

In the Name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

¹ How lovely is your dwelling place, O 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, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God.

⁴ Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. ⁵ Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. ⁶ As they pass through the Valley of Baca, 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.

⁸ Hear my prayer, O LORD God Almighty; listen to me, O God of Jacob. ⁹ Look upon 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 O LORD Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you. **This is God's Word for our Meditation.**

Dear Friends,

This summer has been special for Dawn and I because in June we were in Arizona and this last week we just got back from Texas and in August we will go to Florida. Those places are special because they are where our children, their spouses, and our grandchildren live and we like to be with them.

Maybe you have a special place you wanted to be this summer as well – a special vacation spot or visiting relatives you don't get to see very often or maybe some special event.

The writer of this psalm also had a place he wanted to be too – a place he was looking forward to visiting. He wanted to be in God's Dwelling Place – God's House. As we consider the words of Psalm 84, the psalmist wants us to get excited about God's Dwelling Place and to see it as a, **"Place Where We Want to Be,"** because, **"It's a Place of Power,"** and **"It's a Place of Protection."**

I. "How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty!" When the psalmist wrote these words, we think he was talking about the temple in Jerusalem. That was where the Old Testament people worshipped – what we would call the "official" place of worship and that was where God dwelt in their presence. If people talked about being in the presence of the Lord, they were talking about Jerusalem and the temple

The temple and worship life in Jerusalem was part of the Old Testament Laws God gave his people on Mount Sinai. Laws that helped the people focus on God, His promises for them, and their need of a Savior. These Laws were a very important part of the people's lives.

When Jesus came and kept all those Old Testament Laws perfectly and then made the perfect sacrifice for all sins, he brought freedom to how God's people worshipped. All of a sudden there was no more need for all those animal sacrifices. Gone were the required trips to Jerusalem for

the special feasts commanded by God. Gone was the role of the priests and high priests who performed the sacrifices for the people and were the mediators between the people and God. Jesus not only brought salvation, he brought freedom to the worship lives of believers – freedom for us.

We no longer need to worship at the altar in Jerusalem. Jesus tells us, **“For where two or three come together in my name there am I with them.”** (Matthew 18:20) God is with us when we gather around his Word. God is here in church **right now as we worship**. God is with us in our homes as we gather our families for home devotions. God will be with us this week as we gather for our Vacation Bible School. That is his promise and one of the many blessings he brings to us through his Word.

That’s why the writer of this Psalm tells us, **“My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.”** Apparently, the psalm writer couldn’t go to the temple in Jerusalem to worship, but his heart ached to be there. He wanted the blessings of God’s presence – he wanted to come together with fellow believers to be able to praise his Lord and to hear about God’s grace and mercy and love!

It’s great to go on vacations but by the end of your trip you usually are looking forward to getting back home. The trip was fun but you miss your house and the comfort of familiar surroundings. The writer of this psalm missed the comfort of God’s presence and the blessings God brought to him. He expounded on that with the different names he used for God in these first few verses.

The Lord Almighty – a reference to God’s strength and power. The strength and power God uses to take care of His people. The writer calls God, **“The LORD”** spelled with all capital letters refers to the Hebrew word YAWEH or Jehovah – pointing to the God of grace who promises salvation to all who believe in the promised Messiah – Jesus Christ our Savior who brings us the forgiveness of sins. And finally, **“the Living God”** referring to the spiritual life God gives us by creating faith in our hearts. Without God there is no spiritual life. What a great God we have. That’s why the writer tells us, **“Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.”**

Does your soul yearn to be in the presence of the living God? He has done so much for each and every one of us. His almighty power provides for all of our needs. He is the living God for each one of us – bringing us spiritual life and salvation. He is the God of grace – the covenant God – forgiving all of our sins. Do you wake up on Sunday with the thought, “Today I get to go to church and dwell in God’s presence!” or are your thoughts more along the lines of, “I have to go to church again – maybe they won’t miss me if I skip a week.”

Satan is constantly helping us find reasons not to come to church. He helps us get distracted while we are here and tries to get us to focus on anything but God’s Word. Why do you come to church? So many people look to church for entertainment or to bring them an emotional high. But worship is so much more than that. It is the Lord dwelling in your heart. It creates the emotion of joy, not because the music is so great or the sermon contains a lot of jokes, no it creates that emotion of joy because my sins have been paid for and forgiven. I’m glad Jesus has

taken my punishment for me and gives me his righteousness. That's a great reason to praise God and leave the church feeling refreshed. We have the living water of God's Word that brings life to our sin parched souls – Praise the Lord!

II. Praise the Lord for God's grace – Praise the Lord for God's power and strength. The Apostle Paul reminds us, **“I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”** (Philippians 4:13). It is God's strength that carries us through life. Our psalmist describes that journey through life as a pilgrimage through the Valley of Baca. The Valley of Baca can be translated as the “parched valley” because something is missing. That's the world we live in -- a parched place – a desert with many mirages that look good but work at sucking the life right out of your soul. It's only the living water of God's Word that can bring us relief and give us strength to go on. We need that living water of the Word. Just as the body loses strength and dies without water, so our faith grows weak and dies without the living water of the word – without the Good News of Jesus. God's Word keeps us strong on our journey through life.

The psalmist points out how God's Word keeps us going until we appear before God in Zion. This is a reference to our judgment. We know that, **“A man is destined to die once and then face judgment.”** (Hebrews 9:27). It's something that no one can escape but the Christian faces the judgment seat in Zion with joy pointing to Jesus as their Savior – the one who makes our faith perfect. It's faith alone in Christ alone that saves us. The message we love to hear – the message that gives us strength – the message that assures us of God's protection.

The psalmist ends this psalm with a beautiful picture. He tells us, **“For the Lord God is a sun and shield;”** A shield to protect us from everything that is evil and a sun to bless us with everything that is good.

How do we resist temptation? How do we shield ourselves from the attacks of Satan, the world and our own sinful flesh? Only the shield of God's Word can protect us. That's what Jesus used when he was tempted in the desert – God's Word to shield him from the sharp arrows of the devil.

And then we have that picture of the sun. Just think of all the blessings we have through the sun – it keeps us warm, provides light during the day, helps our plants to grow so that we have food, provides energy through solar cells and so much more. Just as the sun is a blessing to us so also the Lord God Almighty blesses the person who trusts in him. He provides for our needs and so much more. What a wonderful reason to sing praise to our God!

There is nothing better than gathering around the Word every day and knowing that God is with you in a special way. There is nothing better than sharing the Word with God's people – young and old.

Today, as you leave the Lord's House, May the words of psalm 84 increase your longing to hear God's Word – to worship him and praise him in this sanctuary.

May the words of psalm 84 help you see the strength of our God who carries us through life.

And may the words of psalm 84 help you to see how God is our shield and our sun as he protects and blesses us through his Word. Amen.