

SONGS FOR THE JOURNEY:

# PSALMS OF ASCENT



MACARTHUR BLVD  
BAPTIST CHURCH



The Psalms of Ascent are a collection of songs, Psalms 120 – 134, that the Israelites would sing on their journey to Jerusalem to meet with God. The journey would not be an easy one as they would for certain face danger and difficulty along the way. But they had these songs for the journey to encourage them. We know that on this side of redemptive history, we do not have to travel up a mountain to meet with God, but in the same way we can take the principle of singing songs of truth to encourage us on our Christian journey.

Each week will include scripture reading, a short devotional, and a space for worship through prayer and song. While this resource can be used at any time throughout the year, we encourage you to begin on Sunday, September 3rd. Whether you use this liturgy with others or during your personal quiet time, our prayer is that it will continue to help cultivate a life of worship within your home.

Pastor Brandon Ramey



## Tips for Using This Liturgy

Each day, you're encouraged to take time to worship through song along with this liturgy. Use this QR code to access a Spotify playlist with a selection of songs chosen by Pastor Brandon.



- Set aside a dedicated time that you will go through the liturgy each day (morning, during dinner, before bedtime, etc.).
- If your family lives at home with you, use this liturgy together. Dads and husbands, use this as an opportunity to grow in being the spiritual leader in your home.
- If you have small children at home, allow them to participate in reading some of the devotional or Scripture, or have them pick songs for the day.
- If you have a hard time figuring out what to pray after the devotional, think about how God is leading you to respond to the Scripture and devotional and use that to guide your prayer.
- Feel free to use the music playlist throughout your day. You can look up the lyrics online or find lyric videos of most of the songs on YouTube.
- There are a wide variety of genres of music in the provided playlist. If there is a song that is not your “cup of tea”, feel free to skip it or take it as an opportunity to expand your musical taste.



## WEEK ONE

### **God's Presence During Distress**

Tommy Riggins

Scripture Reading: Psalm 120

Life as a Christian is not always smooth sailing. The path we walk might be calm one day yet tumultuous the next. What assurance do we have that our God who walked with us yesterday will still guide us in the troubling times tomorrow? The psalmist remembered God's past faithfulness in his present need. In his current distress, he cried out to the Lord and was confident that God heard him. Psalm 136 tells us that God's lovingkindness is everlasting. Since His mercy endures forever, He will never grow weary of guiding and protecting His children nor does the Lord's storehouse of gifts to us exhaust.

The nature of the psalmist's distress was more than simply physical harm. It was slander from those around him. Jesus said in John 15:20 that if He was persecuted then His children should expect the same, yet what a comfort to know that the Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed in times of trouble (Psalm 9:9). He never leaves us to fend for ourselves in a world that rejects the holy principles of God.

Even in distress and discouragement, we should remain faithful in the kingdom of God. The writer shifts from his prayer to God in order to give a warning to those who caused him distress. Jesus will one day return to take His children home for eternity and judge those who have rejected His salvation. For those who do not know Jesus as Lord it will then be too late. God is not willing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

## Psalm 120 (*cont'd*)

Since He delays His return to give mankind every chance to repent because of His great love for us then when we are under affliction our minds should be focused on the strength of the Spirit in us to remain a godly witness to a lost and dying world.

The psalmist ached because he lived among the ungodly. He was distant from Israel and its people and longed for God's peace. His desire was to speak words of peace and goodness, but every time he did so the response was hostile. So is all of the pain and suffering worth it? The apostle Paul certainly knew it was in II Timothy 4:7-8. Nearing the end of his life after all of the hardships he endured for the King of Kings, Paul looked forward to the crown of righteousness which the Lord would award to him on that day. He longed to hear the Savior say "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master." We must remember that our citizenship is in heaven where we will experience true and everlasting peace in the presence of our Lord for all eternity. Remain faithful because it will be worth it all when we see Jesus.

### *Worship Through Prayer & Song*

## **The Lord Is Our Protector**

Brandon Ramey

Scripture Reading: Psalm 121

What would you do if you knew the journey ahead involved danger and difficulty? Would you continue on or turn back? I'm certain most of us would say, "Well it depends on what's on the other side." Remember the Israelites would sing these songs on their way to Jerusalem, where they would meet with God.

They knew that on their journey up the mountain, they would face danger and difficulty. So, I imagine they were faced with the same choice; to continue on or turn back.

As we meditate on this psalm, we see that God is not just on the other side of difficulty and pain, He is there in the midst of it to protect us. Protection is no doubt a key theme in this psalm. We see that the Lord not only provides protection but that He is the protection. During their journey, this song would have reminded them of His character and how He is with them during the journey, as well as at the destination.

There are characteristics of our Protector that we see in this psalm that will give us peace and comfort on our journey. For the sake of time and space, we will just touch on a few here.

The psalmist says He never sleeps nor slumbers. The false gods of that time and region were often depicted as sleeping and not to be disturbed because they needed rest, and yet the one true God is depicted as never needing to sleep or slumber. He is sufficient within Himself and doesn't need nourishment from sleep. He is always fully aware, and ready and able to help and protect. Our protector is near to us. Verse 5 says the Lord is a shelter by my side, showing the closeness of God. Even when God seems distant, He sees, cares, and is near. And lastly, our protector is faithful. He protects us now and in the future. "*The Lord will protect your coming and going both now and forever.*" I can't help but think of the hymn lyric, "Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow." We have confidence in the midst of any circumstance that God will protect us now, tomorrow, and into eternity.

So, on your journey, acknowledge your need for help and remember that the Gospel doesn't reveal how much strength we have but rather our weakness and the strength of our God. We must not look at the danger ahead and say let's toughen up and push forward, nor should we give into fear and turn back. We

## Psalm 121 (cont'd)

must look to the Lord for protection and strength because our protection against danger is only as good as the source from which it comes. If we seek protection from anywhere but the Lord, it will eventually fail. So, seek protection from the right source and when we face danger and difficulty on our journey to God we can confidently say, *“Where will my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.”*

### *Worship Through Prayer & Song*

## **A Prayer For Jerusalem**

Bob Bolander

Scripture Reading: Psalm 122

As one of the “Ascent psalms” sung as family and friends were traveling to Jerusalem for one of the three pilgrimage opportunities each year, Psalm 122 is unique in that it is a prayer for Jerusalem. This prayer is specifically for three things: Verse 5 calls for the well-being of the civil leadership of Jerusalem; Verse 7 calls for the peace of Jerusalem; and Verse 8 calls for the prosperity of Jerusalem.

What do these three prayers have to do with the pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem? Each of the three, if threatened, would become a hindrance to going to meet with God at the place He had established. If the king or civil leaders were not ruling or judging according to God’s will, they would be threatened by the number of people coming into their town and would resist the free practice of worship. If there was civil unrest or the threat of a foreign military raid, people would be unable to safely enter the city. If the city was struggling economically, they would lack the resources to provide for those who were coming to visit.

Are we so excited about the possibility of meeting with God that we pray for any hindrance or threat to that opportunity to be removed by God's divine intervention? I think back to our Covid experience when we were unable to gather for a season. Were we grieved by that or did we find relief in the comfort of watching online? When our schedules don't allow us to be in God's Word or in prayer as we planned, are we grieved with that hindrance or do we just blow it off until tomorrow? Does our busy life interfere with the times we spend with our Lord? Does a rainstorm keep us home on a Sunday because we are uncomfortable with the trip?

I ask these questions not to condemn but to encourage that we be more active in prayer before these things threaten our plans, schedules, and desires. Let's pray that God clears the path before us of anything that might keep us from gathering together to celebrate Him.

