

SERMON | A HEART OF PILGRIMAGE

SERIES | CHRISTMAS SEASON

STUDY GUIDE | DAVID STOCKTON & NATHAN DEL TURCO | SUNDAY, DEC. 31, 2023

SERMON SUMMARY

At Christmas we celebrate when Jesus came into our world as a baby born in Bethlehem. On the Sunday after Christmas, we love to celebrate the promise that Jesus will come again as a conquering King (Acts 1:10-11 & Revelation 19:11-16).

Last week, we looked at 1 Corinthians 13, when Paul writes, “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” Our hope in Christ’ second advent takes care of the future. Our faith in Christ’ first advent takes care of the past. So, that leaves us to love in the present.

In the Thomas Kelly quote, we find the prescription for how to love while we wait for Christ’ return, “The Loving Presence does not burden us equally with all things, but considerately puts upon each of us just a few central tasks, as emphatic responsibilities. For each of us these special undertakings are our share in the joyous burdens of love. We cannot die on every cross, nor are we expected to. ...By inner persuasion, he draws us to a few very definite tasks, *our* tasks, God’s burden heart particularizing his burdens in us.”

As we seek the Lord for what tasks the joyous burden of Jesus’ love is calling us to undertake this year, we can look to Scripture to help make sense of the pull we feel the Lord leading us in expanding God’s Kingdom.

In Psalm 84, we find important aspects of a life laid down for Christ. This Psalm has three distinct sections for us to understand. Sections 1 (verses 1-4) & 3 (verses 8-12), describe a life fully devoted to the Lord; yearning, praising, surrendered, anchored, desperate, and focused on the good, true, and right things in the Lord. Section 2 (verses 5-7) is what that person’s life, journey, pilgrimage, and ministry can and will look like, in light of sections 1 and 3.

These verses teach us three important things:

- 1) Develop a heart for the Lord and His house (a yearning heart)
- 2) Develop a heart of praise (an ever-praising heart)
- 3) Develop a heart of willingness to go (a pilgrims heart)

Through Christ as our source of strength, we can live a life in reflection of these attributes listed before us. Just as the pilgrims anticipated the joyous worship of God in Jerusalem, overcoming the natural weariness in their difficult journey, we too can be and stay equipped, for all the good and hard times of life and ministry, God has prepared for us.

SCRIPTURE READING

READ THIS WEEK'S BIBLE PASSAGES: Acts 1:10-11; Revelation 19:11-16; Psalm 84:1-12 (NIV)

¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” – Acts 1:10-11

The Heavenly Warrior Defeats the Beast

¹¹ I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. ¹² His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. ¹³ He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. ¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵ Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron scepter.” He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. – Revelation 19:11-17

Psalm 84

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

Section 1 (vs. 1-4) – The Expectation of Worshipping God:

¹ How lovely is your dwelling place, 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, LORD Almighty, my King and my God. ⁴ Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.

Section 2 (vs. 5-7) – The Expedition to Worship God:

⁵ Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. ⁶ As they pass through the Valley of Baka, 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.

Section 3 (vs. 8-12) – The Elation at Worshipping God:

⁸ Hear my prayer, 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 LORD Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you. – Psalm 84:1-12

BIBLE PASSAGE QUESTIONS

What stood out to you in these passages? Did the Lord highlight anything to you? What do we learn about the heart of God from these passages?

Read these passages again (use a different translation if helpful). How did these passages help to convict, correct, or encourage you?

GROUP DISCUSSION

DISCUSS THESE QUESTIONS WITH YOUR GROUP

1. Spend some time seeking the Lord, for what tasks the joyous burden of Jesus' love is calling you to undertake in this new year. Is there anything that comes to mind? Write it down to talk to Jesus about privately or share with the group to pray about together.
2. Which developed heart comes naturally easier to you: yearning heart, ever-praising heart, pilgrims heart? Which comes harder for you? How can you work on developing these heart attributes into faithful maturity?
3. How can you make changes to slow down and be still with the Lord in the New Year? Take some time to inquire from the Lord on a new routine of quiet time in His presence, Word, prayer, and worship. If your rhythm is going good, share what works well for you with the group!
4. Reflect on beautiful testimonies of the Lord's work in your life in 2023. Share with the group as an encouragement of God's faithfulness and goodness! Praise God together for the work He's done with our hands and hearts this year!

PRAYER

Take some time for prayer requests and pray over one another before wrapping up.

