

**Psalms**  
**“The House of the Lord”**  
**Psalm 122**

I just feel like tonight's songs, all of them, just fit so well with our passage, which comes from Psalm chapter 122 this evening. So if you would stand for the reading of God's Word. Which comes from again, Psalm 122. If you have a copy of God's Word, please follow along or you can follow along on the screen beside me. Psalm 122, verse one

***A song of a sense of David. I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord. Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem, built as a city that is bound firmly together, to which the tribes go up the tribes of the Lord, as was decreed for Israel to give thanks to the name of the Lord. Their thrones for judgment were set. The thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. May they be secure who love you. Peace be within your walls and security within your towers. For my brothers and companions sake, I will say, peace be within you for the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good. This is the word of the Lord.***

You may be seated.

Let's go to the Lord one more time in prayer. Gracious Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for this evening. We thank you that you gather us as your people to come before your throne and worship you, Lord, even as Connor saying a moment ago, we were once enemies and not pilgrims, but you arrested us in our path, just like you arrested Paul on his path, and you turned us around and you set us. You set us on this narrow path, the righteous path. And we now find ourselves on this long pilgrimage where we seek after your glory. And indeed, it has already come. We thank you so much that we behold your glory on the pages of Scripture. May you feed us with this word, and may you deepen our desire to await and to yearn for the full glory to come. When you return, we pray these things in Jesus name.

Amen.

Near the very beginning of Pilgrim's Progress, after Christian learns of the impending destruction of his city, the character by the name of Evangelist asks him, why stand thou still? To which Christian responds, I know not whither to go. Evangelist then hands on a parchment, and in it is written. Fly from the wrath to come. And then, looking up, Christian asks once more, whither must I fly?

Then, pointing to the distance, evangelist says, do you see yonder wicked gate? Two weeks ago we started our evening series in the Book of Psalms. And as I pointed out, Psalm chapter one is

the gatekeeper to the whole book. Or as Bruce Walker puts it, it is the wicked gate. Psalm one informs us very clearly whither way we must go.

We must enter the narrow gate and brave the journey down the way of the righteous. But the gate is too narrow, and the way is too hard. We cannot possibly make it on our own. Which is why Psalm chapter two invites us to trust in the Lord's anointed, and to follow him down this perilous path. Thus, in our series, we now heed the words of the evangelist, and trusting in our Messiah King, we enter the Wicked Gate and embark on the King's Highway.

It struck me this past week that in many ways, Pilgrim's Progress mirrors the journey, so to speak, of the psalmist. As we follow Christian on his journey to the Celestial City, we often find him languishing along the way. At times he is bogged down by anxiety, at times by doubt, at times by fear, at times by sorrow, and at times by worldly distractions. Much like us. But it's not all faults and failures. And at other times we see Christian demonstrating great courage and pressing on, and even finding great joy in the midst of great trials. And so too the psalmist expresses every emotion, every obstacle, and every victory that the Christian encounters as we journey down the narrow path of the righteous.

In fact, this analogy is especially true of our passage this evening. Allow me to draw your attention to the superscription of the psalm, which reads A Psalm of ascents of David. If you have your Bibles with you, you will observe that the same title is placed above each of the Psalms that are between chapters 120 and 134. A Song of Ascents.

Our passage is part of a larger section that is tied together by this theme of ascent or pilgrimage. In fact, out of this collection, Psalm 122 is most explicitly related to this theme. Indeed, you will have noticed that the entire psalm is written from the perspective of someone who is not a resident of Jerusalem, but someone who has gone up to the city, in other words.

It is written from the perspective of a pilgrim. Our passage itself is fairly straightforward. If your Bibles are formatted like mine, then you'll be able to tell that this poem or the song is composed of three stanzas. The first stanza includes verses one and two, and in it the pilgrim rejoices at the prospect of going up to the house of the Lord.

The second stanza includes verses three, four, and five, in which the pilgrim once again rejoices, but this time he celebrates the significance of the city of Jerusalem itself. And last but not least, the third stanza is composed of the last four verses, verses six through nine. And in that final stanza, the pilgrim seeks the peace of Jerusalem and fervent prayer.

And so those would be the three points for us tonight.

Number one. Journey to Jerusalem.

Number two, the city of Jerusalem.

And number three. Prayer for Jerusalem.

And one more comment, if I may, about genre before getting started here, I should point out for you that this isn't just a psalm or song of pilgrimage, but it's more narrowly what's called a song of Zion. There are a handful of psalms that celebrate the glories of the city of Jerusalem, as well as the throne of David and the temple of God. There in. You may have noticed, but in verse one the pilgrim says, let us go to the house of the Lord. And then in the very last verse, the pilgrim again mentions the house of the Lord our God. And so reference to the temple forms an inclusion or brackets the entire psalm. And that helps us see the main point of this chapter, which is simply a celebration of the house of the Lord. Let's take a look then, at the first stanza. And our first point journey to Jerusalem. Verse one. I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord. Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem.

I want you to think of a time when you were much younger. Perhaps, and when your parents used to wake you up on Sunday morning and say to you, let's go to church. If you were like me, you would reluctantly roll out of bed with a frown on your face. You'd put on your nice khakis and button up shirt that you hated to wear, and you dragged your feet into the car, into the church, and out of the church. Because if your dad was like mine, the misery didn't end after church. But when you got back home, you'd also have family worship. And that was even worse than church. And now I want you to think about how you feel when someone says that to you. Now. Let's go to church. Hopefully you're no longer being dragged to church. But once again, if you're like me, there are days when it seems like it is only by the sheer force of will that you manage to come. Maybe some of you are sitting there right now thinking to yourself, what am I doing here?

Larson begins with the pilgrim, recalling the moment when he was invited to go to the house of the Lord, and as he looks back to that moment, he remembers, I rejoiced. I was glad for the pilgrim. It is a moment that is distinctly colored by joy and gladness. Once again, when I was younger, one of the things that really got me excited was when my parents told me that we were about to go on sabbatical for missionaries for our family.

At least once every four years, we would take a sabbatical year either back home in Korea or America, or in England. And a large part of what got me excited wasn't so much the destination, but it was the journey. There is something almost magical about airports, isn't there? At least the international terminals? The domestic ones are an entirely different story, but they are almost literally like gateways to another world.

And especially during the weeks leading up to our trip, I would repeatedly have these dreams where I was in the airport, about to get on the plane, but right before I actually got on, I would always wake up because I was so excited. My excitement would wake me up. It's kind of like the

opposite of a nightmare. What sticks out in the mind of the Pilgrim again is that day when they said to him, let us go to the house of the Lord.

Can you imagine the invitation to go up and worship God, being the one thing that gets you most excited? Now I may be preaching to the choir here, but even for you faithful evening worship attenders, that might be difficult for you to sympathize with. And it might even be a little bit confusing, but it's helpful, I think, if we understand the background to this verse.

Keep in mind that not everyone in Israel, such as the pilgrim of the Psalm, lived in Jerusalem. Also, keep in mind that back then there were no highways or cars, certainly no planes. And so even if you lived only ten miles out of the city, that would have been quite the hike. So the people who are living in the towns and villages on the other side of Canaan, well, they would have never gone up to Jerusalem if it wasn't for the fact that God had instituted three festivals throughout the year in which every Israelite was encouraged and indeed commanded to make a pilgrimage to this city.

Deuteronomy chapter 16, verse 16 reads, three times a year all your male shall appear before the Lord your God at the place that he will choose, that place being Jerusalem at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or Passover at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles. Three festivals throughout the year may not sound like a big deal to us today, but I think it'd be difficult for me to overstate just how huge of an undertaking it would have been for these Israelites to put everything in order back home in order to make this trip.

Who's going to take care of all the livestock while we're gone? What if there's a bad storm that causes a flood? What if a bunch of raiders come and plunder our villages in our absence? So going all the way to Jerusalem and spending at least a week. There was no light affair. If we take a passage like First Samuel chapter one as an example, the story of Elkanah and Hannah, then we see that not even the prophet Samuel's parents actually made this pilgrimage all three times.

They only went up once a year. And if that was the practice of Samuel's family, who seemed to be more faithful and righteous than the average Israelite, then I don't think it's a stretch to say that during a year, some Israelites, maybe even most Israelites, wouldn't have even gone up once. Maybe they wanted to, but they felt like they couldn't.

And now I think you can begin to understand and appreciate the elated joy of this pilgrim. I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord. The phrase let us go is a standard call formula in the Old Testament. That phrase is used whenever the Israelites get their act together and determined to do something.

And don't miss the first person plural pronoun there. The phrase underscores the fact the pilgrimage was a communal affair. Let us go. Well, who is the US? Verse four tells us the answer.

It's the tribes. And so we are not to think that this is one individual or even one family going up to Jerusalem. This is an entire clan, and they've determined to go to the house of the Lord to worship.

I mean, this is a remarkable scene. Finally, we haven't been able to make it for some time. The harvest kept on getting pushed back. The young couples kept on getting married, mothers kept on having babies, the elderly kept on dying, and excuse after excuse after excuse continuously delayed the pilgrimage. But finally the elders of the clan have gotten together and they've said, you know, it's really now or never.

We need to do whatever we need to do in order to make this happen. Let's go to Jerusalem. Let's go to the big city and worship in the magnificent house of the Lord. Can you get a sense of how momentous this occasion was? This was the event of the year, so no wonder the Pilgrim, when he thinks back to that moment, recalls that his heart was glad.

Well, that joy is carried through into verse two. But notice that the tense has changed. The pilgrim is no longer recollecting the past. Rather, he is now presently standing in Jerusalem. His time in the city has evidently come to an end. And so now, before returning home, he leads his tribe in reflecting upon the experience that they've had, and it's almost in disbelief that he cries out.

Our feet have been standing within your gates. Oh, Jerusalem! He still can't believe it. They actually made it. They were actually able to worship in the temple. And what a glorious experience it was. And this is now the setting for the rest of the Psalm. It is an ode to Jerusalem. It's an ode. Before they head back home.

And so that's the journey to Jerusalem. And now take a look at me, with me at the second stanza, which is about the city of Jerusalem. Verse three, Jerusalem built as a city that is bound firmly together, to which the tribes go up the tribes of the Lord, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord.

Their thrones for judgment were set. The thrones of the house of David in the second stands up. The pilgrim celebrates the significance of the city itself, and there are three traits or characteristics that stand out in his mind. First, Jerusalem is a city of security. Second, it is a city of gathering. And third, it is a city of justice.

These three characteristics give us a glimpse into the heart of the pilgrim. It explains why going up to Jerusalem was for him such a highly anticipated and joyous affair. We start with the first verse three again Jerusalem, built as a city that is, is bound firmly together. Once again, I think we have to place ourselves in the shoes of the pilgrim in order to fully appreciate what he's saying here.

Suppose that you were from the countryside. You spent most of your life in a small town or village, and as you approach Jerusalem, you can see it off in the distance. Because remember, Jerusalem sat on top of a hill and it may look small at first, but then as you get closer and closer and closer, until finally you've reached its gates, you're staring up at the high walls and towers. And as that gate opens before your eyes and you get a glimpse of the city of David, your breath is completely sucked out of your lungs as you marvel at this spectacular city. Here's how John Golden Gate puts it. He writes, one can imagine a pilgrim being struck by the city's bounded compactness, with the houses all built closely together, partly as imposed by the physical constraints within which the older parts of the city were constructed. Because Jerusalem was almost surrounded by canyons. When I read that description, the first thing that I thought of was that scene from *The Return of the King*, the third movie of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

For those of you who've seen that, you'll remember Gandalf is riding on his horse with Pippin on the back in order to deliver a message to the Steward of Gondor. And as they come out of the force, they ride up a small hill, and we see a city off in the distance, and Gandalf turns and says to Pippin, Minas Tirith, the City of Kings, and Pippin, this hobbit from the countryside of the Shire, stares with this dumb face because he's never seen a city of this scale in magnitude before.

Then in the next scene, we see the camera following Gandalf and Pippin circling around to the top of the city. Then, as the camera now pans out for the first time, mind you, in the movie trilogy, the audience is now given a glimpse of the white City, and you find yourself right there with Pippin holding your breath. And when they finally reach the top, they arrive at this beautiful garden courtyard, and towering before them is the king's palace.

I think the pilgrim might have had a similar experience only for him and his tribe, as they made their way up the narrow streets of Jerusalem. When they reached the top, not only was there the king's palace, but next to it stood the temple of the Lord, the dwelling place of God. It's worth reminding you that at certain points in Israel's history, the house of the Lord, whether the Tabernacle or the temple, was filled with the glory of the Lord, which was manifest visibly in the form of thick clouds and fire.

And so imagine approaching the temple and seeing a pillar of fire wrapped and swirling smoke penetrating and permeating the Holy of Holies. I mean, you can hardly read passages like Exodus 19, Exodus 41st Kings eight, Second Chronicles seven without being filled with awe, but imagine beholding it with your very own eyes.

Jerusalem built as a city that is bound firmly together. You see, that description conjures up for us the impression of Jerusalem as a secure city. It evokes the idea of safety, a place that people

can go in times of trouble and distress. Because not only is the city firmly bound together, but it is bound together by the strong arms of the Almighty God of Israel.

And so first, Jerusalem is a city of security, and second, Jerusalem is a city of gathering. Verse four, to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord, as if the city itself wasn't compact enough, and its architect architecture and its geographical constraints. During the three major festivals of the year, when all of the tribes of Israel came up to Jerusalem, you can imagine it would have been overflowing with hundreds of thousands of people and animals every in in the city, not just filled, but overbooked.

And not just the ends, but even the private homes. And so second, Jerusalem finds its significance in being the place where this tremendous gathering occurs. It is a place of fellowship, a place of reunion, a place of friendship and brotherhood. As verse eight will go on to say, not only is the city itself firmly bound together, it also has the effect of bringing and binding the tribes together.

It draws them in and reminds them, as verse four says, that they are the tribes of the Lord. It is in the Lord that they find their union and communion. And doesn't the church have a similar significance? Just as the tribes were reminded that they weren't disparate tribes unrelated to each other, we are reminded every time we come to church that we're not lone wolf Christians, but that we belong to this body of Christ and that we're members of this great big extended family of God.

The decree that is mentioned in this verse is referring to those three feasts we mentioned earlier. The Lord had decreed for Israel that the tribes go up three times a year, and it was this very decree that allowed for this joyous gathering in the first place. Furthermore, to give thanks here in this verse refers not just to verbal thanksgiving, but to a material offering as a sign of gratitude.

Back in Deuteronomy chapter 16, after commanding the Israelites to go up to Jerusalem, God also instructed them, they shall not appear before the Lord empty handed. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God, that he has given you. Walter Brueggemann. Brueggemann captures the theological significance of these offerings. Like this.

He writes, I quote the act of thanksgiving is Israel's public material, visible affirmation that it lives by the gifts of Yahweh. The act of thanksgiving is the quintessential act of ceding life back to the God who gave it. And so we to bring God's tithes and offerings as an act of thanksgiving to the God from whom all blessings flow.

We cede our life back to him. So on the one hand, pilgrimage was a duty. It was an act of obedience to the law. On the other hand, pilgrimage was also a delight. It was the source of the

pilgrims joy. And the quicker you learn this, the happier your life will be. I promise you that that this is true for all of God's commandments, not the least of which is the fourth commandment to keep the Sabbath holy and related to that, to not forsake the gathering of the saints.

As the author of Hebrews says, God's law is both duty and delight. He commands us to obey. But if you're patient in faith, you will see that obedience leads to pleasure. Sacrifice leads to happiness.

The third significance of the city of Jerusalem is that it was a place of justice. Verse five. There thrones for judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David. Bear in mind that in ancient Israel the king was both the monarch as well as the judge. The throne was also the highest court of appeal. We see this most clearly illustrated in the reign of Solomon, who famously asked God for wisdom so that he might govern the people and discern between good and evil.

Those are his words in First Kings chapter three. Then at the end of that same chapter, we read that the people perceived that the wisdom of God was in Solomon to do justice. One of the primary functions of the king was to establish justice and peace. This was especially significant for the tribes who had come from the far corners of the kingdom.

Because, you see, there were some conflicts and some disputes that just couldn't be settled in the local courts, and so they remained unsettled until they were brought to the royal court, where at last a decisive ruling could be made. It would be easy for us to undervalue this act of judgment. But think about it like this if two families within a village had a dispute with each other, I mean, that could potentially disrupt the peace of the entire community.

And so this rare opportunity to stand before the thrones of judgment had the potential of restoring order and balance to the life of a tribe. So we can imagine two people go up to Jerusalem as mortal enemies, but they return as reconciled brothers. I love how one theologian puts it, he says, pilgrimage is a journey in search of peace.

And where else would the people of God find that peace other than in the city called Jerusalem, the city of peace? And once again, doesn't the church have a similar significance? Don't we also have courts not only in our local church, but also in our presbytery and our denomination? Discipline may be a scary word, and I can't imagine anyone enjoying discipline or judgment.

But when discipline leads to reconciliation, when discipline leads to freedom from sin, when discipline leads to justice, we can readily confess that discipline is deeply desirable. And so, in summary, there are three characteristics of the city of Jerusalem that this pilgrim celebrates its security, its gathering, and its justice that leads to peace. Now, let me help you apply this for today, as I've already been assuming, when we get to the New Testament, what we see is that the church fulfills and effectively functions as the temple of the Lord.



We are the house of the Lord, and I wish I had more time to fully develop this. But then the sermon would approach the hour mark and that wouldn't be good, because then you'd walk away from here saying, I was sad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord. And so let me just give you a few references which I think speak for themselves.

Ephesians chapter two, verse 22. Paul says, you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the spirit. First Peter chapter two, verse five. You yourselves like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house. And second Corinthians 6:16 we are the temple of the living God. I mean, it really doesn't get much clearer than that, does it?

All of that to say, the church is the house of the Lord. And here's what that means that corporately, collectively, communally, Brownwood Presbyterian Church has the lofty responsibility to make this house a place that produces irresistibly joy and gladness and the hearts of those who come. And based upon what you ask, well, at the very least, based upon these three characteristics that the pilgrim celebrates security, gathering and justice.

Another way to put that might be comfort, fellowship, and righteousness.

Are we a church that evokes and reflects divine comfort, divine fellowship, and divine righteousness?

Well, let's quickly take a look at the final stanza of this psalm right before departing. The pilgrim now directly addresses the city herself and prays for her peace. So journey to Jerusalem, the city of Jerusalem. And thirdly, prayer for Jerusalem. Verse six. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. May they be secure who love you. Peace be within your walls and security within your towers.

For my brothers and companions sake, I will say, peace be within you for the sake of the house of the Lord our God. I will seek your good. That word, peace, appears three times in these four verses. It's the major theme of this final stanza. And as many of you know, the Hebrew word for peace is shalom. Shalom is a word that's quite broad in its meaning.

It can mean something as general as wholeness or well-being, or it can mean something more specific, such as military or political peace. I think the pilgrim here has the full range of that word in mind. He prays both for the peace and security within the walls and citadels of Jerusalem, which seems to imply a type of peace from military invasion.

But he also prays for the general good of the city. I will seek your good, and so for her well-being. And if you notice, there are two reasons why the pilgrim prays for such peace and invites us to pray for such peace for the sake of his friends and family, and for the sake of the house of the Lord.

You see, the peace and security of the people of Israel, as well as the temple of God, depended on the peace and security of the city itself. If the walls and citadels collapsed, so would

everything else. And so, because of everything that Jerusalem stands for, because of her security, the gathering, the justice that Jerusalem signifies, the pilgrim intercedes on behalf of this city.

I want you to remember this passage the next time you are tempted to complain about your dear church. It is the case that words can destroy. And that's perhaps especially true for the church. Bitter complaints, exaggerated criticisms, gossip, slander, and false testimony. When you engage in these things, understand that you are doing the very opposite of what the pilgrim does.

In this final stanza, it's almost as though you're praying not for peace, but for division. Do you find that brier wood doesn't live up to this lofty standard, that she doesn't adequately reflect this ideal vision of the house of the Lord? Well, let me remind you that neither did Jerusalem. At no point in its history. But to repeat myself.

The pilgrim prays in this way, not necessarily because of what Jerusalem was, but because of what Jerusalem signified. And so, when tempted to complain, turn that into a prayer. Pray that we will become like this vision. And what I suspect will happen is that as you're praying, God will start to tug at your heart and call you to contribute to that very process of sanctification, whereby Briarwood might be conformed more and more into the image of her glorious bridegroom.

Now, even after all of that, at the end of this passage, you may still be thinking to yourself, I don't think I can confess along with this pilgrim. I was glad when they said to me, let's go to the house of the Lord. And perhaps you're excusing yourself by saying, of course the pilgrim was glad. As was explained, this trip to Jerusalem was a huge affair.

