

## Sermon: Worshipping together – Psalm 122

Prayer: As we are gathered, Jesus is here. Thank you, Lord, that you are indeed here. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord my Rock and my Redeemer.

The theme for today's word is worshipping together, looking at Psalm 122. This psalm is entitled A song of Ascents of David. It is one of the four Songs of Ascent specifically attributed to King David. This psalm and the other songs of ascent were likely sung by Israelite pilgrims going up to the great worship festivals in Jerusalem three times a year. They were sung as they remembered God's saving ways such as Passover and his many blessings. In Luke chapter 2 we read of Jesus and his family participating in such pilgrimages.

David wrote this psalm for what Jerusalem was in his day and what it would become under his son Solomon and his successors. David was 37 years old when he captured the Jebusite stronghold of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, meaning city of peace was a small walled city on a hill between Israelite and Judean territories. It became his capital to govern the recently united tribes – David's city. The conflict and hostility with Saul are behind David and his fugitive days are over.

In Psalm 122 we sense that David is in his prime: powerful because the Lord God is with him. In 2 Samuel chapter 5, verse 10 we read: *And he became more and more powerful, because the Lord God Almighty was with him.* David is also seeking to do what is right and just for all his people. In 2 Samuel chapter 8 verse 15 we read: *And David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people.* Psalm 122 reminds us that the roots of David's imagination for such a life with God lie in worship.

In verse 1 David speaks of the joy of coming to God's house. When he writes "I rejoiced with those who said to me", he was thinking about both the community and the individual. He pictured the individual coming together with the group to go into the house of the Lord. That invitation and the acceptance of it made him rejoice. During David's time there was no temple, but he knew one would be built. There is a description of this in 1 Chronicles chapter 22 (2-16). David may have written this psalm in anticipation of the pilgrims who would come to the house of the Lord built by Solomon. Coming to God's house made David happy. He knew that no building could contain God in all his glory and greatness. At the house of the Lord, he could focus his

thoughts, prayers, worship and receiving God's word in the community of God's people in a special way and David rejoiced in that. We can do the same, we come as individuals but gather together corporately or as a community to worship our Lord and Saviour as one body.

It is good and important for us to gather with God's people for prayer, worship and receiving God's word, God's people coming together for the glory of God and yes, we have to admit it, also for our own benefit – to be uplifted, to be filled with the holy spirit and to receive spiritual nourishment. We should rejoice when we come to God's house. What happens in the house of the Lord should be good; both welcoming to those who are not yet believers and good for those who do believe in Jesus.

In verse 2 David and his compatriots have arrived in Jerusalem. The most important aspect is their joy and gladness at coming to the destination. They came to Jerusalem because that was where David set up the tabernacle and where the arc of the covenant and the altar of sacrifice were. Later Solomon would build the temple there, for which as we saw earlier David had planned and prepared for.

As mentioned earlier, David had conquered the city of Jerusalem. He built the city up in his own day and David rejoiced in declaring that Jerusalem is built. David's city was built, it was not a disorderly collection of tents and shacks. One of the reasons David conquered Jerusalem and established it as the capital of both the political and religious life of Israel was because it did not specifically belong to a particular tribe, being under Canaanite occupation. Since it belonged to no tribe, it belonged to all tribes and in verse 4 we see that the tribes of the Lord could come together as one at Jerusalem and in the house of the Lord.

Charles Spurgeon says ““Note that Israel was one people, but yet it was in a sense divided by the mere surface distinction of tribes; and this may be a lesson to us, that all Christendom is essentially one, though from various causes we are divided into tribes. Let us as much as possible sink the tribal individuality in the national unity, so that the church may be many waves, but one sea; many branches, but one tree; many members, but one body.” God wants our unity, God does not want our uniformity, God wants our unity. We need to reach out in unity and in love to the unbelieving world.

The main purpose of the feasts of Israel was for the people of God to come together to praise God and give him thanks. Their appreciation of what he has done gave them faith for what he would do in the future. According to the statutes given to Israel refers to the arc of the covenant which was the centre of the tabernacle and later the temple.

Verse 5 says that “there the thrones for judgement stand, the thrones of the house of Israel”. Jerusalem was the place where the main courts were established. Jerusalem was to be a city of justice, where good is honoured and evil is corrected. David’s house was established to reign over Israel. David’s lineage reigned in Jerusalem and will forever reign in the Messiah, the son of David. The first line of Matthew’ gospel reads: “This is the genealogy<sup>[a]</sup> of Jesus the Messiah<sup>[b]</sup> the son of David, the son of Abraham”

In verse 6 David encourages us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. David exhorted pilgrims coming to the holy City to pray for the peace of the city. Jerusalem’ name marks it as the city of peace, but sadly it has known much war and conflict which continue to this day. We should pray for the peace of Jerusalem. David continued by giving a prayer for Jerusalem. The prayer included a blessing for those who love the city and a direct request for peace and prosperity for the city.

Verses 7 and 8: May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels. For the sake of my family and friends I will say, peace be within you. David prayed for blessings for those who loved and prayed for Jerusalem, but the blessing was not only for the individual but for the community of those who care for the peace of Jerusalem, those who said, “peace be within you.”

In verse 9 we see the reason to pray and seek good for Jerusalem. David understood that the gladness and goodness of the pilgrim towards God’s city was not political in nature, but it was because the house of the Lord was established there. This has a special application for Christians under the New Covenant. For us the church is the house of the Lord, with Jesus the head and son of the house. In John 3 verse 16: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only son, that whosoever believes in him shall not die, but will have eternal life.*

Psalms 122 is a joyous summons to worship that inspires a spirit-filled, biblically rooted imagination for dealing with God in all of life. In the remembering of what God has done, the rejoicing in who God is and what he has promised us

he will do. We slowly realise that God has always worked in the nitty gritty, the ordinary things of life. Through politics and power, around meal tables as well as on mountain tops. Through people in their daily occupations in 1000 bc and still today.

David's song witnesses to this life-giving bond between worship and our everyday world. Come let us worship, let us come alive to God in all of life. Come, now is the time to worship, now is the time to give your heart. Come just as you are to worship.

Let's pray: Yes, Lord we come to you just as we are to worship you as one body, to worship you in spirit and truth. Lord, help us to come alive to you, help us through your holy spirit to be on fire for you, to worship and adore you for your glory. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen