

### INTRODUCTION:

Over the years, Traci and I and the girls have had opportunity to do quite a few road trips.

- We might all agree on one thing that seems to make traveling in the car a little more bearable, and that is, we listen to music as we drive.
- Some people may go even a little beyond this by watching a video in the car, and others may go the other way and resort to singing.
- That is one thing that the Morkassel family particularly enjoys as we travel.
- But this morning, I would like for us to go back about 3000 years and study one particular song that was sung while people were traveling to the temple in the city of Jerusalem for worship.

There is something about music that seems to make any journey (or even any task) just a little more bearable.

- With this in mind, I would like for us to focus our attention on **Psalm 122**.
- **Psalm 122** is the third in a series of 14 psalms that were normally sung by travelers as they journeyed to Jerusalem for worship.
- When we look at the headings for **Psalm 120-134**, we find that they are labeled “*Songs of Ascent*.”
- In other words, they are the psalms of “**going up**.”
- Over time, these were the psalms that were normally sung by the huge crowds of people as they traveled up into the mountains—as they literally ascended toward Jerusalem to worship.

In just a few moments, we will find that **Psalm 122** starts with a statement of great joy.

- I think we can safely assume that David was not excited about any kind of journey itself.
- Back in those days, of course, there were no planes, or trains, or cars.
- There were no minivans with built-in DVD players and wireless headphones.
- There were no Holiday Inns with clean sheets and hot showers along the way.
- There were no Wendy’s or McDonald’s.
- Perhaps we have forgotten how blessed we are with the ease of travel in our society.

If you’re ever traveling through Chicago you may be aware that rather than rest areas in the metropolitan area, they will occasionally have an “**oasis**”.

- It’s basically like a rest area except that it is not built off to the side of the road.
- It is built literally over the road like a bridge.
- And it contains more than just vending machines and bathrooms.
- It is more like an indoor shopping plaza with coffee shops and a fast food restaurant as its main feature.
- Perhaps sometimes even today we forget how easy it is to travel in modern times.

But back in David’s time, though... there were miles upon miles of hot, dusty, winding, and rocky little trails going up and down through the hills.

- When we realize that those trails were shared with hundreds and even thousands of animals all headed in the same direction, we start to understand that David was probably not referring to the journey itself. It could not have been very pleasant.

I should also point out that for parents of small children, the journey must have been an absolute nightmare—can you imagine?

- We think it’s bad in the minivan with car seats and juice boxes!

- But imagine always watching out to make sure that the children did not get lost, get stepped on by a donkey, or get run over by a camel.
- In fact, we remember exactly what happened to Jesus.
- In the book of **Luke**, we read about what happened to Jesus when he was 12 years old.
- His entire family traveled to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover, but when they all left, Jesus stayed behind.
- It took his parents a full day to realize He wasn't traveling with them, and then it took three more days of searching before they finally found Him, sitting in the Temple, debating with the teachers.
- And so we can only imagine that the trip itself must have been a nightmare.

But then the crowds start getting closer to Jerusalem, and as the city comes into view, the crowds start breaking into song—praising God along the way.

- All of this brings us to **Psalm 122**...

- 1 I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord."*
- 2 Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem,*
- 3 Jerusalem, that is built as a city that is compact together;*
- 4 To which the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord—an ordinance for Israel—to give thanks to the name of the Lord.*
- 5 For there thrones were set for judgment, the thrones of the house of David.*
- 6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you.*
- 7 "May peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces."*
- 8 For the sake of my brothers and my friends, I will now say, "May peace be within you."*
- 9 For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good.*

We notice right away that David was **"glad"** about going to the Lord's house.

- David did not say that he was sad, or that he was obligated, but he said that he was **"glad"** about going up to Jerusalem to worship.
- The Law of Moses required every adult male to make the journey three times every year.
- Everyone had to go. And yet with David, there is not even a hint of reluctance.
- There is no suggestion whatsoever that David is going merely out of a sense of duty, but he was worshiping with gladness.
- This morning, then, we need to ask ourselves, **"Is this how WE feel? Are we excited about worshiping the Lord on the first day of every week?"**
- As we think about our own attitude, I'd like for us to consider several reasons for David's joy.

#### **I. First of all, we find that DAVID LOVED TO BE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD (verses 1-3).**

Since this psalm was written by King David, and since it was written about worshiping in Jerusalem, then we must believe that it was written before the temple was constructed.

- At this time, then, the Ark of the Covenant was resting, not in the tabernacle, but in a tent that David had pitched in Jerusalem on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite—most likely the same place where Abraham (1000 years earlier) was asked to offer Isaac, his son.
- And so this place was very special and full of meaning.
- It was special because God was there!
- After David died, his son Solomon built a temple on the site, later, Solomon's temple was replaced by Zerubabel's temple, and then by Herod's temple in the time of Christ.
- But it was a great honor and a great joy to be able to be in the presence of God.
- It was a high point in David's life.

