death. That brings destruction. That longed for peace and security.

[24 : 51] It evaporates. And in its place, sin, judgment. If we think back to Psalm 120, referenced a little earlier, these words ring in our ears.

Too long, verse 6, too long have I had my dwelling among those who hate peace. I am for peace. But when I speak, they are for war.

When we think about our lives, we think about our personal lives, we think about our communities, we think about the world around us, and we see that sin and its consequences are running rampant, frustration and conflict, relationships that are fractured, physical war, peace as Jerusalem experienced, the peace of Psalm 122.

We don't see that as we look around. We're burdened by that lack of peace. And we're not talking peace like just coexistence. It's not what we're aiming for, not some kind of fake, superficial peace.

We want real, lasting, God-honoring, harmony, and order. We want the peace where men and women and children are living according to God's word, where they're living rightly before one another and before God.

[26 : 07] And we don't see much of that peace today. But there is a peace that the Bible speaks of which we can have, peace with God himself.

Romans 5.1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And so, through the finished work of God's Son on the cross, he has made peace with us.

For those who have put their faith in him, we are no longer his enemies. We are no longer at enmity with him. We're no longer in conflict with him or opposed to him. He's reconciled us. As we were just singing of and thinking on and meditating on in the music, he's made us his children.

And that peace that God has achieved for us, we now experience between us. It flows into our relationships.

And so that's why in the New Testament, Paul can speak of the peace that we have with God in Colossians 1. And just two chapters later, he can speak of the same kind of peace but now with each other.

[27 : 18] So Colossians 1, verses 19 and 20 say, For in Christ, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven making peace by the blood of his cross.

And then just two chapters later, Paul can write in Colossians 3.15, And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which indeed you were called in one body.

So now this peace with God, it leads to then peace that we're to live out with one another. So we work hard to love each other and to bear with one another and to be long-suffering towards each other.

When one has a complaint against another, to forgive each other because we have peace with God. And if you're here tonight and that is foreign to you, the Spirit is working in your heart, you can have that peace with him as well.

Jesus welcomes all whom the Spirit draws to him. He warmly welcomes all of those who come in faith and repentance. Come to Christ. Have that peace with God.

[28 : 26] God. So David wanted to be in Jerusalem. David was filled with gladness at the thought of being in Jerusalem, at the actual reality of standing at its gates because there he found God's presence, he found God's people, and he found God's peace.

And as we've considered this psalm, as we see where David wanted to be, we should be struck by this incredible reality that Psalm 122, it anticipates a far greater future for God's people.

All that we find here in Psalm 122 in Jerusalem finds its fulfillment in the New Jerusalem. All that we find here, a day is coming when God's presence will be found right before our eyes.

We will see him, as Revelation 22 speaks, face to face. Or as Revelation 21 says, that God has made his dwelling with us. And there will be no temple because we will be in his very presence.

the Lamb will be the temple. And a day is coming when God's people will gather from every tribe and tongue and nation to worship him. We'll come flooding into the new heavens and the new earth.

[29 : 42] We sang of that in the last song of coming into the pearly gates. We're going to come flowing into those gates to worship God together, unhindered by our sin. And a day is coming when full and complete peace and security is going to be ours.

Nothing unclean, nothing impure, no sin or death, no physical enemies, no spiritual enemies in the city of God. Perfect peace, perfect security, the prayer of Psalm 122 realized in its entirety.

And that perfect peace, that perfect security, it's going to be ours because as Psalm 122.5 gets at, there are thrones in Jerusalem. And one worthy is going to sit on that throne and his name is Jesus.

And he is going to perfectly rule, he is going to perfectly reign from that throne. And we're going to dwell secure. We're going to dwell in peace.

We will see the face of God. His name will be written on our foreheads because we belong to him. And we're going to be with the Lord forever. So we're not going to need a map.

[30 : 55] We're not going to need to be blindfolded and throw a dart at the wall to figure out where we want to go. We know where we want to be. We know where we want to go. It's in the New Jerusalem. As the writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 13, 14, for here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.

So even as we await that future day, as we look forward to that perfect city coming down from heaven like a bride beautifully adorned, as we wait for the new Jerusalem, we can say with David, I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord.

Let's pray together. Father God, we do, we rejoice. Our hearts are filled with joy as we consider your song, your people singing of their great desire to be in Jerusalem.

And Father, we too, we long to be in your presence with your people in perfect peace. So Father, we pray that you would fill our hearts with longing, with anticipation for the day when your son will return, when he will judge perfectly, when sin and death will be no more, when your people will be vindicated, when you will be shown to be God, when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord.

What a wonderful day that will be, Lord, when we can be in your presence. Help us as we live in this week, as we live in the trials and the suffering of this world and in the difficulty of this world and the sin that even we contribute to relationships that we have.

[32 : 33] We pray, Lord, that you would help us to walk in a manner that is worthy of the gospel, to live as people who seek a city that is to come. Pray all of these things in the precious name of your Son.

Amen.