

“The Glory of Zion”
Psalm 48
(Preached at Trinity, November 28, 2010)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. This psalm is one of several psalms that direct our attention to Zion, the great city of God. They are referred to as “Songs of Zion.”
These psalms are 48, 76, 84, 87, 122.
2. Zion was the historic term for Jerusalem.
This is a psalm celebrating God’s great activity in His holy city.
But we need to understand that Zion has a past, present, and future reality.
3. As we consider the past, Jerusalem was the great center of God’s theocracy in Israel. It was the city chosen of God. It was the place of the throne of David. It was the place of God’s holy Temple. It was the place of God’s own abode.
4. Zion is a present reality. It refers to God’s Holy reign through Christ in the lives of His holy people. Zion is represented through the Church of Christ.
 - A. The City of Zion is drawing a great multitude from every nation - even the Gentiles are flocking to the light of Christ.
Isaiah 60:3 – “And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”
 - B. Those who are redeemed are already the citizens of this city. We are already dwelling within its walls.
*“The hill of Zion yields a thousand sacred sweets
before we reach the heavenly fields,
before we reach the heavenly fields,
or walk the golden streets, or walk the golden streets.”*
 - C. There is also the true sense that Zion represents the people of God themselves. God dwells in them, protects them. He is building them up to a beautiful house. He reveals His glory through them.
5. Zion is a future hope. It refers to the everlasting habitation of the people of God when they will spend eternity in His presence.
“We’re marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful, Zion, we’re marching upward to Zion the beautiful city of God.”
6. There are some who insist that Zion still refers to earthly Jerusalem and that God still has future plans for this earthly city in Israel.
One well known expositor writes:
“Ultimately, this psalm looks ahead to the last days in the time of the great tribulation when Jerusalem will be surrounded by hostile foes. But even in Zion’s darkest hour, which is still in the future, God will come to her defense. The Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, will descend from heaven and return to the Mount of Olives in order to defend his ancient city.”
7. I think this misses the glory of the present reality of Zion. It isn’t an earthy city but the glorious presence of Christ in and with His people.

8. Tonight I want us to move through this psalm as the psalmist glories in Zion.
 We'll look at it under four heads:
 Zion Described – **Verses 1-2**
 Zion Defended – **Verses 3-8**
 Zion Dedicated – **Verses 9-11**
 Zion Displayed – **Verses 12-14**

I. Zion Described – **Verses 1-2**

- A. The Psalmist begins by describing the God of Zion
Psalm 48:1 – “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised”
1. Zion is great because her King is great – “Great is the LORD”
 - a. God is great in power, great in wisdom, great in holiness, great in mercy, great in goodness. God is great in His love towards His elect.
 - b. If you were to examine every aspect of God’s love for His people—the height, depth, breadth, width—you would discover it to be infinite in every way
 2. God sits upon the throne in His holy mountain
 - a. In Verse 2 Zion is described as the city of the Great King
 - b. Zion is great because her God is great
 - c. Zion finds her full revelation today as the Christian Church – the Temple of the Messiah.
 3. All of the inhabitants of the city worship Him
 He is greatly to be praised
 The infinite God deserves infinite praise.
 4. And it is true that the inhabitants themselves have become full of beauty.
Ephesians 5:26-27 – “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”
- B. Zion is a beautiful city on a hill – “Beautiful for situation”
 Literally, “Beautiful in elevation”
1. Jerusalem was located on a hill
 2. The church stands as a beacon in this world of darkness
Psalm 50:2 – “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.”
 - a. Over and over Christianity is described as standing apart and distinct
 - b. We are this light of this world reflecting the glories of our great King.
 3. The Church shines with the radiance of her King. The people of God reflect the beauty of their King.
- C. Zion is the joy of all the earth
1. Believers have entered Zion and discovered infinite joy
Isaiah 51:11 – “Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting **joy** shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and **joy**; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.”

2. Zion brings joy to all the earth although the lost person can't see it. Jesus is the source of all joy
3. This is the message of Christmas
Luke 2:10-11 – “And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”
4. From Zion flows the “good news” of the Gospel which is offered to all men – not for the Jews only but for people from every tribe and nation. The Gospel of great joy is for all men
Genesis 12:2-3 – “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”
5. The incarnation of Christ is a blessing upon all men. The atonement is a blessing upon all men in that it is a demonstration of God's mercy upon all men. All men are being preserved because of God's redemptive plan in Christ Jesus.
6. All of humanity should rejoice in the incarnation of Christ. He is the hope and joy of the world.
7. George Horne of the 18th Century wrote: “How beautiful is the holy and heavenly Zion, or the Christian church; how truly is she the joy of the whole earth, by the glad tidings which her ministers continually publish; how properly is this Jerusalem styled, the city of the Great King.”

