

## “What to Expect From a Sunday”

Psalm 84

22 July 2007

- I. We were created to bring God pleasure.
  - a. We know that we were created by God to be the “apple of his eye” that the Bible talks about
    - i. We bring him pleasure when we worship Him.
    - ii. God’s greatest desire is to know us and to be known in return.
  - b. So when we gather on Sunday morning, its not about us – it’s all about God.
    - i. Too often we approach God like consumers.
      1. I mean that we approach worship asking the question, “What will I get out of this?”
      2. It’s the wrong question.
    - ii. We need to approach God like worshippers.
      1. That means worship is for God’s benefit not ours.
      2. We should worship so that it makes God smile.
  - c. Our focus on worship should exclusively be a focus on Jesus.
- II. Psalm 84 is a song of prayer and longing for the house of the Lord.
  - a. It is one of the psalms not written by David.
    - i. It is one of 11 psalms written by the “sons of Korah.”
      1. The Sons of Korah were the representatives of the family of Kohath, son of Levi.
      2. The sons of Korah were a choir that sung during ceremonial acts in the Temple during David’s time.
    - ii. In the psalm, the author gives voice to his longing to be near (and in) God’s house.
      1. He has had easy access to the temple in the past.
      2. But now, perhaps because of war or other troubles, is barred from access to God’s house.
  - b. The Psalm is a lament that expressed the writer’s desire to return to God’s house.
    - i. The greatness of God and the greatness of God’s house is a central theme.
      1. “How lovely is your dwelling place.” – verse 1.
      2. There is no place that he would rather be than in the presence of the Lord in His temple.
    - ii. The psalmist also talks about the blessings that he receives and the things he learns as a result of his time spent in God’s house.
      1. The motivation for worship remains the same – the glory and honor of God.
      2. It’s still all about God!
      3. But, there are some benefits that come from his time in God’s temple.
- III. Likewise, we receive blessings and learn some important truths about God and ourselves as a result of our time in worship.
  - a. Perhaps this is one reason that Paul tells us, “not giving up meeting together, as is the habit of some.” – Hebrews 10:25.
  - b. When we see worship in this way:
    - i. It’s still first and foremost about God and God’s glory.
    - ii. But when our worship flows from our gratitude (not our sense of obligation), we are blessed in return.
  - c. It begins with a longing for the house of God.
    - i. Verse 2: “My soul yearns and even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.”

- ii. All of you (not part of you) desiring to be in God's presence.
    - 1. Your desire to be with God in worship is not my responsibility.
    - 2. I don't have a problem with "entertaining." – I'll do my best to give you my best.
    - 3. But your desire is yours to cultivate and grow.
      - a. I can't give you a deep longing for God's house.
      - b. I can't give you six easy steps toward desiring God.
      - c. That's got to come out of your heart.
- IV. So, here's what the Psalmist says we can expect from a Sunday.
- a. First, you will be reminded that God is your deliver/sustainer.
    - i. Look at verse 5: "Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage."
    - ii. In the first part of the verse it talks about strength.
      - 1. This is not just physical strength.
      - 2. This is a spiritual strength born out of dependence on God.
      - 3. If God is your deliver and sustainer – strength is easy to find.
        - a. Because you don't look for it in yourself.
        - b. You look for it – and you find it – in God.
    - iii. In the second part of the verse it says, "whose hearts are set on pilgrimage."
      - 1. It could also say, "in whose hearts are the highways."
      - 2. On the occasion of the religious festivals in Jerusalem, people would travel from all over the surrounding country to be at the Temple.
        - a. They would travel in large caravans on dirt roads between towns and villages to Jerusalem.
        - b. Many families, many villages would be together. (Luke 2:41ff)
        - c. Because of their constant use by these caravans year after year – these paths became common ways of travel.
      - 3. "In whose hearts are the highways," refers to these paths to Jerusalem for the pilgrimage.
        - a. The psalmist is saying that the path to God's house should be written on your heart.
        - b. The heart – the center of your being, where your emotions, thoughts, motivations, courage and actions – should know its way to God's home.
    - iv. You can't worship God without reminding yourself that God is your savior [your deliver/sustainer].
      - 1. That alone will increase your desire to be in God's house.
      - 2. It reminds you of your dependence on God. [Independence is an illusion]
  - b. When you worship, your trials will become blessings.
    - i. On their pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the festivals, the travelers had to pass through many arid and barren places in order to reach the temple.
      - 1. In verse 6 it says, "As they pass through the Valley of Baka."
        - a. It's referring to arid places, or more literally "places of weeping."
        - b. Difficult places to get through – places of trial.
      - 2. Verse 6 goes on, "as they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools."
        - a. The expectations of those headed to God's house for worship, transform the wilderness into places of refreshment and beauty.
        - b. The difficulties of their journey are forgotten when they think of their destination.

- ii. Like them, your trials will become blessings when your mind is focused on God in worship.
        - 1. Your trials, your struggles may not disappear.
        - 2. But they are transformed and become blessings – they become water in the wilderness.
    - c. In the end, you will learn to trust God more.
      - i. The Psalm closes on a note of trust.
        - 1. Verse 12: “Lord Almighty, blessed are those who trust in you.”
          - a. A deep longing for the Lord puts all things into perspective.
            - i. One day in worship is more valuable than 1,000 spent anywhere else.
            - ii. The lowliest place of service becomes the highest reward.
          - b. In the middle of desert and arid places – trust in God turns them into places of life and refreshment.
        - 2. The result of that awareness is trust.
          - a. If God is truly that great – trust in Him is the most logical conclusion.
          - b. If trials becomes blessings – even difficult times are welcome because of the hope they can bring.
      - ii. Ultimately, for us, its all about trust.
        - 1. Do you trust your savior, your deliverer, your sustainer, with your life?
        - 2. Will you look for the silver lining in situations even when you can’t see any sign of what God is doing?
- V. It all comes home to me this way:
  - a. God must be your deliverer [your sustainer].
    - i. In your heart – are the highways?
    - ii. Are the things of God your priority?
    - iii. When you are willing to make following the commandments and the teachings of Jesus your highest priority – you are a disciple. [Dallas Willard]
    - iv. Do you desire God in that way?
      - 1. Does your soul yearn for the things of God?
      - 2. Does your heart cry out for God?
    - v.
  - b. What is one trial [struggle/desert] that you want God to turn into blessing?
    - i. What are you going through right now that you want God to water so that the arid place in you becomes a place of springs?
    - ii. What trial do you need God to redeem and transform for you?
      - 1. There is a blessing in there somewhere.
      - 2. God will help you find it.
  - c. What do you need to trust God for?
    - i. Do you trust him? What are you trusting him to do?
      - 1. What promise are you claiming?
      - 2. What prayer have you given over to him to answer?
    - ii. How can you demonstrate your trust?
      - 1. Is there some concrete way to demonstrate your trust?
        - a. Stop worrying. Stop being fearful.
        - b. Begin to act as though your prayer will be answered?