We can almost imagine King David looking forward to worship just as a small child might look forward to Christmas.

- He was eager to meet with God. He was eager to stand in the presence of God.

Under the New Covenant, of course, we no longer travel to Jerusalem to worship.

- As Jesus said to the woman at the well in **John 4**, *“Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.... But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”* (verses 21, 23-24).

Over in **Hebrews 12**, we find a beautiful contrast between worship under the Old Covenant as opposed to what we do today.

- In **Hebrews 12:18-24**, the Bible says...

**18** *For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind,*

**19** *and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them.*

**20** *For they could not bear the command, “If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned.”*

**21** *And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, “I am full of fear and trembling.”*

**22** *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,*

**23** *to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,*

**24** *and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.*

And so we find that David, in all of his joy and gladness, was only participating in a shadow of what we experience in the Lord’s church today.

- We can take David’s gladness and multiply it many times, and we just start to appreciate what a blessing it is to worship God with our Christian family on the first day of every week.
- Today, we do something that those under the Old Law could hardly even dream of doing.
- As Christians, we enter into the Most Holy Place.
- That curtain was ripped in half from top to bottom at the crucifixion.
- In **Hebrews 6**, then, our hope is described as, *“an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us....”*
- You might remember that in Old Testament times, only the High Priest could enter behind that veil.
- In fact, at one time in history, the High Priest would only go through that veil with a rope tied around his ankle.
- That way, if God struck him dead, his fellow priests could drag him out from under the curtain without putting their own lives in danger...

Sure, we may face hazards on the road on way here, we may need to drive half an hour or more to get here, we may be tired after a hard day at work, we may have to wrestle with our kids for a little bit...but what a joy it is to worship God with our Christian family!

- What a wonder it is to follow Jesus into the Most Holy place—worshiping in the throne room of God!
- In a similar way, David was glad when it was time to worship God—even in his own very limited way.

II. There is another reason for David's enthusiasm, and that is, **HE WAS ABSOLUTELY THRILLED TO GET TO SEE HIS FELLOW JEWS ONCE AGAIN** (verses 4-5).

In **verses 4-5**, he refers to all of the tribes going up together: first, to give thanks to the Lord and also for the purpose of judgment.

- But we also find a lesson way up in the first verse.
- Notice how David emphasized the importance of doing this as a community, or as a group.
- David said, *"I was glad when **THEY** said to me, 'Let **US** go to the house of the Lord.'"*
- He didn't just say that he was going on his own.
- He didn't just tell someone else to go, but David said, **"Let's go together!"**

Someone has said that there are two things we cannot do alone—one is to be married, and the other is to be a Christian.

- It is significant to think that God could have told each of the 12 tribes to worship on their own.
- He could have told them to come together in their separate cities.
- There could have been a city like Jerusalem in each of the 12 tribes.
- God could have told them to stay home and worship in their own tents, but God saw the value in having everyone come together.

In a similar way, we should also appreciate the great blessing in having a church here in Salem, IL.

- Just ten years ago, who would have thought that all of us would be together here this morning?
- Just ten years ago, none of us could have imagined the series of events (and God's loving care) that brought all of us together here this morning.
- Sometimes we could look around and say to ourselves, **"Wow! This is a pretty small group."**
- We could see the weaknesses of those who attend.
- And yet it is a small number who have come together to hear the word of God without compromise.
- I am reminded of God's loving care that arranged for Peter to go and preach the gospel to Cornelius, a Roman Centurion, who had been fervently praying that he would hear the truth.
- When Peter and his companions finally arrived (in **Acts 10**), the Bible tells us that Cornelius was waiting for them and that he had called together his relatives and close friends.
- Cornelius stood up and said to Peter, *"...you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."*

And so David also was happy about being together with others during these special times.

- I don't know about you, but I know how encouraging it is to me to stand at the back of the auditorium and to see everyone so happy to see each other again.
- And to see Lola and Olivia and Haley when they see each other—They run up to each other and give big hugs and they really enjoy being with one another once again.

Adults may not do so much playing, and bumping, and hugging, and running together, but it is still amazing to see how long people stay around after the closing prayer.

- It is not that unusual for there to be fellowship going on even 30 or 40 minutes after services have ended.
- I think Traci and I stayed talking to Brandon and Siretha until after 10 o'clock or later once!
- I think it shows that we enjoy being together.
- David also looked forward to seeing his fellow Jews during those special times of worshiping God.
- Being together is not a burden, but it is the highlight of our week.

