

Why I Go to Church

Psalm 122

If today is your 1st Sunday w/us... I'm Pete. I serve as lead pastor. I want to add my **welcome!** I hope you sense warmth/friendship of this gathering. It's real.

We are walking through the Psalms one at a time. Each summer we pick up where we left off... we have made it to Psalm 122.

Sometimes we recommend a **book resource** for our sermon series... and here is the resource for the Songs of Ascent (*LOSD*). We will be in this section of the Pss a few more weeks/ then pick back up next summer. Hang on to this book!

Eugene Peterson's intro to Ps 122 is too good to pass up: **listen to this!**

Illus Peterson, p 49

I agree with Peterson!

*I am way more interested in reasons **we do go to church** than a thousand excuses for why we don't.*

I should tell you... I don't always *want to come* to church. Plenty of Sundays in the last 16 years when I said to Vicki: "do I have to go to church today?" / "Aren't you preaching today?" / "I guess I should go."

But even those days when **the struggle is real...** I never leave church thinking 'what a waste of time.' *Because God never wastes a day of your life...he uses even the driest days of **worship** to strengthen your faith.*

So, today I am going share with you three reasons **why I go to church**.

Three reasons from Psalm 122... and they have radically reshaped my life:

1. It's where I found true gladness (vv 1-2)
2. It's where I found my tribe (vv 3-4)
3. It's where I found peace (vv 6-9)

1. It's where I found true gladness (vv 1-2)

Read vv 1-2

I have been here before... and now I am back. This is the **gladness of return!**

King David, the composer of this psalm, voices the heart of a person who has been *to the house of the Lord (Tabernacle) many times*. Who has experienced the **gladness** of true worship with the people of God.

The gladness of seeing **God** for who he is / realizing how big, sovr, good.

The gladness of **confession** and humility before him... the gladness that comes when you confess your sins; cry out for mercy—**Psalm 51:1-2**

And the gladness that permeates the entire worshipping community—when **grace** is the story of everyone singing! Hundreds/hundreds of pilgrims who experienced the power of forgiveness at the mercy seat!

This is same thing that happened to us—the church—the NCov people of G.

Jesus, our great high priest, entered into the holy place and offered himself as the true and ultimate sacrifice for our sins! Making the sacrifices of the tabernacle and the temple obsolete forever...

From that moment on, **the house of the Lord** (see Eph 2:21) is the house Jesus is building. He's the **cornerstone** and we are his building blocks. We, as disciples of J, are being built into a holy temple—a *dwelling* place **for God by his Spirit**. We are the house of the Lord.

The house of the Lord is no longer a tabernacle or temple! A building...

The house of the Lord is where the gospel is making all things new.

That's why I love to **sing**—There's joy in the house of the Lord today!

Here is why I go to church—because back in 1986 (college yrs) it's where I began to discover true forgiveness/healing for: my pride/self-righteousness, my anger, my distorted view of sexuality, my personal prejudices, my N. Tampa rich kid status, and ... a 1000 other expressions of brokenness in my life...

Church is where we learn to exchange our brokenness for true gladness!

That's why I am glad when they say to me, "Let's go to the house..

2. It's where I found my tribe (vv 3-4)

Read vv 3-4a

Jay Mabry likes to say, about *this* church, “I found my tribe—I finally found my people.” I take that to mean he wants to live in a real, gospel society bound firmly together—strengthening each other—like the walls of Jerusalem (v 3).

We were made to dwell with and among a like-minded people who find their identity in the worship of God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Unity among people is life-giving—the main idea of this stanza.

The tribes in v 4 are the 12 tribes of Israel descended from Jacob/his 12 sons. The book of Genesis (Hunter Bolton's fav...) ends with Jacob blessing each of his 12 sons. So between then and Psalm 122 that's a *big family tree (800 yrs)*. *More like 12 different family trees... a rich diversity even within ethnic Israel.*

Which leads Derek Kidner to say, “the unity of Israel was never meant to be uniformity; Israel was a family of tribes, each with its own distinct character.” (adapted Kidner, 469)

So there must be something more than blood ties/lineage to unify Israel!

