

Text: Psalm 84 (End Times 3, Series A, November 19, 2017)

Theme: Almost . . . home!

Virtue (basic truth): Christians eagerly look forward to being where the Lord dwells.

Malady (our problem): Along our journey home, sin detracts focus and detours hearts.

Telic Note (goal): By means of this sermon, the Spirit of Grace fixes the glad truth of our heavenly home on our hearts to strengthen us to sojourn well until we see him.

Propositional Statement (aim): Some trips are tough . . . especially with the little one who consistently asks, “are we there yet.” Interestingly, though, our hearts often ask that same question too – sometimes in challenge or anger – of our heavenly home. Today, though, the Shepherd of Grace reminds us that we, by his grace, are almost . . . home!

Specific Law in Text: implied in our reluctance to see the blessing of the Lord’s dwelling.

Specific Gospel in Text: “Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you” (Psalm 84:4).

Doctrinal Thought: Confidence of a heavenly home is based entirely upon God’s promise to us.

Sanctification Thought: *“Living Lord, in sovereign love, you are the King and God who has promised me an eternal home with you. Shepherd of Grace, thank you! Even as I struggle to sojourn here, keep the promise of heaven on my heart; strengthen me to cherish your dwelling place and yearn for the day you bring me – and all your children - home to you. Keep me firm in grace and glad in truth. In your name I pray. Amen!”*

Psalm 84

For the director of music. According to gittith. Of the Sons of Korah. A psalm.

¹ How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty!

² My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

³ Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young – a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God.

⁴ Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.

⁵ Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. ⁶ As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools.

⁷ They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion.

⁸ Hear my prayer, O LORD God Almighty; listen to me, God of Jacob. ⁹ Look on our shield, O God; look with favor on your anointed one.

¹⁰ Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

¹¹ For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.

¹² O LORD Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you.

Happy are those in God's house, whose strength, whose trust is in the living LORD (Ps. 84:4, 5, 12). Happy are we because his grace, mercy and peace are ours every step, every day. Amen!

The estimate is staggering but not surprising. From what I read this past week, here are the numbers: a projected 43.4 million Americans will travel *somewhere* for Thanksgiving Thursday. Do the math and, for this one, single celebration, 1 in 7.4 of our fellow citizens will be *not home*. Insane as that number is, it's also the cultural travel trend. Even more interesting and ironic, though, is that 43.4 million . . . is also the number of times Summer Joy is estimated to ask "*are we almost there*" on our 3 hour and 35 minute flight to Orlando. How often that same question is voiced on the post-flight drive to Grandma and Grandpa's house is still undetermined.

Love my daughter dearly, but, if I'm honest, I'm not excited about those questions confined to a Southwest flight or about finding new ways to answer the same "no." On top of that, not super stoked to try to decipher if the question is eager or if it's anxious, if it's annoyed or if it's angry. And, you whom the Lord blessed to be around kids, know exactly what I mean. Advice?

That illustration is clear and the observation is obviously; but let's realize that pained question isn't just a preschooler's ponderance connected to Thanksgiving or familiar to families. It's also extremely contextual to everyday of our lives – no matter how old we are – en route to our heavenly home. *Are we almost there?!* Eager anticipation. *Are we almost there?!* Annoyance at the delay. *Are we almost there?!* Aggravation and anger. *Almost there?!* Daily ponderance!

In a wonderful way, we're not alone in that. In a gracious, gracious way that's the question raised, the anxiety addressed, and the calm instilled in Psalm 84 – the Foundation of this Saint's Triumphant sermon. Read the text in Scripture. Resounded the text in song/psalm. So we won't re-read or re-sing it – take time to do that this week at home, that's important. What we will do, though, is learn to remember Psalm 84 by its three simple sections: the *almost there* in focus is the home where the LORD is (84:1-4); it's the home where our hearts are (84:5-11); and it's the home where we're headed, too (84:12) – and each mention of that happiness and blessedness "*is a stronger expression of peace and satisfaction*" for we who are ***almost . . . home*** (Brug, 101)!

In just a second, you'll engage the first portion of Psalm 84 and, through it, the Holy Spirit will engage your heart with his truth. But let me get this out there: in terms of specific melody or directed use or what a *gittith* is, Psalm 84 leaves much unanswered. But, much as we don't know, most likely this festival song was sung en route to the Temple or Tabernacle for a feast (Tabernacles, Passover, Pentecost). If that's the case, 84 emphasizes the goal of their travels – not as the Jerusalem skyline or the gold that glistened in the Mediterranean sun – the goal, that to which they look and for which they sang, that in which they craved to be wasn't the brick and mortar dwelling place itself, but the One who dwelt there, the One who occupied it. You tell me: specifically from Psalm 84:1-4, whom were they so eager to see?