Way back in 1975, there was a report concerning the development of large screen TV's.

- Do you remember what those looked like back then—suitcase sized projectors with the three huge lenses on the front.
- The report said that due to that development, by the year 1980, there would be almost no movie theaters in the United States.
- What they failed to realize is people still enjoy being together.
- There is more to watching a movie than sitting on the couch.
- In a similar way, we can also say that there is more to worship than sitting at home reading a Bible.
- But, like David, we enjoy coming together and we enjoy connecting with one another.

III. There is another reason for David’s enthusiasm, and that is, **DAVID LOOKED FORWARD TO ENCOURAGING HIS FELLOW JEWS AT THOSE TIMES OF WORSHIP.**

Notice in **verses 8-9**, his concern was for others.

- David said, *“For the sake of my brothers and my friends, I will now say, ‘May peace be within you.’ For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good.”*
- In other words, worship is not a selfish experience.
- We receive encouragement from others, but we also encourage the others who are present.
- When we come together, we learn the needs of our fellow Christians.
- We learn who is sick, who needs assistance, who has been in the hospital, who is traveling, who has had a birth in the family, who is facing some special trouble or concern.

We may think that we ourselves can make it through the week without encouragement, and that may or may not be the case, but we should remember, as David did, that we cannot encourage our brothers and sisters if we ourselves are not present.

And so, when someone is not here, we don’t just say, **“Well, I wonder where they are today,”** and then leave it at that, but we check into it—not out of meddling, not for ammunition with which to gossip—but out of genuine concern for the other person.

- We make a call, write a note, send an e-mail, or stop by for a visit.
- It means so much when we do this for one another, because we are all connected.
- As Paul said in **Romans 14:7**, *“For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself.”*
- In other words, our lives are all interconnected with one another.
- When we are here for worship, we encourage one another, and when we are absent, our lack of attendance will discourage the other members of the congregation.

Someone might say, **“Well, I won’t come to class this time, and no one will miss me. My little bit is not very important.”**

- Most of us have probably heard the very old fable about the *Great Stone Soup*.
- Supposedly, once upon a time, somewhere in Eastern Europe, there was a great famine in which people jealously hoarded whatever food they could find, hiding it even from their friends and neighbors.
- One day a man came wandering into a village and began asking questions as if he planned to stay for the night.
- But the man was told to keep on moving, because there was not a single bite to eat in the entire province.
- But the man responded by saying, **“Oh, I have everything I need. In fact, I was thinking of making some stone soup to share with all of you.”**
- He pulled a huge iron pot from his wagon, filled it with water, and built a fire under it.

- Then, with great ceremony, he took an ordinary-looking stone from a velvet bag and dropped it into the water.
- By now, hearing the rumor of food, most of the villagers had come to the square or watched from their windows.
- As the stranger sniffed the supposed “broth” and licked his lips in anticipation, hunger began to overcome their skepticism.
- And then the stranger said to himself rather loudly, **“Ahh, I do like a tasty stone soup. Of course, stone soup with cabbage – that’s hard to beat.”**
- Soon a villager approached hesitantly, holding a cabbage he’d retrieved from its hiding place, and added it to the pot. **“Great!”** said the stranger.
- **“You know, I once had stone soup with cabbage and a bit of salt beef as well, and it was fit for a king.”**
- The village butcher managed to find some salt beef . . . and so it went, through potatoes, onions, carrots, mushrooms, and so on, until there was indeed a delicious meal for all.
- The villagers offered the stranger a great deal of money for the magic stone, but he refused to sell and traveled on the next day.
- The moral is that by working together, with everyone contributing what they can, a greater good is achieved.

The same thing is also true in the Lord’s church.

- As the Bible says in **Hebrews 10:24-25**, *“Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”*

## **CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY:**

With that in mind, and as we close this morning’s lesson, there is a great day coming.

- I have read that as the Jewish people got closer to Jerusalem, their songs would grow louder and louder as more and more people joined in along the way and as they all grew more excited about arriving in the city.
- The Bible tells us in **Hebrews 11:10** that Abraham *“...was looking for a city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”*
- We are looking for that same city. I don’t know if any of you think about it like this, but we are closer to that city right now than we were last Sunday.

Until we get there, we come together every first day of the week, and we follow the example of King David in **Psalm 122**.

- He loved to be in the presence of God.
- He was thrilled to see his fellow Jews once again.
- He looked forward to offering encouragement during times of worship.

The Bible teaches that we are added to God’s family when we turn our hearts back toward God, when we confess our belief in Jesus as God’s Son, and when we allow ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins.

### **Comments or Questions?**

Please contact Kevin Morkassel by email... [kmorkassel@ussonet.net](mailto:kmorkassel@ussonet.net)