

**“What Are We Missing? —
The Weakness of Virtual Worship”**

Psalm 84

--CEFC 5/10/20

So here we are in the tenth week of what we call our “virtual worship” as a church.

These are unusual times—

“unprecedented” is the word we keep hearing.

And we do what we can, sometimes with great creativity,

to try to accomplish what we can,

We work from home,

we stay socially distant,

we wear our masks,

and, as a church, we meet together

and we worship together by Zoom.

We qualify this time of worship with the word “virtual.”

That word “virtual” has come to mean

“occurring by means of a computer or the internet,”

but that is a derived meaning,

an extension of its more common definition.

Until recently “virtual” simply meant

“being very close to being something without actually being it.”

In other words, something that is virtual isn't the real thing—

it's “close but not quite.”

So what is unreal about what we are doing here?

The question is, What are missing in our virtual worship?

It's true, we do have a real spiritual connection—

one that goes beyond our connection

by internet cable and wifi.

We are united by one Spirit in our common relationship with Jesus Christ.

We can all pray the same prayers,

we can all sing the same songs,

and we can all hear the same sermon—

all at the same time.

And though, we may not want to admit it,

there are advantages to this mode of meeting.

It's certainly convenient and efficient.

You don't have get the kids up and dressed,

no need to put on make-up or shave.

You can enjoy your coffee and even breakfast while you watch.

And think of all the creative things we could do with this virtual setup—

I mean, we did a little bit this morning, didn't we--

showing that moving video from Great Britain.

Imagine not only singing Getty songs,

but having Keith and Kristyn themselves leading us.

Who needs Steve Tiilikainen?

But who needs Bill Kynes or Tim Cho, for that matter?

We could just as well screen share preaching videos from John Piper,

or Tim Keller or Tony Evans.

We could simply create a video church.

Why not?

So what's missing in our worship during this time?

Obviously, it's the real physical presence of one another.

Our "worship experience" as a church, if I can use that term (!),

is deficient,

it is in some sense unreal,

because we are not actually meeting together.

And I want to explore why that is important—

that connection between worship and physical presence—

I want to do that, first, by looking at the experience of the psalmist in Psalm 84,

and then by moving from his experience to ours today

through the mediation of Christ and the Spirit.

My goal in doing this is not to discourage us with how bad things are.

Instead I want to stir up a longing for what is no longer virtual,

but is the real thing—

as I want us to consider what it is that makes our worship real.

And in the end, I want to develop a longing for what is yet more real--

more real than even our gathering again as Christ's church here in this building.

So turn back with me to that beautiful piece of Spirit-inspired poetry we call Psalm 84.

Psalm 84:1—"How lovely is your dwelling place,
LORD Almighty!
My soul yearns, even faints,
for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God."

Consider, first, the situation of the psalmist assumed here.

He seems to be separated from either the temple
or that tent of worship, the tabernacle, that preceded it
situated on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem.

That was the place where the Lord, the God of Israel,
had chosen as his dwelling place on earth.

Now, of course, the Jews knew that God was not limited in space—

Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, had prayed,
"But will God really dwell on earth?
The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you.
How much less this temple I have built!" (1 Kg 8:27).

They knew that God, in a sense, dwelt in heaven.

Yet it was in that earthly place,
centered around the sacred ark of the covenant set in the holy of holies,
where the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled,
that the Lord had said, "My Name shall be there" (1 Kg 8:29).

The sacred tent, and later the temple,
was that place where, in a sense, heaven came down to earth,

and God's presence was to be found.

It was there that God and man were to meet.

That's why it was often referred to as "**the tent of meeting.**"

It was to that place that the congregation of Israel would gather

in their times of trial or of celebration to meet with God.

The psalmist was cut off from that sacred place—

we aren't told why—

and he longed to return there.

His heart was drawn to that sacred dwelling place.

He speaks of this place in all sorts of ways—

In v. 2 it is the "**courts of the Lord;**"

in v. 3 it is "**your altar;**"

in v 4 it is "**your house;**"

and in v. 7 it is "**in Zion.**"

But all of these refer to the same thing—

that sacred location where God makes himself known. /

That dwelling place of God, was "**lovely**" to him—

a term that expressed not just exquisite beauty,

but also delightful pleasure.

It was not only lovely, it was dearly loved.

He longed to return there.

"My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord."

