

New Year's Resolution

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Date: 31 December 2023

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[0 : 0 0] Morning, church. The scripture reading today comes from the book of Psalm, chapter 122. Please follow along in the bulletin, on the screen, or in your own Bible.

Starting in the introduction, we read, A song of essence of David. I was glad when they said to me, Let us go to the house of the Lord.

Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem, built as a city that is bound firmly together, to which the tribes go up.

The tribes of the Lord, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord. There, thrones for judgment were set.

The thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. May they be secure who love you. Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers.

[1 : 0 6] 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.

This is the word of God. That's great. Thanks, Anastasia. Thanks for all those encouraging testimonies.

It's wonderful to hear of God's goodness. But after looking backwards, we're going to look forward, because there's another year coming. And so why don't I pray as we look at this passage together.

Our Father, yeah, thank you for your word and for the past year. And as we look forward to another year, pray that you would speak to us and encourage us today. Show us Jesus in his name. Amen.

Yeah, another year. Now, I don't know how you feel about another year living for Christ. We've heard how so many people have had a hard year. And so you see 2024, and maybe you think another year of fighting sin.

[2 : 0 7] Or another year of, you know, struggling with all the serving you're doing. Another year of failing to balance work and family. Another year of staying single because you can't find the right Christian to marry.

How do we keep going? How do we keep going in 2024? And so I wanted to look at this little psalm. Why is this psalm relevant? Well, look at that introduction. It says a psalm of ascents.

That's a group of psalms. But to ascend is to go up, right? This is about going up to Jerusalem. This is about a pilgrimage. The Israelites, a few times a year, they all had to go to Jerusalem to celebrate.

To have this festival in God's presence. That's what it's about, right? Verse 1. I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord. Right?

Let's go together. And, you know, our feet have been standing within your gates. People are so excited to, yeah, to come together. I don't know.

[3 : 08] Maybe you think, well, this is about going to church. Well, imagine if you live all the way on the other side of Israel. And you have to spend a whole week traveling through the desert with a bunch of cows and sheep that you have to sacrifice.

Traveling through the hot desert to Jerusalem. And then a week celebrating there. And then a week traveling back three weeks away. Just at harvest time when you really want to work. Pilgrimage isn't easy.

And so you need motivation. And these songs are what people would sing along the way. I hope you can see that it's relevant for us. This is about pilgrimage.

Well, what is for us the pilgrimage, of course? Well, it's not Jerusalem in the Middle East. Where do we go? Well, if you did the Bible reading plan, you've just read it.

Right in Revelation 21 and 22, the new Jerusalem. That's where we are going. We have this long journey keeping going until we reach the new Jerusalem. And so just as these pilgrims motivated themselves by singing this, well, we can learn how we can motivate ourselves to keep going in 2024.

[4 : 16] Well, let me give you two reasons from this psalm to keep us going. The first one, of course, is that why is it worth keeping going? Well, being in God's place will be great.

It will be so great to get there. Because you can hear the joy, right, when people get there, when people arrive at Jerusalem. And why is it so great? Well, Jerusalem is safe and secure.

Verse 3, Jerusalem built as a city that is bound firmly together. There's no gaps in the walls. There's nothing bad coming in. There's no wild animals, no robbers, no enemies.

It's just a wonderful, safe place to be, right? All the dangers, all the hardships, they're not there. Of course, pilgrimage, you think of a religious duty. But it's celebrating God's presence, right?

The tribes going up to give thanks to the name of the Lord, to have a great feast, a great celebration. It is secure. There is justice.

[5 : 18] Verse 5, there thrones for judgment were set. The thrones of the house of David. God's king rules there. And he will bring justice. And so there's no injustice.

There's no poverty. All of that is gone. That is that place where we will be forever, right? If you did the reading plan, I hope it was so motivating to just read about that city.

To read about seeing God's face. About the tree of life. About, you know, we don't need a temple anymore because God is there. And there's no more curse.

And all these wonderful things. I've been meditating on that last week. So encouraging. It motivates you. Yeah, I want to keep going. 2024. I want to keep living for Christ because I want to get to the new creation.

But, of course, it's great if we get there. But will that actually happen? You know? It's a long journey. It's a hard journey. The Christian life is hard.

[6 : 16] Will we get there? Will it happen? Will we get there? I don't know. Maybe you wanted to go away for Christmas. And you booked a holiday. And it was really not what was advertised. And it was rather disappointing.

Will that happen? Um, maybe you wanted to go and then your flight got canceled. Or you got sick. You know? Is it really going to happen? Well, that's the other thing in this psalm.

Of course, one thing you can do is pray. I hope we'll be a praying people, right? 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.

We've heard so much about community, right? Praying for Jerusalem. Praying for the church. Praying for each other. That we would keep going. Supporting each other. As we journey together to the new creation.