*Worship Through Prayer & Song*

## **Looking For God's Favor**

Bob Bolander

Scripture Reading: Psalm 123

Why do we go before the Lord? Certainly, to worship Him for who He is and what He has done on our behalf. Psalm 123 was sung as people prepared to go before God at the temple. It lacks the joy and celebration often seen with the journey to Jerusalem for a more personal call to the Lord. How do you view yourself when you come before God? Do we see ourselves as an announcer of God's goodness and participator in a celebration of worship? There are certainly times for that but we often miss the humble significance of seeing ourselves in our need before God.

## Psalm 123 (*cont'd*)

Do we view ourselves as *totally* dependent upon God? This is the significance of seeing one's self as a slave. We have no possessions of our own; no resources, home, identity, value, freedom, etc. All we have is determined by the one we serve. We must admit before God that we, and all we have, are His and ask Him to give us our identity and the desires we will carry.

Do we call for mercy? A cry for mercy comes from one who recognizes they are at the end of their rope. There is no hope to escape, survive, overcome, or even rest. When we come before God do we have this attitude, that we are at the end and need more of Him? We need His mercy to provide, lift up, and encourage.

Do we know where our true battle lies? The ridicule and contempt that the psalmist describes is much like the spiritual battle we face today. The enemy tells us we are nothing in Christ and calls us to find fulfillment in what the world offers rather than relying on our Lord. The world views our dependency upon the Lord as weak and falling short of true satisfaction. Do we believe them, or do we call on God to prove them wrong through His merciful relief? Let's recognize who we are apart from Christ, understand who we are in Christ, and call upon Him to show us the mercy we need to be whom He has called us to be for His glory.

***Worship Through Prayer & Song***



## WEEK TWO

### **The Lord Is On Our Side**

Art Buntten

Scripture Reading: Psalm 124

We don't know a lot about the circumstances that lead David to write this psalm of encouragement, but we do know a lot of the situations that David and the nation of Israel faced. Perhaps he had in view how God saved him from Saul's spear, and Absalom's betrayal, or perhaps how Yahweh delivered the nation from captivity. Whatever the enemy or circumstance that David had in mind, the threat felt like rushing, raging waters that could sweep them away to destruction.

Was the fear real? Yes. Was the threat real? Yes. But David got to know the Lord as a God who saves. He reinforces this by repeating "if it had not been the LORD who was on our side" two times in the first two stanzas. The threat was real, with real consequences, and just like we don't have the power to stop raging waters, we don't have the power to halt the works of the enemy, but God is on our side and He does have the power. How can we know that He can do this? Because, as David points out, the very God that is on our side is the very God that created the heavens and the earth. He has the power to create and the power to save.

What is our response to the Lord who has rescued us? Our response is to sing out and live out "Blessed be the LORD." Let's follow the pattern of our psalmist David. How does David bless the Lord? He blesses the Lord through his acts of worship, through praises to Yahweh, and his heart of gratitude. What we see from David is that his life was marked by a pattern of following God, trusting God, and being a man after God's own heart. As David did, we as His people

## Psalm 124 (*cont'd*)

should bless the Lord through worship, obedience, and recognition of God's goodness in our lives and power to protect us from the storms of life that feel like they will swallow us.

And finally, rest in the truth that the Lord is on our side!

## *Worship Through Prayer & Song*

# **Do You Trust Me?**

Keith Daniels

Scripture Reading: Psalm 125

From time to time, particularly in a movie scene, you might hear the statement made by one character to another “trust me”, or the question asked, “Do you trust me?” However, outside of a movie scene, very rarely do you hear someone speak the words “I trust you” or “I trust” a certain person, place, or thing. Nevertheless, while not necessarily spoken, our trust in people or even inanimate objects is clearly expressed in everything that we speak and do.