Far greater than to Grandma and Grandpa's house they go, they went to meet with the LORD Almighty. They went to interact the Eternal King and to do so in the courts of the living God. And, that alone made the journey worth it; of course, they sang with excitement on the way!

Millennia later and continental pilgrimages removed, let's not ignore the truth that we enjoy the same blessing here. This is where we meet the living God . . . and where he meets us! Present in his Word, here are courts of the LORD, here is the house of the living God! Present in his Sacraments, this is the abode of the King of kings and Lord of lords and God of gods. This is his house . . . where we come to praise him until we're home in heaven where we will see him!

Neither of those thoughts are removed from the Spirit-Inspired of Psalm 84; in fact, the 84th song shines that light radiantly. Brilliant as it is, though, it's embarrassing how that light exposes our negligence of his Word. We've got *better* things to think about. Embarrassing as it exposes our neglect of God's house. We've got *better* places in the skyline of our hearts. Embarrassing how it exposes the little things about which we grumble along the way, the impatience of our anger throughout the sojourn. Embarrassing and sad how childishly our life forgets worship of the God who gave us life; and how often living life abandons the living God in whom we have it. And, if God is at all serious about those first three commands . . . God have mercy on us, sinners.

But what if we took a minute to ponder why we're here and where we're going? Contrary to cultural trends, we're not here to be entertained; we're here to be edified by God's Word. We're not here because it's Sunday routine; we're here because it's a Sunday reminder of his promises. We're not here because our parents dragged us; we're here because they loved us enough to tell us about the God who so loved the world . . . and in whose presence we gather and go!

I've come to terms with the fact that a 3 hour and 35 minute ride in an elevated tin can will be uncomfortable with three kids three and under; and being packed into a Honda Pilot will be uncomfortable. And I'm so thankful Erica's foresightful enough to have a bag of books, a tote of activities, and a carry-on of answers ready. But, even in mid-flight misery and despite aeronautic activities, our Thanksgiving goal remains unchanged: to grandma and grandpa's house we go. And, sometimes our "*are we there yet*" simply needed to remember the *there* to which we go.

The Old Testament sojourners needed that, too; and saints triumphant need it still. Not necessarily coloring books or activities; not detoured by distractions or distracted by detours – those things come – but when the "*are we there yet*" is anxious, remember where we're going.

Doesn't mean we won't endure trials along the way or troubles en route; doesn't mean we won't have our pains and problems; doesn't mean our journey will be free of sorrow and sadness. They did; we do. They had; we will. But, even in the sojourn struggle, even when hearts were pressed

to ask “*are we there yet?*,” the goal remains unchanged. Even through the Valley of Baca (Valley of Weeping), the goal and the focus remains our heavenly home. That’s why . . .

- They “*set their hearts on pilgrimage*” (Ps. 84:5) and kept the way near and dear, beloved, and dearly loved. They would be in the presence of God; nothing better!
- They “*went from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion*” (Ps. 84:7). That’s why they craved refreshment and went day by day until they got there. And that’s why we do, too; as we rally here and are refreshed in his Supper, as we take his Word on our hearts to our homes, delight in it with devotions and ponder it in our petitions.
- They emphasized the marvelous dichotomy of even one day in the courts . . . but thrilled – and we with them! – at the reality that we’re consigned to be door-keepers in eternity, we’ve got a place at the banquet! And we’re not just there for one day or a cultural celebration holiday; Saints Triumphant, because of Jesus, we’re there to dwell eternally! That’s not just the goal, or the end of life . . . it’s our Father’s promise to us!

Do you know why Summer Joy knows where we’re going? We promised. And do you know why Summer Joy trusts us? Because she knows that we love her. So, despite any mid-flight “*are we almost there,*” she knows that, by God’s grace, we will be . . . soon. And when we gather with our family, when we sit at the table, when we rest and digest, it’ll all be worth it!

Saints triumphant in our dear Jesus, only by his goodness and grace, we’re going home. And how do you know; how can you be so dog-gone sure? Because you have his Word where he promises you. You’re going home! I know you’ve got your anxieties and angers; don’t let them distract you. I know you’ve got your headaches and your heartaches; but they don’t undo the goal. I know you’ve struggled; you’ve also got the God of Grace who gives grace for them; and who eagerly strengthens you to go from strength to strength until you appear before him in Zion.

Almost there?! Almost around the banquet feast of heaven? Almost gathered with friends and family already there? Almost there with saints triumphant to worship Savior triumphant?

Mid-flight, mid-life, this one I can answer with a beautiful confidence in our Jesus: Yes. Friends, you’re ***almost . . . home!*** God bless and keep you firm in his truth. God give you strength to remain in his Word. God gather you in his house. And God bless you with a happy/blessed heart to give thanks until you are, in fact, home! Safe sojourns, Christians!

Amen!