

“Praying for the Peace of Jerusalem”
Psalm 122
(Preached at Trinity, June 23, 2013)

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. As I’ve pointed out, the series of 15 psalms beginning with Psalm 120 are each designated by the title, “A Song of Degrees,” or “A Song of Ascent.” They were originally contained together in a separate self-contained hymnbook but later added to Book Four of the Psalter.
They picture the ascent of pilgrims going up to Jerusalem for the feasts. They begin in a distant land and move closer and closer to Jerusalem.
These psalms are significant for us because they chronicle the pilgrim’s journey to the house of God. They are significant for us because we too are on a journey, a long pilgrimage full of dangers and toils, yet we press on with great joy. John Bunyan described it so well in his wonderful allegory, “The Pilgrim’s Progress” – the chronicle of Christians journey from the city of destruction to the Celestial City.
 - A. In **Psalm 120** we saw the distress and weariness of the pilgrim dwelling in a world of evil. He cries out to God for deliverance.
Psalm 120:1 KJV - "In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me."
 - B. In **Psalm 121** we find him clearly looking upward towards the sure source of his help. Although this world is full of trials and tribulations the pilgrim must never lose focus of the source of his help.
Psalm 121:1 KJV - "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."
2. Now we come to **Psalm 122**. We read, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD."
 - A. David is clearly the author designated in this psalm. There is an air of joy at the thought of pilgrims arriving in Jerusalem and their feet standing within the city.
 - B. Their hearts are filled with great joy as they are called to corporate worship
 - C. The thought of entering into Jerusalem caused them to sing for the peace of the city. They are led to pray for its peace, prosperity, and wellbeing.
3. Jerusalem was the center of their worship, the place of the Temple and of the mercy seat. It was the place of the holy presence of God. No wonder their hearts were lifted up at the thought of entering into the City of David.
4. Too often, however, Christians today read this psalm and limit their thoughts to the physical city of Jerusalem in the physical land of Israel. Modern Dispensationalism is largely responsible for this.
 - A. We must remember that Israel’s worship, the Temple, the sacrifices, and the mercy seat were all but shadows pointing forward to the full revelation in Jesus Christ.
 - B. The types and shadows that Jerusalem represented find their greatest expression in Christ and the cross. God’s revelation of His redemptive purpose is fulfilled through the church, the New Jerusalem.

5. So as God's New Covenant people read **Psalm 122** our hearts are lifted up to a greater Jerusalem. Multitudes from every nation are flowing into this Jerusalem—the church of Christ.

Hebrews 12:22-23 NAU - "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect,"

6. The New Jerusalem isn't made of brick and stone but of God's holy people. In the New Jerusalem God doesn't merely dwell *among* His people, He dwells *in* them.
7. There will be a final heavenly Jerusalem, the perfected church, God's eternal tabernacle of which earthly Jerusalem was only a shadow. In Revelation this Jerusalem is called the "Bride of the Lamb."

Revelation 21:2 NAU - "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband."

8. My point is, on the one hand, when we read **Psalm 122** we read it historically as the center of Israel's worship, but more important on the other hand, as the people of the New Covenant, we read it through God's fulfilled promises—we read it as cast in the New Jerusalem, the church.

9. For the sermon tonight we'll look at the psalm under three headings:

- I. The Pleasures of Jerusalem – **Verses 1-2**
- II. The Praises of Jerusalem – **Verses 3-5**
- III. The Prayer for Jerusalem – **Verses 6-9**

- I. The Pleasures of Jerusalem – **Verses 1-2**

- A. The pilgrims were glad to enter into the city

Psalm 122:1 KJV - "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD."

1. The word for "glad" means "to rejoice." There was great rejoicing upon entering into the presence of God
2. The wickedness of the unbelievers described in **Psalm 120** seemed distant and insignificant as their feet entered the city.
In **Psalm 120** we read:
Psalm 120:1-2 KJV - "In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me. ² Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, *and* from a deceitful tongue."
Now we read, "I was glad . . ." From distress to gladness.
3. To enter the city must have filled their hearts with great joy. They saw the great walls protecting the city, the palace and official buildings, the lovely households . . . and the Ark was there.
4. **Verse 1** is in the first person. There was great joy in having others call him to worship – the community of worshippers. God's worship is not a private thing. The worship of God has always found its fulness in corporate worship.
5. But Jerusalem was only a shadow of the great joy of the church.

