

Sunday, November 19, 2023 pm

## GLAD TO GO TO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

### Psalm 122:1

Psalm 122 is a psalm attributed to David. It is described as one of the Psalms of Ascents – a group of 15 psalms that Israelites would sing while on their way to Jerusalem to worship the LORD for various feasts. They are called songs of ascent because Jerusalem was located on an elevation that one had to ascend to. Psalm 122 is a song of anticipation as one anticipates assembling in the temple to worship God. These psalms would have been of the greatest meaning to the devout who were genuinely committed to YHWH, as opposed to the nominal Jew. There are many wonderful lessons associated with this psalm, but I want to just focus on the first verse, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the LORD.’”

Tonight, I want to address our attitude when we assemble! We frequently mention the importance of assembling. For the true saint, it is not a suggestion, but a realized command. Hebrews 10:24-25 says, *And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.* We are reminded in this verse that we are not to forsake (abandon or leave behind) coming together with others of “like precious faith”. Notice that “assembling” is not restricted to a single time but **WHENEVER** we assemble. We ought to **WANT** to be here every time we gather as we have opportunity, not just the “once and I have fulfilled my weekly obligation” of many.

But I want to focus on a specific aspect of assembling as the church. Do we find joy in assembling? And is our joy to assemble as great now as in times past or is it more or is it less. Sadly, for many, assembling is treated only as a necessary chore associated with our faith. But is that the attitude we ought to have?

**Malachi 1** finds Israel’s indifferent attitude toward the LORD. Idolatry had been purged from the people once and for all. But now they were guilty of a sin just as egregious. Serving God had become mere ritual and even that had been corrupted. They were offering to God left-overs, animal sacrifices that were useless otherwise. YHWH was insulted by this and rightly so. He challenged them to try and offer that as a gift to the governor, and see how he would act (1:6-8). Vs. 9 says, *“But now entreat God’s favor, That He may be gracious to us. While this is being done by your hands, Will He accept you favorably?” Says the Lord of hosts.* It is a call to repentance.

Vs. 10 shows His disgust for their behavior – who is there among you who will shut the doors (to the temple). Their worship was vain. Then the LORD declared that they had defiled His “table”. “You say, “O what a weariness!” and sneer at it” (13). He declared the one offering these “left-overs” as cursed in His eyes.

As I examine texts like this, I wonder if it is possible for us to assemble, going through the motions, but there is no real joy in the assembly. Has our worship become mere routine that we participate in without giving much thought to what we are doing? Are we simply “going through the motions”? Are we continually critical of the various acts of worship (leaders, length, etc.)? Do we doze off during the “long winded lesson”, and can’t wait for worship to be over so that we can go about our business? I simply ask, will God be pleased with such an attitude?

Paul commanded in 1 Corinthians 14:15, *What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.* We need to **UNDERSTAND** what we are doing **AND** it needs to be “in spirit” meaning with a proper attitude.

With these thoughts as a foundation let’s take a few moments to address some things that can help us ensure that there is joy in our worship, and that it is both “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

#### I. **Do I appreciate the purpose of being here?**

- a. Why are we here? In summary, it is to worship God.
- b. True worship to God consists of two different aspects: 1) We must follow the pattern He has outlined. We are continually reminded that our worship is first and foremost directed TOWARD God. As such, He determines **WHAT** we do and **HOW** we do it. We must respect the boundaries of God’s authority.

- 1 Corinthians 4:6 challenges us to not think beyond what is written. That is why we do acts of worship when and how we do them. We have commands, approved examples and necessary conclusions that factor in to this. While Israel was doing SOME of what God had commanded (going through the motions), they were not fully pleasing Him. God demanded the firstborn and the best. They had failed in that. God demanded total devotion which they were not giving. Malachi 3:8ff asks, "Will a man rob God?". They had because they were not giving Him the commanded "tithe" which was part of the Law of Moses. The point is God has a RIGHT to dictate how we worship Him. Our responsibility is to follow His pattern in everything we do. 2) The second part is our next point – the heart.
- c. In our worship we also edify one another. Every act of worship God has given us is designed to both praise Him and build us up. Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 14:12, 26.  
And let us not forget in this that in a world that stands opposed to God, we need each other all the more. Hebrews 10:24-25.

## II. Is my heart right?

- a. Our worship needs to be from the heart. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> aspect of true worship. It should be something we WANT to do and are glad to give Him our very best.
- i. 1 Corinthians 14 described abuses in the worship at Corinth. They had heart issues.
  - ii. 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 describes our giving is to be from the heart, "*not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver.*"
  - iii. As we partake of the Lord's Supper, we must partake "in a worthy manner... discerning the Lord's body" (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).
  - iv. Ephesians 5:19 – our singing is "making melody in the heart". If our heart is not in it, to God it is as "sounding brass or a clanging cymbal" (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:1 – noise). 2 Corinthians 13:5 – this is another area that calls for examination.
- b. Matthew 5:8, "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."
- c. Hebrews 10:22, *let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.* This leads to our passage previously mentioned.
- d. If my heart is not right, assembling will be a weariness.

