

## **Theme: What a Beautiful House!**

### **Psalm 84:1-4, 7-12 (EHV)**

- <sup>1</sup> How I love your dwelling place, O Lord of Armies.  
<sup>2</sup> My soul grows weak and even wastes away, as I long for the courtyards of the Lord.  
My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.  
<sup>3</sup> Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow has found a nest for herself,  
where she may place her young near your altars, O Lord of Armies, my King and my God.  
<sup>4</sup> How blessed are those who live in your house. They are always praising you.
- ... <sup>7</sup> They go from strength to strength. Each one will appear before God in Zion.  
<sup>8</sup> O Lord, God of Armies, hear my prayer. Give ear, O God of Jacob.  
<sup>9</sup> Look upon our Shield, O God. Look with favor on the face of your Anointed One.  
<sup>10</sup> Yes, one day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.  
I would rather wait at the doorway of the house of my God  
than dwell in the tents of the wicked.  
<sup>11</sup> For the Lord is a sun and shield. God gives grace and glory.  
The Lord does not withhold any good thing from those who walk with integrity.  
<sup>12</sup> O Lord of Armies, how blessed is everyone who trusts in you.

Are you happy to be here at church today? Were you excited to come to the worship service this morning, or would you say you kinda had to drag yourself here? Would you say you land somewhere in the middle? Or, are you so used to coming to church on Sunday that it's pretty much just "automatic" and a force of habit that you're here today?

Well, would any of us who are gathered here today say that we are as excited as the inspired writer of Psalm 84: **"How I love your dwelling place, O Lord of Armies. My soul grows weak and even wastes away, as I long for the courtyards of the Lord. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God..."** <sup>10</sup> Yes, one day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere" (v. 1-2, 10)?

What is it about the house of the LORD that moved the writer to say, **"How I love your dwelling place, O Lord of Armies..."** <sup>4</sup> How blessed are those who live in your house" (v. 1, 4)?

What is it about this place that makes you come back here week after week? I think it's good from time to time to ask ourselves that question; to think about the "why" we gather together for worship in God's house.

It isn't the physical building or the amount of people gathered inside the building that gives the house of the LORD its true beauty or value. No, it's what goes on inside these walls that truly makes this such a blessed and beautiful house! It's what goes on inside these walls that moves us to come back here week after week, despite the fact there are plenty of other places we could be and plenty of other things we could be doing on a Sunday. There are things the LORD gives to us in His house as we gather for worship with our fellow Christians that we simply cannot get anywhere else. Think about some of the blessings we receive:

- The spiritual peace we receive each Sunday from the confession and forgiveness of our sins; knowing that our sin-sick souls have been completely cleansed and healed from all the guilt and shame of every last one of our sins because of the sacrifice of Christ.
- The reminder of God's continuing presence in our lives and all the comforting promises He has made and kept that assure each one of us individually of His love and protection.

- To hear and learn from the very words of our Father who created us; from His Son who redeemed us on the cross of Calvary and destroyed death by His resurrection; from the Holy Spirit who guides us in the truth of God's Word and empowers us to put it into action in our lives.
- The assurance of forgiveness and incredible faith-strengthening which Christ gives to us when we come to His table to receive His very body and blood given for you in the Lord's Supper.

These are all some of the gifts the LORD Himself gives to us when we come together and meet Him in His house. But there is one gift in particular that we can only receive when we gather together in worship with our fellow Christians—even if it's just a handful of them (even if it's just **“two or three” (Matthew 18:20)** Jesus says): That great blessing is called “fellowship.” Fellowship cannot be fabricated, it cannot be simulated—at least not fully. There is no real substitute for the blessing God gives us through fellowship when you are here sharing, worshiping, encouraging and being encouraged by your fellow believers in church. Besides, the LORD Himself has told us very clearly in His word that He wants us to gather together with those of our faith for worship, for Bible study and for mutual encouragement. Listen again to the words of our Scripture reading from Hebrews, **“Let us also consider carefully how to spur each other on to love and good works. <sup>25</sup> Let us not neglect meeting together, as some have the habit of doing. Rather, let us encourage each other, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:24-25 EHV).** (“The Day” he is referring to there is the Last Day; Judgment Day).

Now, for those of you who are watching, hearing, or reading these words over the internet, or in print, this is not meant to be a “guilt trip”—especially if you are a great distance from our congregation, or if something else is preventing you from coming to the worship service, like the Psalmist who wrote our text was experiencing, or if this is your only means of hearing God's Word preached and taught. I am very glad and thankful that you are listening, watching, and reading. Let me make sure I am clear: Hearing the Word through these means can definitely be helpful to the growth of our faith.

But, if you are willingly and purposefully not gathering with your fellow believers for worship on a regular basis that is a different story, and it is definitely time to do some soul searching and ask yourself “Why?” The psalmist says this about the worshipers in the house of the LORD in our text, **“How blessed are those who live in your house. They are always praising you...<sup>7</sup> They go from strength to strength. Each one will appear before God in Zion.” (v. 4, 7).** Why willingly deprive yourself of this strength; why neglect God's great blessing of fellowship?

If you are currently not experiencing this blessing of fellowship with God and other believers on a regular basis, let me encourage you to do so, and let me invite you to come and worship with us here every Sunday. Be a part of this family of faith that continually feeds off of God's Word and each other as we **“go from strength to strength”** on our journey toward the eternal “house of the LORD” in heaven.

Let me give you one more thing to think about when it comes to the blessings of gathering together for worship in the LORD's house with our fellow believers: We are not just blessed by what we can receive here, but also by what we can give here.

Notice that in the Hebrews passage from our Scripture reading which encourages us to gather together God doesn't point out the fact that it will benefit us and strengthen our faith. He actually points to the fact that it will be a blessing and an encouragement to others: **“Let us also consider carefully how to spur each other on to love and good works...let us encourage each other, and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25 EHV).** So, even if you aren't feeling a deep need to have your own faith encouraged and strengthened by gathering together for worship, do it for the encouragement and strengthening of your fellow believers. A full pew is always more encouraging than an empty one!

Think of the other blessed things we can give when we gather together for worship:

- ✝ We can praise our God who saved us.
- ✝ We can pray to the God who promises to hear and answer us.
- ✝ We can serve our God in unique ways with our fellow believers and be a part of growing and strengthening the “Body of Christ,” the Church.
- ✝ We can give our offerings to God to help His kingdom spread and grow—both locally and globally.

For all the blessings we get, and for all the blessed things we can give, our souls should be “excited” to come to the house of the LORD. It should be the place we’d rather be over any other—not because it’s the most fun or exciting place, but because it’s where we meet our Savior Jesus! It’s where He speaks to us; where He gives us the comforts of His promises; where He reminds us of the love He showed for us when He took all our sins upon His innocent body on the cross and then destroyed death for us in His resurrection on the third day. It is where we are reminded that He waits for each one of us in heaven, preparing a “beautiful house” for us. For all this, how could we not say with the psalmist, **“How I love your dwelling place, O Lord of Armies. My soul grows weak and even wastes away, as I long for the courtyards of the Lord. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God...”**<sup>10</sup> Yes, one day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere” (v. 1-2, 10). Amen!