For instance, if a friend says I'll meet you at a particular place in an hour and you go to that location, you do so because you trust them to be there. If I buy a food product stamped with a date of expiration, I trust that it will be good and not go bad before that date. If I get in my car to drive across town, I not only trust that my vehicle will get me safely there, but that the other drivers will drive safely enough to not impede me getting there, and the roads and bridges that I traverse will hold up and allow my vehicle to roll along smoothly from point A to point B. Every time we board an airline flight we are trusting pilots, whom we cannot see behind the cockpit door, to operate the controls properly to power aircraft engines and components that we trust have been maintained properly

by maintenance technicians that we have never met, and fueled with an adequate amount of fuel by the supplier we do not know, all of which will keep a commercial airliner weighing 220 plus tons in the air flying at an altitude of 35,000 feet against the laws of gravity. You get the point; we may not verbally say it, but our actions indicate the people and things that we trust.

In Psalm 125 we are encouraged to trust the God who is worthy to be trusted because He is committed to taking care of His people in the moment, days, weeks, and years to come, and for all eternity. The passage tells us that like Mount Zion and the mountains that surround Jerusalem, the Lord surrounds His people and will not allow the wicked to remain in power always. The days of the wicked are numbered so that they cannot overcome righteousness with their injustice. Because of the righteousness and goodness of the Lord, by His character, He will do good for those He calls His own and endure in doing good.

To be sure there will be times in our lives when all our expectations aren't met, and times when what we get is a bad product or outcome that isn't what we paid for or "deserved". There will undoubtedly be roadblocks, closed roads, and detours; and of course, breakdowns, delays, fuel shortages, storms, and turbulence en route. But as believers, we must remain steadfast on the journey, not in our own ability but in the stability of the only One who is trustworthy to ensure we reach our destination!

*Worship Through Prayer & Song*

## **Zion's Restoration**

Keith Daniels

Scripture Reading: Psalm 126

If you're like me, every so often I will awaken from a bad dream, or "nightmare". Other times I have gotten out of bed from a good night's rest and

## Psalm 126 (*cont'd*)

vividly recalled a very pleasant dream, one that sometimes felt so real and had me wondering where it came from. Was it from something I had previously thought or perhaps read about? Was it from something I had seen or a conversation I've had? Whatever the case, I much prefer to have a pleasant dream over an unpleasant one. In fact, I tend to try to put a bad dream out of mind as quickly as possible, but several days after a pleasant dream I find myself trying to remember it and all the details again.

In Psalm 126:1 the psalmist writes “When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.” The writer goes on to declare the pleasantries of the dream – “mouths filled with laughter, tongues shouting for joy among the nations the great things the Lord had done for them.” Then, as if the writer wakes up and the dream is over, the request is made of the Lord to restore the fortunes of His people in Zion (Israel). While the psalm is written for the Israelites, its relevance to us is the great reminder of the ongoing tension and reality for every believer – the “already and not yet” status of our faith. Just as the psalmist reflected on the dream of the day when Zion would indeed be restored, we too are called to live in light of the future promise that is ours. And like the psalmist, it is a reminder to us that even amid our tears and weeping through “many dangers, toils, and snares,” having sown for the Master, we too will reap with shouts of joy as we collect all that He has for us in glory!

In reflecting on the psalmist's words “we were like those who dream,” I was reminded of an expression often used as a response to the question of how one is doing. I'm sure you've heard it or, like me, even said it a time or two. *Question: “How are things going?” Answer: “I'm Just Living the Dream.”* While that response is usually meant to be a bit facetious, for the believer those words could not be closer to the truth. In the truth of the gospel, the tense of our salvation is past,

present, and future, and we are indeed living in the reality of already, but not yet.

So I would ask my brothers and sisters, are you “living the dream?” One final thought: Psalm 126 is both a declaration of praise for what God has done and a rejoicing in the hope that is ours for what God is yet to do. Some years ago I learned a simple chorus that says, “Zion is calling us to a higher place of praise.” May we, like the people of Zion in this passage, joyfully extol the great things the Lord has done for us among the nations!

*Worship Through Prayer & Song*

## **The Blessing Of The Lord**

John Williamson

Scripture Reading: Psalm 127

Have you wanted to be famous? Our human nature gravitates toward people that appear successful. People work hard to achieve their identity in sports, wealth, work, social media, relationships, and a host of other things. Many celebrities feel the weight of chasing fame. Robert Pattinson of the Twilight movies said, “People don’t realize how lonely you are....”. Human thinking would say that fame brings about satisfaction and love from others. If celebrities struggle with experiencing true love and satisfaction in this world, then a multitude of people probably struggle with the same.

