

Gladness in the House of the Lord, Part 2

Psalm 122:1-9

Second reason for giving thanks. Not only are we joined together in city, but we are united by grace through faith. In an inseparable union with the people of God. David rejoices that Jerusalem is built as a city. And it says there, "bound firmly together." It's kind of a difficult phrase to translate, and so you see myriad of translations, all kinda coming around the same theme. Another way to translate it is, "built as a city, solidly united." Compacted together or even, joined together in partnership.

In the Septuagint translation the Greek word that's used there is a word that means sharing or partnership. Again, David is using a literal, concrete characteristics of a well engineered city that is closely joined together. It will not easily fall over, using those characteristics that he can see to illustrate a greater, deeper spiritual reality, a reality of unity and harmony, a reality of fellowship and partnership.

Calvin helps us to grasp the idea, when he writes this, "The mutual concord which reigns among the citizens of a city and by which they are united together to each other is compared to buildings, compacted together by a skillful and elegant workmanship so that there is nothing imperfect, nothing ill joined together or torn, but throughout, a beautiful harmony." This unity of believers, this concord, this harmony, it is a unity in the faith. In the truth. It is a unity in the gospel. It is a harmony then that is divinely granted and Spirit produced in love. It's a fellowship that is known and shared only by true believers.

And listen, this fellowship of believers, goes way, way back, before David's time, way back. We need to remember here that David, he was not the first righteous king of Jerusalem. He had to kick out the Canaanite people, the Jebusites, out of Jerusalem and take over the city. They're not the first kings of Jerusalem. Long before David, the first king of that city, the city then known as Urusalim, you can hear where the Hebrew name comes Jerusalem, Urusalim. City of peace it was known as and the king of that city is known to us as Melchizedek, king of Salem, king of Shalem.

Before David reigned in Jerusalem, Melchizedek reigned over that same city. Melchizedek is the one who blessed Abraham before he became Abraham. He was just Abram then. Before he became Abraham, the father of those who believe the promise. The writer to the Hebrews picks up on this theme and draws it out for us in Hebrews. He says this, "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham ... And to him, Abraham apportioned a tenth," of all the spoils that he took from the war he just came from. This Melchizedek is first, "by translation of his name, King of righteousness." That's the *zedek* part of Melchizedek. And then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. That's the *melack* part of his name. Melchizedek.

"He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days or end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever." So we have Melchizedek, king of righteousness, king of peace, joining together with Abraham, the father of all who believe and David sits on the throne that God gave him that was inhabited first by Melchizedek. And here he is believing in God, worshipping the same God, God Most High. He is resting and rejoicing on the promises that God made to him.

2 Samuel 7, "I will raise up your offspring after you, I will establish his kingdom. He shall build up a house for my name, I'll establish the throne of his kingdom forever." It's a reference to Christ, we all understand that, his eternal enduring kingdom. So these titanic figures, Melchizedek, Abraham, David, David's greater son, Jesus Christ our Lord, they are brought together here, aren't they, in a unity, in a harmony. They are perfected in fellowship and partnership. They are serving the same purpose of God to unite the people of God as one people under one shepherd.

That's what Paul rejoiced at, over in Ephesians 2:19 and following, he tells the Gentile Ephesians, he says, "You, though you were strangers and aliens, you're no longer strangers and aliens. But now you are," verse 19, middle of the verse, "you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure, being joined together," there's that that same language.

"Joined together it grows into a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit." What a great connection, isn't

that? To see what David looked at a distance, looked at in brick and mortar and stone and pavement on the streets and walls and Paul sees the reality fulfilled in the church, in us. So we give thanks because we stand on a foundation of gospel peace. We give thanks because we share in this inseparable union with the people of God and we are being built together even closer knit in unity and harmony than any city can be built.

Here's a third reason to: Psalm 122. Third reason for giving thanks, we're called by the name of God and we exist for the praise of his glory. We have the privilege and the honor that we are called by the name of God, and we exist for the praise of his glory. It says there, Jerusalem, built as a city, is bound, firmly together. To which the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord or Yahweh, as was decreed for Israel to give thanks to the name of Yahweh.