## III. Am I spiritually minded?

- a. Philippians 2:5 – we need to have the mind of Christ in us. We know that all He did was to the glory of the Father (cf. John 17:1-5).
- b. Romans 8:6 – to be spiritually minded is life and peace. It is contrasted with the carnal mind.
- c. Colossians 3:1-2, Matthew 6:19-21 – where is your treasure?
- d. The one who is spiritually minded is interested in spiritual subjects. He wants to know more and more. It is seen in his growth – 1 Peter 2:1-2. One mature in the faith will get more out of a lesson, even if it more meaty. Cf. Hebrews 5:12-14 – by this time you ought to be teachers, etc. He appreciates God and what He has done, and so his singing is more vibrant, etc.
- e. Often, one who is a babe or more carnally minded will not comprehend a lesson from God's word.

## IV. Have I made preparation to worship?

- a. One reason worship is a weariness is that we have not put much thought into it. With our busy schedules, we barely have time to make it to services, much less prepare.
- b. The very text we began in – Psalm 122:1 notes how glad they were to be going to the temple. That indicates it was something they had been preparing for. After all, for most we are talking about a journey.
- c. In the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:8 & 23), the good soil is ready to receive the word of God. Anyone who has farmed or planted a flower bed knows that to be successful requires preparation.
- d. Ezra 7:10, we find that he had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, AND to do it, and to teach it to Israel. Notice that his preparation was not just external, but his heart as well.

- e. Preparation may include lesson preparation for class, getting rest, saving to contribute, thinking about one's appearance, etc. It involves leaving early enough that you are not rushed.
- f. And it also involves living a pure life that makes assembling with the saints consistent with the rest of their lives. The life you live throughout the week IS preparation to worship God. Weariness in worship COULD be because one knows their life is inconsistent.

**V. What is my attitude toward my brethren?**

- a. The Bible emphasizes brotherly love. Romans 12:10, *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another*; 1 Peter 3:8 reminds us to strive to be of one mind, having compassion for one another and to love as brothers, being tenderhearted and courteous. 2 Peter 1:7 – it is part of our process of diligently building upon our faith. In fact, it is toward the “top of the list.” Christians love each other! Cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10.
- b. The Bible is clear that we ought to be thinking about others, even greater than ourselves. Philippians 2:3-5 emphasizes how we look out for the interests of others. Romans 15:1-2 notes our need to bear with the weaknesses of the weak and strive to please each other.
- c. The question is, do I prefer to be with my brethren? Do I look forward to that? What is my relationship with my brethren? If we are bitter and at odds with one another, assembling will be drudgery. Just thinking about it might be unpleasant.
- d. AND, be reminded that this is a 2-way street. I ought not to be causing misery in others so that they dread being in our presence.

**VI. Do I really want to go to heaven?**

- a. Ultimately, why am I here? Is it my desire for heaven as great as it ought to be?
  - i. IF that desire is not at the forefront of our minds, then yes our assemblies will be a weariness. Chances are the reasons we assemble have some ulterior motive.
  - ii. Others do not see the commitment God calls for to receive that reward. They see serving God as a checklist of dos and don'ts, that if they do them, they “qualify”. BUT, their heart is not in it. That was likely the problem of many in Israel in Malachi's day, AND throughout their history.
- b. However, the examples of scripture of those who were loyal to God show a desire to be with God. Hebrews 11 shows some examples.
  - i. Abraham willing to leave his homeland because God told him to. Typically, the first thing he would do was to build an altar). Hebrews 11:8-10 tells us why, “he waited for a city which has foundations...”.
  - ii. He was willing to offer Isaac because of his faith in God (11:17-20). His life was about trusting God in all he did.
  - iii. Moses, by faith, chose to suffer affliction with his people than to enjoy an opulent life as Egyptian royalty (11: 24-26).
  - iv. Hebrews 11:13-16 summarizes those great examples of faith. They desired a heavenly country.
  - v. NOTE: This comes on the heel of the writer challenging us to NOT forsake the assembling of ourselves.
- c. As Peter began his first letter, he said, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.* (1 Peter 1:3-4). The struggles they went through were because of a desire for something better.
- d. 2 Timothy 4:6-8 – Paul was ready to die and be with the Lord. Philippians 3:20-21, he noted that our citizenship is in heaven from which we eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ...
- e. What does this have to do with assembling and our attitude? It is my belief that a properly managed assembly is a foretaste of heaven. We get to be with those whom we hope to spend eternity with.

- f. In heaven, we will be worshipping and serving God together. Coming together HELPS us prepare for that. Thus we ought to joyfully anticipate it, even if the singing is not as great as it ought to be, the prayers and lessons are long, the building is not as comfortable as we would like, etc.
- g. As a gospel preacher once said, "If you miss heaven, you miss all there is!"

These are some reasons we ought to find joy in assembling. Perhaps there are others we could add to this list, but these are sufficient to encourage us to work to not only assemble, BUT also to make it meaningful. What about you? Do you find joy in assembling with your brethren? Think about it!