Like many celebrities, we work hard to achieve a certain image and success in the world’s eyes. To attain this status, we tend to want to selfishly be in control. Psalm 127 provides immense wisdom that God has all authority over everything. By God’s grace he made a covenant of blessing with Israel in which they could encounter Him, finding an identity and a love that no one else can give. One aspect of this blessing is experienced within family and children. From the

## Psalm 127 (*cont'd*)

Israelite's perspective, children helped manage the land and household. Sons played an important part in the family's economic security and guaranteed its inheritance rights, continuing the family's participation in the covenantal blessing.

The psalmist acknowledges the vanity of any human endeavor apart from God. This psalm declares that God has kept His promise by blessing His people through the family of God. We get to experience all these blessings because of Jesus Christ. We should strive to find our identity in Christ in the context of family. It is easy to labor for worldly success and neglect the Father and the family He has graciously provided for us. Christ alone is the famous one. Think about how this world would be if we labored to make Christ famous in our families, the church family, and every area of our life.

***Worship Through Prayer & Song***



## WEEK THREE

### **Blessings For Those Who Fear God**

Mike Gibbons

Scripture Reading: Psalm 128

We all want the “good life” in some sense. The great Greek thinker Aristotle certainly did. He defined the “good life” as the happy life. America’s Founding Fathers continued this idea when they declared that all men have “certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” It is how to obtain that happiness that men have sought to answer over the ages. Psalm 128 definitively answers that question. You will not find happiness by pursuing happiness. You will find happiness by pursuing God. The good life is found by fearing and obeying God.

This introduces a dilemma, however. Scripture tells us that no one pursues God (Psalm 14:2-3). Jesus resolves this when He says, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (John 6:44). Because no one naturally pursues God, God pursues us. When we are born again, He opens our eyes to the truth, and in the power of the Holy Spirit we begin to truly seek after God. In our newness of life, we realize the love and power of our sovereign God and look to seek and obey Him out of holy and reverent fear. We live with God as the center of everything we are. All our thoughts and actions now begin with God, continue with God, and end with God as the only path to a blessed and happy life. As a Song of Ascent, Psalm 128 alludes to this seeking after God. These psalms were sung by the Jewish nation as they ascended the uphill road to the city of Jerusalem, seeking God in the temple.

In our seeking the face of God the psalmist emphasizes this blessed life. He uses the word “blessed” four times. “Blessed” conveys the idea of happiness and

## Psalm 128 (*cont'd*)

contentment. We could read verse one as, “Happy is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways!” “Blessed” also communicates the idea of the favor of God. The blessed life is one of happiness because of the divine favor from God. The passage continues by describing what this blessedness looks like. The blessings of God are manifested in the routine and ordinary. Work (vs. 2), family (vs. 3), and community (vs. 5-6). Real happiness does not come from the big events or purchases in this life. It comes from living in alignment with God and His purposes. In living this way those around us flourish as we find peace in our work, our family, and our community of the church.

We all want the good life. Psalm 128 reminds us how to find it. Fear and obey God. Turn to Jesus. Bow before Him. Trust Him. As you do this, may “The LORD bless you from Zion! May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life! May you see your children’s children! Peace be upon Israel!”

### *Worship Through Prayer & Song*

## **Protection Of The Oppressed**

Travis Bengé

Scripture Reading: Psalm 129

Afflictions, struggles, and attacks from the enemy are prevalent in the life of individual believers and the body of Christ, the Church. The longer you live, the more you notice the number of afflictions and struggles you face, and the church faces. What should we do when we face these attacks and threats from the enemy? Should we be consumed with fear and worry, as is our most natural instinct?