David refers there to what's decreed for Israel, literally it's a testimony for Israel and that looks back to what Moses said in Exodus 23, Exodus 34, Deuteronomy 16:16, "three times a year shall all your males appear before the Lord your God at the place that he will choose." He has chosen Jerusalem, it says come here for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Booths. So these are instituted then as a testimony

in Israel. David is seeing them as joyful occasions for coming together to worship the Lord.

And he comes and he says three times a year I want everybody in Israel, all the men, I want you to come together to Jerusalem, bring your families and I want you to rejoice. I want you to pray. I want you to praise. I want you to sing. I want you to eat. Commanded fellowship. Say man, don't mess with my autonomy. Don't mess with my autonomy, I'll fellowship when I want to, I'll stay alone when I want to, that's the attitude of our culture, isn't it? They're just ruining themselves. Listen to God.

Worshippers, notice in those verses, they're not strangers to one another. They're brothers. They come together as relatives and tribes; they're members of the same family. They're members of the tribes of Israel descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but notice there, David does not refer to them as the tribes of Israel. He's given them an even greater honor. He calls them the tribes of the Lord, tribes of Yahweh.

That expands it, doesn't it? That opens it up to us Gentiles, not physically descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but we are members of the tribes of Yahweh. There's no higher honor, is there? Than to be called by the name of

somebody great, to have a great family name, to belong to a great, and wealthy, and powerful family.

I know it's not popular these days to talk about privilege, but listen, we make no apologies for the privilege that is ours to be called by this name. It's a name that guarantees goodness and blessing to us. Think about what that's meant in our country in times past, to be called by the name of Rockefeller, or Kennedy, or DuPont, or Hurst, or Vanderbilt. The men who built those dynasties are dead and gone. Their greatness is only an entry on a Wikipedia page. All their wealth, and power, and influence, they had to give that up and pass it on to others, to their heirs, to be squandered or spent or used up. It's already fading away. Earthly dynasties, merely human, they're subject to futility. Earthly favor is fading, and fleeting, and doing so quickly.

But to be the object of divine favor, like the tribes of Israel that ascended into the house of the Lord. Like those who are called by the divine name, set apart by his grace to give him praise, and honor, and glory. That is an eternal calling, isn't it? Because God, the Lord, Yahweh, is an eternal being. To be called to the duty and the task of praising his name, that never ends and so this eternal calling is one that requires an

eternal life, so it's implied here. We beloved are so deeply, deeply privileged as Christians to be living today because we have seen and we have come to know what David only saw from a distance. David's reason for rejoicing has been fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Most of us, we're not numbered among the tribes of Israel; not by physical heritage or lineage anyway. But we do belong, by the grace of God, to the tribes of Yahweh. We do belong in this family. We belong to him, by faith in Jesus Christ and this means that we too, are called by the divine name, the name of Yahweh. We too have the privilege of living for the praise of God's glory.

You can turn to Ephesians 1:3-6, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved."

That's our birthright. That's our inheritance right there. We are a highly, highly favored people. We're called by the

divine name. We're united in God's one and only son to bring praise to the glory of divine grace. This is why we gather, this is why we come together, as a living testimony, with a chorus of praise, born again worshippers, united together in this fellowship. Amen? We get to do this together.

Look at Psalm 122 verse 5. Fourth reason for giving thanks. We live under the gracious lordship of Jesus Christ. Psalm 122:5 says, "There thrones for judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David." I'll just make this very brief. You know what's better than the constitutional, representative democracy that we live under in our country? This. A divine monarchy, where David's greater son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the prince of Righteousness himself, reigns, sitting on this throne.

