

SUNDAY'S SOUL SONG - Vol 1, No 56. OT 34. Psalm 122.

“Sing the words and tunes of the *psalms* and hymns when you are together” Ephesians 5:19

Theme: “The Joy of Gathering with God’s People”

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord. (based on v 1)

V1. I rejoiced when they said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the LORD.”

V2. And now our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem.

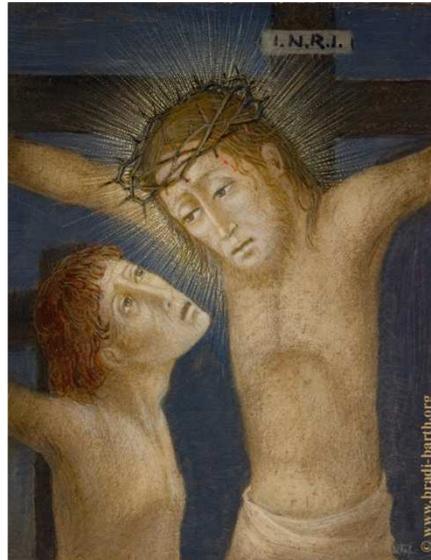
V3. Jerusalem is built as a city
bonded as one together.

V4. It is there that the tribes go up,
the tribes of the LORD.

For Israel’s witness it is
to praise the name of the LORD.

V5. There were set the thrones for judgment,
the thrones of the house of David.

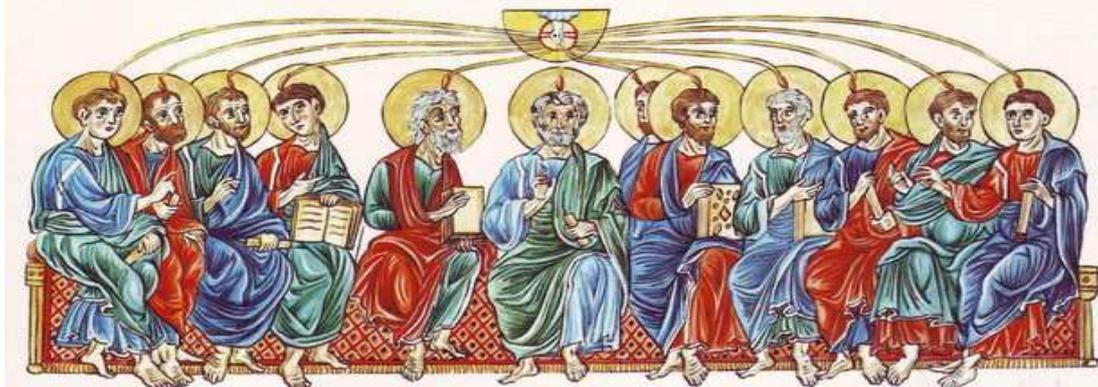
You might like to read the remaining four verses which ask us to pray for peace.



On this feast of Christ the King of the Universe, we are praying Psalm 121/122, one of the 15 Psalms of Ascent/Pilgrimage. There are fifteen Psalms of Ascent, and begin in Psalm 120 with the psalmist crying out in trouble far away from Jerusalem, and they end in Psalm 134 with the psalmist offering up praise in the temple. If you break the fifteen psalms into five groups of three, you notice a pattern in each group of three psalms. The first psalm in each group focuses on trouble of some sort. The second psalm in each group focuses on trust. And then the third psalm in each group focuses on triumph or victory.

	1	2	3	4	5
Trouble	120	123	126	129	132
Trust	121	124	127	130	133
Triumph	122	125	128	131	134

Ever gone on a long family or school excursion road trip with children? Then you’ve heard the words “Are we there yet?” My reply as a teacher was “Just five more minutes!” An later they would ask the same question and get the same answer. Psalm 121/122 is a song of arrival. It’s the song of someone who has been looking forward to that arrival for some time. And it’s also a song about going to church, and gathering with God’s people. You notice that the psalm both begins and ends with the phrase “the house of the Lord (see v1,9).



Ever ask someone why they don't go to church? They'll give all sorts of reasons. "It's boring. I have better things to do. It's my one day to sleep in. We have sports on Sundays. We like to keep Sundays for family time." People give lots of reasons for not going to church, but there is one overriding reason why we should go and that is God. There's the old joke about the mother getting her son up on a Sunday morning. "Time for church," she says. "But I don't want to go to church," he replies. "No one likes me there, and the people are all mean to me. Give me one good reason why I should go." The mother replies, "I'll give you two good reasons. One, you're 54 years old. And two, you're the pastor!" As a Christian we don't journey alone. The gathering of God's people for worship is one of the most important parts of our journey with God. We need each other. For the Old Testament Jew worshiping with God's people meant going to the Jerusalem. For us Christians it means going to church, and enter worship with anticipation and joy (v2). Our psalm teaches us what the Hebrew pilgrims felt, and what God would have us feel. How we enter worship matters. It shows our attitude towards God and God's people. Do we enter Eucharist with anticipation and joy?



Look at verses 3 to 5 they are talking about the actual city Jerusalem and yet there are applications we can make to our own experience of gathered worship. What are some of the benefits you reap from gathering each week? First it's the joy from the closeness with other disciples. In verse 3 we read "Jerusalem is built as a city bonded as one together." Here the psalmist is not talking about the physical architecture of the city, but about the people. Remember, the church is not the building. It's the people. And one of the benefits you reap from weekly is the experience of unity that comes from praising God together. Verse 4 calls the Jews not the tribes of Israel but rather the tribes of the Lord! The ties were more than those of blood or convenience. And it's the same for us today. We all come from different backgrounds, places and situations, but we have a unity because we are all members of the one body of Christ. At church we all learn to get along with each other despite differences.

It's sad but too many people make weekly church an optional part of their lives rather than a non-negotiable. They don't think about it during the week, they don't look forward to it or anticipate it. When they do come they treat it more as a duty rather than a delight. As a result they miss out on the many benefits. If we love God, we will love God's people. And if you love God's people, we will love gathering with God's people to worship God. What a privilege we have every week to gather with God's people, to set all our differences aside, and to worship our God and Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord! Make weekly worship a non-negotiable, and then we can look forward to reaping the benefits every week for the rest of your life. "I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'"