Of course not! Psalm 129 encourages believers to acknowledge these afflictions and the magnitude of them yet be confident that God is in control and holds all things together for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. We ought to pray that the Lord would show himself to us in these battles and be ever-present in our hearts and lives during these times.

The psalmist uses language here that would be frustrating to the enemy, such as in verse 4, “he has cut the cords of the wicked,” verse 5, “put to shame and turned backward,” and verse 6, “be like the grass on the housetops, which wither before it grows up.” If we conduct ourselves in a God-honoring way and push through the afflictions with hope in Christ, the enemy will leave defeated and frustrated, knowing the attacks cannot penetrate our hearts and faith in our King, Jesus. Fight the good fight of faith while counting the gracious love, care, and tenderness of our Savior.

*Worship Through Prayer & Song*

## **Awaiting Redemption**

Rob Tayne

Scripture Reading: Psalm 130

The contrast between the meaning of an “Ascent psalm” and the description the psalmist gives of their current condition should not be lost here. This description of crying out from the depths, begging the Lord to hear the psalmists’ voice, for the Lord’s ears to be attentive to his pleas for mercy – it reveals a sense of desperation contrary to the feeling we expect to have as we “go up” to the dwelling of God. The description by the psalmist makes it easy to imagine being in this terrible position. To be hiding in a cave, or trapped in a pit, knowing that we alone cannot rescue ourselves. Nor do we even deserve to be rescued. There is a feeling of hopelessness.

## Psalm 130 (*cont'd*)

Of course, we are not in a physical cave or pit. But clearly, our iniquities hold us in a place where we are desperate for rescue. How many times, as we are on our own journey, do we feel just as the psalmist describes? As we are on our way, we can often feel as though others are going up to the dwelling of the Lord, while we are languishing in the pit. Like a bad news / good news announcement, the psalmist acknowledges that if God were counting our iniquities against us then we would surely not stand. There would be no hope of escaping the pit. But the good news is that the Lord has intervened; He has made a way of escape, a way of forgiveness. Without His forgiveness, there would be no rescue from the pit. We can trust His promise of redemption.

The character of God and the certainty that He always delivers on His promises are the reasons our soul can wait for the Lord. As I meditate on this psalm, I cannot help but picture being in a pit myself. A pit that I cannot escape on my own. I know that as they walk by, no one outside of the pit has the tools to rescue me. But like the psalmist, I have seen how our Lord has always answered my cry before. It is in that blessed assurance that I have hope. The kind of hope that helps me wait.

It is hope that gives us the strength to wait for our rescue. Even from the depths of the pit, we know our rescue is certain. We may not know the day or the hour of our rescue, but as Psalm 130 ends, the encouragement to wait on the Lord is given. For the Lord abounds in steadfast love, with Him redemption is plentiful, and He has promised this redemption to His people—redemption from all our iniquities.

As we ascend to worship, we should acknowledge that we are either currently in the pit, have only recently been rescued from the pit, or may be

headed for a pit. But no matter the case, we can be encouraged by the psalmist's admonition, "Wait for the Lord, hope in the LORD!"

*Worship Through Prayer & Song*

## **A Childlike Spirit**

Jamie Brooks

Scripture Reading: Psalm 131

The common belief is that David composed this psalm while still under the rule of Saul's kingship, awaiting the fulfillment of his own anointing. An anointing that could naturally lead his heart toward pride and entitlement; a waiting that was anything but quiet and calm amidst the accusations and attacks of his predecessor.

David understands that he is not God, so he doesn't hope in the circumstances of life and judge them as if he was God's equal. He has a right and humble perception of himself flowing from a right and exalted faith in God. He's not arrogant and idolatrous from an inflated view of his self-sufficiency, or panicked and idolatrous from a self-deprecating view of his insufficiency, because his hope is in the Lord.

The life experience that best illustrates this is that of a weaned child, who no longer cries fearfully because he has grown to understand that there is food and it will be provided when he needs it, so he can stay calm even when he's hungry. He's confident because he is able to communicate with words, not tears, when he needs food. He's satisfied because he is mature enough to eat solid foods and not only drink milk. He is quieted in his soul because he isn't overwhelmed with discontentment or distrust while he awaits the next time he'll be fed.