It was a momentous occasion, almost sounds like going on vacation. Of course, that's exciting. But how can you compare that to weekly Sunday services at my local church? Well, here's how you see the invitation. Let us go to the house of the Lord. It's not ultimately talking about church, just as it wasn't ultimately talking about the historical city of David.

It's an invitation to go up to the place of which the city of Jerusalem, of which the temple of which the church is but a type. So in Isaiah chapter two, the prophet looks forward to this future joy that is set before him. He says, it shall come to pass. In the latter days, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and all the nations shall flow to it.

And many people shall come and say, come, let us go to the house of the God of Jacob. And then later again in Isaiah 65, for behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind, but be glad and rejoice forever in that

which I create. For behold, I create Jerusalem, Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness.

And of course, that is the same vision that the Apostle John sees in the book of revelation, chapter 21, when the new heavens and the new earth and the holy city of Jerusalem descends from heaven, prepared as the beautiful bride of Christ.

Ultimately, our passage is an invitation to go up to that Jerusalem, where there is perfect security, perfect fellowship, and perfect justice and peace. So it's not as though your pilgrimage comes to an end once every week and then simply repeats itself. No, your whole life is this pilgrimage. And in that long and often arduous journey, the church functions as a kind of pit stop where we're given a glimpse and a foretaste of where we are headed, where we're reminded that we've received this grand invitation to the Celestial City.

So I'd like to end where we began. And that's what *The Pilgrim's Progress*, as we follow Christian journeys on the King's Highway. As I said, we often see him languishing along the way. At one point we find him ascending hill difficulty, and not surprisingly, Christian grows tired and weary, and he begins to lose his motivation. But while he was thus bewailing his unhappy miscarriage, Bunyan writes, he lift up his eyes and behold, there was a very stately palace before him, the name of which was beautiful.

The porter explains to Christian that this is a house that was built by the Lord of the hill, for the relief and security of pilgrims, and so Christian enters the palace, where he has beautiful conversations with beautiful people, where he's refreshed, rested, and restored to good spirits, and where he's equipped with armors and weapons for the perils of the journey ahead.

And of course, Palace beautiful as Bunyan wanted to call it, represents the Church of Christ.

Church functions as a kind of pit stop, and this is actually why it is so important for us as a church to faithfully reflect the New Jerusalem to come. Because the better we do that, the greater the encouragement for God's pilgrim saints, the greater the assurance of the certainty of God's promises, and the more desirable the destination then becomes.

Two weeks ago, Dr Doriani preached on Hebrews chapter 12, verse two, which says, Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross. You see, Jesus was also a pilgrim. But as he journeyed down the narrow path of righteousness, what do you suppose was the joy that was set before him?

Yes, that joy was to be seated at the right hand of the father. But you could also say that the joy set before him was the same joy that set before us. It was the New Jerusalem. But whereas we look forward to the joy of meeting our Lord, he looked forward to the joy of meeting his beautiful bride.

It is even as we sang in Old Church, rise, and he will have the prize for which he died an inheritance of nations. There's a real sense that isn't there, that the words of our Psalm are in fact the joyful words of our Lord and Savior. Have you ever thought about church from Christ's perspective? Each and every Sunday we gather here to meet the Lord.

But each and every Sunday the Lord also meets us in his house, and you may come distracted, sad, and reluctantly. But Jesus always comes fully devoted, glad, and eagerly. And he meets you here so as to give you strength for the journey, so that one day you will see him in glory. And so as we leave here tonight, won't you also make this confession along with your Savior? I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord.

Let us pray.

Father, it baffles us that we would be something desirable from your perspective. That your heart would be filled with joy at the prospect of gaining us. And we confess that in spite of that kind of radical, incomprehensible love, far too often we do not desire you. Our hearts are not filled with joy when we gather here for worship. But even when we think about what is to come, forgive us of such ingratitude. And yet, in the same breath, Lord, we thank you so much that by the work of Your Holy Spirit, you renew our hearts. You give us new desires, and you give us the strength to press on in this narrow path. And we press on precisely because we look forward to the day when we might be welcomed into your arms. We thank you so much that not only are you the goal, but even now you are with us. You walk alongside us on this pilgrimage, and you strengthen us by Your Holy Spirit. You are present with us so that we can taste and see by faith. Even now and yet, Lord, come quickly, Lord, come. We pray, for it is New Jerusalem that we look forward to. And we confess that we cannot wait for that day. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.