- B. To become a part of Christ's church is full of great joy – to become a part of the community of faith.
1. **Verse 1** points to the heart of God's people
The call to worship fills their heart with great joy
 - a. One of the plagues of the modern church is lifeless worship
Matthew 15:8 KJV - "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me."
 - b. True worship is not to be measured by its outward elements but by the hearts of the worshippers. True worship flows from the heart.
Ephesians 5:19 KJV - "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;"
 - c. Does your heart become merry as you near the Lord's Day? Do you drive to worship with a sense of joy?
 2. It also points to the communal aspect of worship - corporate worship
Psalms 122:1 KJV - "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go"
Psalms 34:3 KJV - "O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together."
Psalms 95:1-2 KJV - "O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. ² Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms."
Psalms 95:6-7 KJV - "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker. ⁷ For he *is* our God; and we are the people of his pasture"
 3. Matthew Henry – "It is not saying, "You go before, and we will follow at our leisure;" or, "We will go first, and you shall come after us;" but, "*Let us go* together, for the honour of God and for our mutual edification and encouragement."
- C. And the best is yet to come. How we long to be called to the house of God not made with hands
1. The people of God are called to eternal worship
To see our King face to face. To gather unhindered. To be surrounded by the true worshippers of God.
 2. There is no greater pleasure than being numbered among the elect

II. The Praises of Jerusalem – **Verses 3-5**

- A. In **Verses 3-5** David speaks of the excellence of the holy city
1. **Verse 3** speaks of its great unity - "a city that is compact together"
"compact" means "to unite" or "join together"
 2. **Verse 4** – all of the tribes would gather together in tribal unity with one accord to give thanks to the LORD.
 3. **Verse 5** – Speak of the royal city as a place ruled with justice and equity – the reign of David
 4. But again, earthly Jerusalem was but a shadow

B. The Church overshadows the excellence of Jerusalem

1. The church knows true unity. We are united as one body in Christ.
Galatians 3:27-28 KJV - "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."
Ephesians 4:4-6 NAU - "*There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.*"
Ephesians 4:15-16 NAU - "we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."
Romans 12:4-5 NAU - "For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."
2. The church is blessed by the gathering of the elect from every tribe and nation
Micah 4:2 KJV - "And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."
 What started as a small, localized sect in Jerusalem has filled the earth.
3. The Church enjoys a perfect rule – the rule of Christ
 - a. Jesus is seated at the right hand of majesty where He governs His Kingdom perfectly
 - b. As our King He rules with perfect justice and equity. Let us love His gracious rule in our lives. May we not murmur against His gracious governing nor chafe against His Law.
 - c. And this King shall arrive in judgment upon His enemies
Matthew 22:44 KJV - "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?"

III. The Prayer for Jerusalem – **Verses 6-9**

- A. As the pilgrims entered the city in all its greatness they were moved to prayer
 1. They prayed for the peace and safety of Jerusalem – **Verses 6-7**
 2. The second half of **Verse 6** can either be a declaration or a petition
 “Let them prosper that love you.”
 3. **Verse 8** – let the peace be for the sake of the brethren
 4. Because of the dwelling place and presence of God they would labor for the prosperity and good of Jerusalem

- B. These things also find wonderful fulfillment in the church
1. We should pray for the peace and comfort of the church and labor for its wellbeing. We must be a praying people and pray continually for the prosperity of our church.
 2. The church faces enemies without and within continually
 - a. Sometimes the enemies are difficult to recognize
2 Corinthians 11:13-15 KJV - " For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."
 - b. Satan is a cunning enemy. He is always seeking to destroy our church.
 - c. There will always be wicked men who will seek to hinder the Gospel. Paul continually asked for prayer
2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 KJV - "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have *free* course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you: ² And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all *men* have not faith."
 3. Because it is our Lord's Church we must labor for her prosperity
 Our own covenant stresses our duty to our church:
 "I promise, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together with this assembly in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, disciplines and doctrines; to attend its services; to contribute cheerfully and regularly through the tithe for the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all the nations."
 4. We should always labor to build up and not to tear down. We seldom recognize the power of our words or the effect of our actions.
Romans 14:19 NAU - "So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another."
1 Thessalonians 5:11 NAS - "Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing."
 5. Let those who labor for the prosperity of God's church find the sweet blessings of Christ. Let them enjoy the sweet comforts of God and the hope of a sure reward.
Psalms 122:6 KJV - "they shall prosper that love thee."
 - a. Again, it can be either a statement or a prayer—"let them prosper that love thee."
 - b. Spurgeon: "Prosperity of soul is already enjoyed by those who take a deep interest in the church and cause of God: they are men of peace, and find peace in their holy endeavours: God's people pray for them, and God himself delights in them."

Conclusion:

1. Our hearts must be stirred by our Lord's Church and His people. Jesus considered it so precious He laid His life down for her.
Ephesians 5:25-27 KJV - "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ²⁶ 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."
2. We must labor for the prosperity of our Lord's church recognizing she is not yet perfected. We must be patient with her weaknesses. Jesus does not take lightly any abuse of His bride. To abuse His bride is to abuse Him.
Acts 9:4 NAU - "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"
3. May we rejoice in the Church of Christ and look to the day when she will shine before Christ in perfect excellence and beauty.