But how about verses 8 and 9? Because they're a bit weird. I mean, praying. Yeah, that's useful, right? But verse 8. For my brothers and companions' sake, I will say, peace be within you.

[7 : 20] For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your goods. That sounds like what we should do is, well, seeking the goods of Jerusalem. Let's seek the good of the church.

That's a good thing to do. But if you're just a pilgrim, what can you do? You're traveling through the desert. What kind of goods can you do for Jerusalem? Not very much. If you're just saying, I will say, peace be within you.

What good does it do for me to say, peace be within you? No, we need to see, if we look at these verses, who is the author of this psalm? Who is this about?

Well, as you see in the title, this is of David. And sometimes, you know, that's very important in the psalms. Who wrote it? Sometimes David is just a believer. And we can take the psalm and, hey, we can sing the same psalm.

But David is also, he's the king, right? He's the greatest king ever. And sometimes he says things that are not really applicable to us, right? When he says, with my sword, I cut off all my enemies.

[8 : 26] That's not about you going back to work next week. It's not. Right? David can say that because he is the king. And if you know that, then suddenly that transformed this psalm.

This is a psalm by the king. This is about him and his commitment to Jerusalem, to God's people, right? Verse 5.

Their thrones for judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David. David is writing this psalm and he realizes that's my job. The peace and safety of Jerusalem.

Well, I'm the king. I need to make that happen. It's my job. I'm the king. And so that's why he says, okay, for my brothers and companions' sake, I will say, peace be within you.

By royal decree, I'm going to bring peace to Jerusalem. Verse 9. For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good. With my royal power and authority, I'm going to bring peace.

[9 : 30] I'm going to make this happen. I don't know if you ever thought about that, but yeah, king is important. The fact that God's king will make it happen.

And the pilgrims would sing this and think, yeah, we have a great king. And next year we're going to read through the Old Testament. As you probably know, there are some good kings and some bad kings. And just to make that real, have you ever thought of going on pilgrimage when there's a really bad king in Jerusalem?

There's no point going. First of all, Jerusalem's not safe. There's gangs and crime and injustice. There's a foreign army outside the gate, right, because the king has rejected God.

And, you know, there's a siege, and so there's no festival. And even if you get into the city, you know, the king, he's rejected God. He's worshipping some idol. So the temple will be closed. The priests don't get any money.

They're gone. It's no worth going if there's no good king. But if you have a great king who delights in worship, who absolutely loves God's people celebrating, who is committed to it, then it's worth going.

[10 : 40] And so pilgrims would sing this, not about themselves, hey, my commitment. No. We have a great king who is going to make this happen. And that's why it's worth keeping going.

And, of course, David is dead, but we have the son of David, the greatest king, Jesus. This is about him and his commitment and his delight. Read these as the words of Jesus.

I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord. All right? Jesus loves nothing more than seeing God's people there, celebrating in the presence of God, seeing them worship his Father.

That's his greatest joy. It's not just that we are looking forward to the new creation, to heaven. Jesus is looking forward to it. He is so looking forward to the completion of all God planned, to us being there, being with us.

He's looking forward to it. One day the father will say, okay, son, it's time to get up, time to end this. How do you think, what do you think he will do? Will he just, okay, well, you say so, let me. No, right?

[11 : 46] He will jump up from his throne because he loves to come back and bring us home. He's committed to it. It is his greatest joy. And even now, this coming year, he's going to make it happen.

Right? For my brothers and companions' sake, we are his family. He will make it happen. And for the house of the Lord, for his Father's glory, he wants to see his Father honored by having you be there in worship, in celebration.

And so he's going to make it happen. He knows this is my job. I need to do this. I'm the son. It's my responsibility. So he will make it happen. He is totally committed.

And maybe you do New Year's resolutions. Maybe you want to lose weight or read the Bible more and pray. And that's really great. But I don't know. How many New Year's resolutions make it?

10% or something? It's not very encouraging. But this is Jesus' New Year's resolution. Jesus says, I will say, Peace be within you.

[12 : 48] I will seek your good. He's going to do it. And who is speaking? He is the Word of God, right? The one whose words creates galaxies. He will do it.

And we've seen his commitment, right? Yeah, we look forward. But how committed is Jesus to us? As you know, he died on the cross. He became a human. He died for us. And he's not going to stop there.

He's not going to stop until you are there in his presence, celebrating, enjoying his love and blessing and goodness. And so, yeah, if he's not going to give up, we can go into 2024, right?

What a wonderful way to start this year. I'm not sure what it will bring. Trials, temptations. The world is still lying in the power of Satan. You know, there's wars and the economy is still tanking.

And there's sin in our hearts and all around us. But Jesus is committed to us. Jesus will see us through. Jesus will bring us home. It's his greatest delight and his greatest responsibility.

[13 : 51] And so, let's keep our eyes fixed on Jesus this year, as his eyes are fixed on us. A przestmail stints. A przestromo. A a