## Psalm 131 (*cont'd*)

I imagine David at times prayed the truths of this poem to his promise-keeping God as he rested in the Lord's gracious peace, and he confessed the admonition of this poem to his sovereign God as he wrestled with the reality of his own impatience and fear. Perhaps it was during one of these times of personal prayer that another realization struck. The exhortation to fully trust in the Lord's provision is a necessary word for all God's people whether they are a shepherd, warrior awaiting a throne, or an exhausted mother rearing a house full of children. And so, he ends by inviting the people to follow his example, "Put on humility and take up trust in the Lord together with me."

***Worship Through Prayer & Song***



## WEEK FOUR

### **David And Zion Chosen**

Enoch Chan

Scripture Reading: Psalm 132

When Mr. Pain and Mrs. Suffering force an entrance into your house, leaving behind a trail of broken plates, broken chairs, broken lives, and broken hearts, what can you do? To whom can you turn for help?

If you're God's people, you know the answer: God. That's why in Psalm 132, they longed to meet with God. Can you feel the emotion in their song? They wanted Him, even craved Him! "Please God, You're our only hope! Rise, come to your resting place! Meet us there!" (vs.8).

There's just one problem. They've blown it so bad that they know that their chances of being helped by a holy God were slim. That's why they brought in David in verses 1-5 and verse 10, "Do you remember David, Lord? Do you remember how he loved you, labored for you, would rather be homeless until You found a home? Remember Him? He's our father! For David's sake, help us! Please. Don't reject us!"

Why are God's people so sheepish? Isn't God a God of love? Doesn't He love helping people? Here's why they're sheepish. Because unlike many moderners who falsely think of God as a grandfather whose job is to be warm and fuzzy, God's people in Psalm 132 rightly understood God as the Lord whose nature is just and fair. You see, the people of God had signed a contract with God in Deuteronomy 28 which they heinously breached. The contract was clear on the consequences: curses and destruction. You'd be sheepish too if you had the more biblical view of God.

## Psalm 132 (*cont'd*)

But that's why we were shocked when we heard the end of their song in verses 13-18. God came through! He helped them! But why? Wasn't the just and the fair supposed to judge the contract-breachers, instead of blessing them? The answer lies in verse 11; because the Lord swore an oath. He made a promise that He will not abandon.

You see, we had always thought of the Christian God to be a God who says, "I will keep my end of the deal if you keep your end." But as Jesus bled on the cross, we finally understood what God actually said, "I will keep my end of the deal even if you don't." He knew the cost of that commitment—He would need to absorb the consequences of the breached terms Himself in Deuteronomy 28. He would end up in our place—cursed and destroyed. And cursed and destroyed He was. On the cross, Jesus made abundantly clear His choice. "I will not abandon My promise even if it means that I will be left with a broken heart and a broken life." It turns out that more than the Lord who is just and fair, the Christian God is love and commitment. He swore an oath which He intends to never abandon, no matter the cost.

*Worship Through Prayer & Song*

## **Living In Harmony**

Mike Gibbons

Scripture Reading: Psalm 133

Although brief, this is surely one of the most beautiful descriptions of unity that has ever been written. The nation of Israel sang this psalm to express their joy in coming together for worship at the temple, where God promised to meet them. The psalm imparts blessing and life to God's people as it proclaims their oneness in faith.

It begins by heralding the delight of unity. The goodness of living together in unity is so good that the psalmist says, “Behold! Look! Marvel at what I am about to describe to you!” The world tells us that what is “good and pleasant” comes from grabbing what one wants at the expense of another. David tells us otherwise. What is “good and pleasant” is “dwelling in unity” with our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is a corporate focus, not an individual focus. This is not just surviving a weekend family reunion. It is living together, “dwelling,” for a long duration.