*What is it? It's in v. 4. Every tribe of Israel was tribe **of the Lord**.*

Imagine you arrive in Jerusalem at Passover and you get separated from your tribe. You are looking everywhere for the tribe of Benjamin... Just then you meet someone from a different tribe—he says, “I know where the ToB is... I'll take you too them.” *And on the way, you both realize why you are in Jerusalem to begin with... to worship the true and living God through the glory of the earthly Tabernacle... and it hits you both, “bro... we are in same tribe!”* **TOL**

One of the key features of this psalm is that the physical city of Jerusalem stands for this much greater spiritual reality:

Illus Spurgeon explains (Ps 122):

(Jeruslaem) The city of God had this peculiarity about it; it was not a long, straggling street, or a city of magnificent distances *but the allotted space was filled with buildings of solid block, a massive unity*. The idea is a close neighborhood, a sure standing, a strong defense.

Spurgeon (adapted):

In a church one of the most delightful conditions is... our unity: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." A church should be one in creed/one in heart/one in testimony/one in service/one in aspiration/one in sympathy.

They greatly injure our Jerusalem who would build dividing walls within her; she needs unity, not division. There is **no joy** in going up to a church which is rent with internal dissension.

On Verse 4:

Note that Israel was one people, (even if there were many tribes); **this is a lesson for us:** though we come from various backgrounds, *let us as much as possible sink the tribal individuality in the (depths of) unity, so that the church may be many waves, but one sea; many branches, but one tree; many members, but one body.*

*If you are still looking to find your **tribe**... make it the **Tribe of the Lord**.*

***Find a tribe of people** who are built firmly together—on the rock that is Jesus Christ. I will build my church, he said! On the solid rock of the gospel.*

*That's why I go to church—I want to be in **a gospel community that is bound firmly together!** Like the walls of a new Jerusalem...*

Appl

Next week we launch Small Groups for the fall. **Open enrollment** (no SS #)!

We have groups meeting **Mon - Thur** nights. All our groups are **inter-generational** by design, so don't worry whether you'll fit in. You will!

I hear people say it all the time... small group is how I found my people. This is a big crowd... but in small group you can **find your tribe**.

We call should our small group launch: **Find Your Tribe!**

3. It's where I found peace (vv 6-9)

Read vv. 6-8

Three times King David uses the word *peace* in this stanza—v 6, v 7, v 8. The person who sings this song along with him is looking for peace. Longing for the peace/shalom of God.

If you long for peace *in your own heart*, peace in your *family*, peace in the *church*, peace in our *nation*... then camp out in this stanza for while!

The thing about the city of Jerusalem was that **it was so well-built** that it doubled as a fortress. With gates/watchtowers. So, once inside... **peace!**

NB—(v 7) peace be *within* your walls/security *within* your watchtowers

David is so moved by this idea that he sings to the city walls inside of which he stands... **v 7 / v 8** (personifies the city, as if she can hear him singing)

But David is not an *animist*... he doesn't think the rock walls of the city can actually hear him or are connected to him in the spirit world. He is not singing **to a city wall** / or even **about a city**... he is singing about the reality of God and those who meet God there in true worship.

v 6a / v 8a

*In the same way that you could get inside of the city of Jerusalem and be secure / be at rest / be at peace, **you can also get inside of God and discover true and lasting peace.***

And by the time we get to the **New Testament**, we discover that Jesus Christ is the builder of a much greater city than Jerusalem. In fact, the ancient city of David's Kingdom was always pointing us to **the true and greater David.**

To the kingdom God is building in and through Jesus Christ.

If you want to find true/lasting peace... it starts w/ Jesus who is himself the embodiment of peace. "Grace to you and peace from...

Close:

One more thing from v. 1—did you notice that David is not commanding people to go to church?

"Let us go to the house of the Lord!"