II. Zion Defended – **Verses 3-8**

Psalms 48:3 – “God is known in her palaces for a refuge.”

- A. God was Jerusalem's defense
 1. Jerusalem was a walled city, but her walls were not her defense
When God removed His protection the walls came crashing down
 2. Invading kings might attack but they fled in terror
- B. God is the great protector of true Zion
 1. While Israel was unfaithful and God allowed their walls to be breached true Zion is built upon Christ. His people have a sure defense
 2. No enemy shall prosper against the people of God
Isaiah 54:17 – “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue *that* shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness *is* of me, saith the LORD.”
 3. This is our possession, our inheritance – a benefit of being a child of God
 4. There is no greater promise than this: The Lord will keep His own.
2 Thessalonians 3:3 “But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep *you* from evil.”
Jude 1:24 – “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,”
2 Timothy 2:19 – “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.”

5. It is God's purpose that not a single one of His own shall be lost.
John 6:39 – “And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.”
6. The children of God are placed upon a high place out of the reach of the enemy – inaccessible
Psalm 121:3-8 – “He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD *is* thy keeper: the LORD *is* thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.”

C. Our last enemy, death, shall have no power over us
Isaiah 25:8 – “He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken *it*.”

1. Death is only an enemy because of sin
2. We are God's people. We are God's abode.
God has established us – we are fixed upon Christ

Psalm 48:8 – “As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever.” Selah.

Stop, consider, meditate upon this!

Psalm 48:14 – “For this God *is* our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide *even* unto death.”

III. Zion's Delight – Verses 9-11

- A. First, the inhabitants of Zion stop and meditate on those things that are their delight and the first blessing is God's covenant love - רַחֲמֵי
 1. God has a general love for all men—even His enemies
 2. But His covenant love is reserved for His people. They are His delight. He reserves the blessings of adoption for them. He reserves His highest intimacy for them.
- B. Second, they delighted in the blessing that God is in the midst of them.
Verse 9 – “O God, in the midst of thy temple.”
 1. Where God is is the best place of meditation
 2. God is in the midst of His people
 3. When Jesus was teaching Mary found the best place – at His feet
Luke 10:41-42 – “And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: ⁴² But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”
 4. The disciples on the road to Emmaus
Luke 24:32 – “And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?”

- C. Third, they delighted in the fact that the great name of God was extending to the ends of the earth. – **Verse 10** – “According to thy name, O God, so *is* thy praise unto the ends of the earth”
^{ESV} **Verse 10** – “As your name, O God, so your praise reaches to the ends of the earth.”
1. The “name” of God describes the fullness of God.
 2. The people of Zion love to see the increase of Zion because as Zion increases the praise of God increases
 3. The people of Zion labor for the increase of Zion
- D. Fourth, they delighted in God’s righteous judgment
Verse 10 – “thy right hand is full of righteousness.”
1. Right hand is a symbol of authority
 2. God administers His authority with perfect justice
- E. These things caused all of Zion to rejoice in their great God
Psalm 48:11 – “Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments.”

IV. Zion Displayed – Verses 12-14

- A. They took a tour of the city – her glories were on display
Psalm 48:12 – “Walk about Zion, and go round about her”
1. Look at her fortifications – “the towers” “her bulwarks” – they are strong
 2. Examine her palaces – they are magnificent
 3. But Zion’s glory is not in her strong walls or her magnificent buildings. Zion’s glory is in Her King.
 For us there is no greater glory than Christ.
Psalm 48:1 – “Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God”
- B. Her glories were worthy to deliver to the next generation
“that ye may tell *it* to the generation following.”
1. “For this God *is* our God”
 Let the world have their gods. Let them love them. Let them worship them. But this God is our God.
 - a. Let our children see it. Let them know it.
This is the God we serve. *This* is the God who protects us, loves us.
 - b. Can your children see the greatness of your God?
 2. Let the next generation see that this God is our God forever
“this God is our God for ever and ever”
 God is the God of the everlasting covenant. He will not forget His people even to eternity. God’s care for us is eternal, unchanging, everlasting.
 3. That He will guide us even unto death
“**He will guide us until death.**”
 - a. Our relationship with God isn’t just something reserved for the future. It is a present reality
 - b. God will guide us and protect us, even unto death
 - c. Countless saints have passed into death with praise upon their lips. Ours is a hope that transcends this life.

Conclusion:

1. Mount Zion is glorious. It is God's holy habitation. He dwells with His people.
2. John Newton:
"Glorious things of Thee are spoken, Zion city of our God; He whose Word cannot be broken, Formed thee for His own abode: On the Rock of Ages founded, What can shake thy sure repose? With salvation's walls surrounded, Thou may smile at all Thy foes."