The psalmist then gets to the heart of unity. It runs like a thread through the text. The phrases “running down” and “falls on,” describe a coming down or a descent. “The dew of Hermon” and the “mountains of Zion” also illustrate this descending. Mt. Hermon was the tallest mountain in ancient Israel at around nine thousand feet. The “mountains of Zion” were in the lower plains and peaked at approximately twenty-five hundred feet. True unity is vertical. We do not achieve unity; it comes from above like all good gifts. It starts high and moves down. It is received rather than manufactured.

Like the Tower of Babel, we often try to achieve a human-centered form of unity. Rather than a God-given, vertical, unity, we attempt a horizontal unity through our own efforts. This is uniformity, which is a false unity. When we attempt to conform others to our beliefs or actions, we are forcing uniformity, not true unity. Unity points to what we have in common. Uniformity points to differences and what must be given up. True unity focuses on the fact that we are one in Christ and reflects the unity of our trinitarian God, “that they may be one even as we are one” (John 17:20-23). Unity around anything except the truth of the gospel is division going by another name.

Unity is a blessing. It is worth giving up our rights, preferences, and reputation to unite around Christ. A.W. Tozer tells a story of tuning one hundred concert pianos. Tuning the pianos to each other results in disharmony and

## Psalm 133 (*cont'd*)

discord. True harmony only occurs when they are tuned to the same tuning fork, a standard. When we try to tune ourselves to one another, horizontally, it does not work. When each of us tunes ourselves to Christ and abides in Him, God provides unity. It is harmony amongst differences. May the world know we are Christians by our harmonious unity and love for each other (John 13:35).

### *Worship Through Prayer & Song*

## **A Call To Evening Worship**

Brandon Ramey

Scripture Reading: Psalm 134

We come to the last song in the Psalms of Ascent. It seems fitting that as the people are preparing and setting their thoughts on the journey back home, the encouragement of this Psalm is that of continued worship and the blessing of God.

The worship of God did not cease when the people left Jerusalem. The priest and Levites were appointed and set apart to serve in the temple, offer sacrifices, guard, and continue the worship of God on behalf of the people. Verses 1 and 2 were addressed to those priests and Levites. This was sung as a call and response to charge the servants of the Lord to continue, on behalf of the people, to worship God as they knew they would not have another time to worship in the presence of God until the next festival. They were encouraged even in the night: do not be consumed with other things but continue in your duty. And the servants responded in verse 3 with the blessing of God on the people.

For us today, we know we don't need priests and Levites to worship on our behalf. We are a kingdom of priests with continual access to God's presence

because of the finished work of Christ on the cross. And we need not go to a physical location for worship, for we are the temple of God. The Spirit of God no longer dwells in a place but in a people – in you and me – and we have the privilege and duty to be devoted to the worship of God, day and night.

As we are encouraged by this psalm to continue worshipping God, one of the goals of providing home liturgies is to help start a continual rhythm of worship within your home. What we consistently do and consume in the home has an impact on what you and your family treasure. This doesn't mean there is never a time for watching your favorite show or having leisure time in the home. What it does mean is that you and your family will not drift into a life devoted to following and enjoying Christ, but we can cultivate a rhythm of worship by purposefully setting our gaze on God. As we end this liturgy, I charge you to continue to worship God, and pray God's blessing on us, *"May the LORD, Maker of heaven and earth, bless you from Zion."* Psalm 134:3

***Worship Through Prayer & Song***

## Psalms of Ascent Liturgy Created by:

Pastor Travis Bengé  
Pastor Bob Bolander  
Pastor Jamie Brooks  
Pastor Art Bunten  
McKenzie Byrd  
Pastor Enoch Chan  
Pastor Keith Daniels  
Angela Detten  
Pastor Mike Gibbons  
Laura Oliver  
Betsy Philip (Cover Art)  
Pastor Rickey Primrose  
Pastor Brandon Ramey  
Pastor Tommy Riggins  
Pastor Rob Tayne  
Pastor John Williamson