We understand three branches of government, comprehend the functions of government. The legislative branch, the power to pass laws. Judicial branch, power to interpret the law, make judgements based on the law. Executive branch, power to enforce the law. Verse 5, just two branches represented there. Thrones of judgement, that's the judicial. Thrones of the house of David, that's the executive, the administrative. Where's the legislative? It's there, it's in the Law of Moses, it's written. Once God gave the law to Moses, the legislation is complete. The

foundation is set. It sets a perpetual foundation of righteousness for the nation of Israel.

Simplifies the task of government tremendously. Simplifies, takes the complexity of everything. You don't need new laws made for a new people. David rejoiced in the blessed city, the joyful task of administrating Jerusalem, promoting the righteousness of the divine law, by ensuring righteous judgement is upheld in the courts, by executing righteousness for the good of the people of God.

Listen, we live in an even greater reality now that Jesus Christ rules and reigns from heaven, and will one day rule and reign from David's throne here on earth in the millennial kingdom. We can read about this in Jeremiah 23 verses 5 to 6, "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'Yahweh, our righteousness.'"

Those few comments just don't come close to exhausting all that is contained there, in verses 3 to 5, but they do. It was just a sense of the gratitude that we share in the fellowship of

believers. The reasons we share even with David, for giving thanks, every time we come together as a church. God has made us citizens of a heavenly city, new Jerusalem, with an immovable foundation that's set upon, grounded upon the foundation of peace, the gospel of peace.

God has united us all together by his grace to be called people that he has foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified. God has honored us by calling us by his own name. Privileged us to bring praise to the glory of his grace. And God has given us the joy, the safety, the comfort, the protection, the satisfaction, the contentment of living under the righteous administration of the gracious Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Well with our longing fulfilled and our hearts full of joy and gratitude, we come to a third and final point. Thirdly, we pray for the fellowship of believers. We go to the final verses there, starting in verse 6, "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."

We entered into this psalm with David rejoicing in verse 1, but those called him to join in worship saying, "Let us go to

the house of the Lord.” Now in verse 9, he calls those same people to join him in praying, “for the house of the Lord our God.” Again, notice the focus on the place of worship. The house of Yahweh, the house of Yahweh our God. It’s the place of worship that brackets the refrains in this psalm.

Yes, God is omnipresent, he is infinite spirit, he is a being that fills all things, and is everywhere at the same time. And yet, he has chosen to localize his visible presence. Identifying particular places, the tabernacle, the temple of Jerusalem, the Ark of the Covenant. He’s identified those places for his people to gather for worship. And now we come together in local churches, where the spiritual temple of the living God is manifest in his people. Inhabited by his spirit, growing in the fruits of the spirit, manifesting a likeness to Jesus Christ. He inhabits the praises of his people. That happens in a place, beloved. It doesn’t happen online. It does not happen fishing. It doesn’t happen at the barbecue pit. It happens in church.

And those who love that place, as David says, those who love to be at that place, worship with him. David calls them brothers. They’re closer to him than physical family. He calls them his friends. David calls upon these people, those people

with whom he is united, with whom he shares this deep spiritual kinship, those who are compelled by the same love, who are driven by that same longing; he calls upon them to join him in praying for this place. Pray with me.

Want to do some self-assessment? Want to find out what it is you really love? Examine your prayer life. You pray for what you long for and you long for what you pray for. David prays for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem. He's not praying for its stones, and its walls, and its ramparts, and its streets. He's not praying for its homes and its shops, not for its courts and palaces. He's praying for its environment. He's praying for its attitude of harmony. He's praying for the blessing and prosperity of his people.

Listen, it's no good having strong walls and high towers for repelling the enemy outside the city if the inhabitants within the city are at each other's throats. We've seen this in our own country, haven't we? We've seen this over many decades in our country. We have the strongest, most powerful, best funded, trained, resource provisioned military in the world. We're able to project power by sea, by air, by land, all over the world. Overcoming powerful, dangerous enemies on all kind of battlefield environments.

