

Psalm 84 (83) (Mode 1. 5....65 / 3.....23)

The psalmist expresses his overwhelming delight at being able to be in the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. He reflects on the happiness of those who make the pilgrimage to encounter God in his dwelling place. The pilgrimage is physical, spiritual and moral.

How lovely is your dwelling place, O mighty Lord!

Praying this psalm as Christians we see Jesus as the new temple (John 2:19,21; Apocalypse 21:22-23). We dwell in him as he dwells in us.

‘If you eat my flesh and drink my blood you abide in me, and I in you’(John 6:56).

‘Abide in me as I abide in you’(John 15:4).

We see the Church as the new Temple.

‘You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God’(Ephesians 2:21-22).

‘You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first born who are enrolled in heaven’(Hebrews 12:22-23).

The ultimate temple is heaven.

‘We know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens ... He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord’(2Corinthians 5:1,5-6).

Augustine

‘To them there remains nothing to desire apart from God. They no longer love the earth; they love the One who created the heavens and the earth. They love Him, but they are not yet with him. From this arises their desire, a desire that is not satisfied immediately, and so it grows so that it can hold as much as it desires. It will not be little what God will give to those who nurture such a desire ... God will not give to his creatures anything less than Himself, the Creator of everything. Train yourself, therefore, to welcome God. Long from afar for the Good that you are destined to possess for ever ...

Augustine

Let us not tire of giving praise to God. If you lack love, you lack praise. However, if love is eternal, because the beauty of God is inexhaustible, then do not fear, because you will be able to praise forever the One whom you can love forever ... Long only for that day which knows no beginning and no end; that unique day, that eternal day, not issuing from a yesterday, and not leading into a tomorrow. May our desire be for that unique day.'

How lovely is your dwelling place,
O mighty Lord!

How I long, how I am yearning
for the courts of the Lord.

My heart and my flesh sing for joy
to the living God.

O mighty Lord, my king and my God!
Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for her brood,
where she may lay her young by your altars.

‘Thus says the Lord God: I will profane my
sanctuary, the pride of your power, the delight of
your eyes, and your heart’s desire’(Ezekiel 24:21).

Blessed are those who live in your house,
ever singing your praise.

‘Happy are those whom you choose and bring near
to live in your courts. We shall be satisfied with the
goodness of your house, your holy temple’(Psalm 65:4).

‘You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who
abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the
Lord: My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I
trust’(Psalm 91:1-2)

Blessed are those who draw their strength from you
as they resolve to go to you on pilgrimage.

As they go through the Baka' valley
they enjoy a place of springs;
the early rains cover it with pools.

A valley of trees that exude ('weep') gum,
and so a symbol for passing through sorrow.

They go from garrison to garrison.

‘Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint’(Isaiah 40:31)

In Zion they will see the God of gods.

The journey reaches its goal in the temple in Jerusalem – in union with God.

‘They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God’(Isaiah 35:2)

‘I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory’(Psalm 63:2).

O mighty Lord, hear my prayer;
listen, O God of Jacob!
God, our shield,
look upon the face of your anointed.

One day in your courts
is better than a thousand elsewhere.

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than live in the tents of the wicked.

For the Lord God is our sun and shield,
bestowing favour and glory.

The Lord never fails to bless
those who walk with integrity.

O mighty Lord, blessed are they
who place their trust in you.

Once again the focus is on God's power ('Yahweh of hosts', verses 1,3,8) and on the happiness (verses 4,5) of those who trust in the Lord.

'Those who are attentive to a matter will prosper,
and happy are those who trust in the Lord.'

(Proverbs 16:20)