What good is all that power when we're rotting on the inside? I'm not diminishing the military, not at all. I love the military; I love our law enforcement. I love all of that. I love those things, but what good is projecting power abroad when our country tears itself apart on the inside? Listen, David, as king, understood that. When he had to evacuate Jerusalem at the threat of Absalom, he understood that this place is tearing itself apart. And it was only the grace of God that united that nation together under his leadership again. He wept for the sheep of Israel.

And so David prays for the peace of that city. He prays for the security of those who love Jerusalem. He prays that they might have ease, they might live in quietness, in happiness, that they might enjoy the blessing of God and the prosperity of his favor. His prayers here aren't self-centered. He's not thinking about his own, like, I'm a king, I know that coups end poorly with kings having their head removed from their shoulder. He's not thinking about that, his own peace and prosperity is beside the point, he'll go live in caves and rocks, and mountains if he has to. He prays this for the sake of all those who love the house of the Lord.

That's leadership. He's not thinking about himself, he's thinking about them. Because of that shared love and passion, these people he counts as his brothers and friends. He sees his personal benefit accruing from the benefit of their blessing and joy. That's leadership. And that's the heart of every true believer. Is that how your prayers go? Are others on your mind? Do you pray for the peace and the unity, the harmony, the happiness of all true faithful churches? Do you pray for our unity, harmony, our joy, as individuals, as families? Or are your prayers mostly about yourself?

That's why we need this correction, this reminder, get back on track. John Calvin says this about that, "If we would order our prayers aright, let us always begin with pleading that the Lord would be pleased to preserve this sacred community. Whoever, confining his attention to his own personal advantage, is indifferent about the common wellbeing. He not only gives evidence that he is destitute of all true feeling of godliness, but in vain, desires his own prosperity and will profit nothing by his prayers, since he does not observe the due order."

I like how he puts prayers in the frame of a due order. Our prayer life needs to be ordered, disciplined, aligned, structured for the good of others. He not only prays for his

fellow worshippers, brothers, friends, but he prays for the house of the Lord itself, verse 9. So as you might expect, in David's prayers, his love for his neighbor is joined with and completed by his love for his God.

Here again we see the same themes that show up all through Scripture and are really the bedrock of all the law and the gospel. Love for God, love for neighbor, these two loves are inseparable companions. Wherever there's true love for God, you'll find love for one's neighbor. Wherever you see love for one's neighbor, you'll find true love for God as well. And I also might add, whenever the one of those loves is absent, so is the other. No matter what's said from the lips, from the mouth, the love David describes here isn't based on mushy feelings, it's not based on indistinct, indiscriminate sentimentality, his love takes action in spiritual discipline, it's a discipline, by the way, that nobody else can see.

It's one that only God knows, the living God, who sees all things. He's omniscient, and he sees what is unknown to other people. God knows David's prayer life and his love is a love that's practiced in secret. It's unseen by anybody else. It is the most powerful way though of loving one another; namely in an attitude of sincere disciplined prayer for their good.

We pray for the peace of Jerusalem. We pray for the sake of our brothers and friends. We pray for one another. We pray for the good of God's chosen place of worship. Spurgeon said, "If we're glad to be called by others to our Father's house, how much more glad shall we be to actually go there. We love our Lord, and therefore we love his house. And pangs of strong desire are upon us that we may soon reach the eternal bode of his glory."

Friend, if you're not happy in the house of the Lord that God has joined you to on earth, one wonders if you'll ever be happy with what he's prepared for you in heaven, you say, oh but heavens filled with perfect people. Beloved, this is what it's ordained for now. With all of our warts, all of our sins, all of our imperfections. God doesn't save perfect people. He redeems sinners just like you and me. He redeems sinners with lots of sins and he covers them with a grace, covers them with a love in the savior, Jesus Christ.

Let's pray. Our Father, we're so thankful for the heart of David. So thankful for his passion for you. He is the sweet psalmist of Israel. He is one who loved you. He was not a perfect man. He was a sinner. He, he fell so precipitously, but Lord you have raised him up to be a model worshipper and we're

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so thankful to follow his lead in singing praise and giving
glory and honor to you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.