We see this same intense desire in other psalms—

I think of Psalm 42—

“When can I go and meet with God?” (v. 2)

‘These things I remember

as I pour out my soul:

how I used to go to the house of God . . .

with shouts of joy and praise

among the festive throng” (v. 4).

Why such longing? Why such burning desire to go there?

Ps. 42:1--**“As the deer pants for streams of water,**

so my soul pants for you, my God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God”

And back in Ps. 84:2--**“my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.”**

The psalmist is almost desperate to encounter **“The living God”**—the one true God,
who, unlike all idols, is alive and active—

he is a God who speaks, a God who acts—

he is a personal God, a great and awesome God.

He is **‘the LORD Almighty’**—

the LORD of hosts—the ruler of a vast angelic army.

Surely, as we heard last week—

we have a God who will fight for us.

He is not a far off, distant deity

who has no connection with our puny lives here on this earth.

No, he is **“my King and my God”** (v. 3)—

there is a personal relationship here.

We are made to know this God,
to love this God,
and to worship this God—this true and living God,
this great God who is the source of all goodness,
all beauty,
all truth.

He is righteous in all his ways;
He is faithful in all his words.

He is most worthy of our highest affections,
he is the one who satisfies our deepest desires.

The psalmists long for him with their whole being--

My soul thirsts for this God,
my heart and my **flesh** (notice that word) cry out for him. /

I had a reflection of this longing when I was engaged to be married,
and I had to be away from my beloved bride-to-be for nine long months
while I lived across the Atlantic Ocean.

All I had were pictures and letters,
and the precious memories of our times together.

My heart ached with longing to be back in her physical presence.

Can't you feel it here?

v. 4—**"Blessed are those who dwell in your house;
they are ever praising you."**

He looks with envy at the birds
who manage to find their way into that sacred place
and make their nest there.
“a place near your altar,
LORD Almighty, my King and my God.”

I think of this verse every time I seem the birds fly into that space
behind the big wooden cross attached to the outside of our sanctuary.
They are there this morning.
The psalmist wishes he could be like them—
living continually in the very presence of God.

Psalm 27 expresses this well—
27:4--“**One thing I ask from the LORD,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.”**

“**Blessed are those who dwell in your house**”

There is nothing that can compare to being in the presence of God.
v. 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.”**

All the luxuries of this world are nothing to the soul-satisfying joy
of knowing God.

I like Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of this—

One day spent in your house, this beautiful place of worship,
beats thousands spent on Greek island beaches.
I'd rather scrub floors in the house of my God
than be honored as a guest in the palace of sin.¹

v. 11—"For the LORD God is a sun and shield;"

He is the source of all life,
he is one in whom we find protection and security.

"the LORD bestows favor and honor;"

No worldly honor—
a Nobel Prize,
a Hollywood Oscar,
a Heisman Trophy—
what are they compared to the approval of the God of heaven and earth—
to know that you are loved and accepted in his eyes—
there can be no higher honor.
To receive his favor is real and lasting glory.

¹ Peterson, E. H. (2005). *The Message: the Bible in contemporary language* (Ps 84:10). Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.

And there is the wonderful promise at the end of v. 10—

**“no good thing does he withhold
from those whose walk is blameless.”**

“no good thing”!

Isn't that just what Paul echoes in Rom. 8,

when he says,

in v. 32--“**He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—
how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”**

and in v. 28--“**in all things God works for the good of those who love him,
who have been called according to his purpose.”**

**“no good thing does he withhold
from those whose walk is blameless.”**

To be sure, there are lots of things I may want

that he won't give me,

but as I simply walk before him in faith,

there is **nothing, nothing at all** that is for my eternal good

that he won't give me.

No wonder the psalmist longs to come into the presence of this God.

And it is in that hope that the pilgrims

who are traveling to Zion to share in the annual festivals

find their strength—

v. 6—“**As they pass through the Valley of Baka,**”—

probably a desert place—a place of hardship and difficulty.

“they make it a place of springs;
the autumn rains also cover it with pools.”

The Lord will be with them through it all.

7 “They go from strength to strength,
till each appears before God in Zion.”

Those who have tasted of this sweetness,

this delight,

this soul-satisfying joy

that comes from knowing the presence of God—

they are the ones who want it all the more.

I think of Psalm 63--

Psa. 63:1--"You, God, are my God,

earnestly I seek you;

I thirst for you,

my whole being longs for you,

in a dry and parched land

where there is no water.

2 I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.

3 Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you.

4 I will praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will lift up my hands.

5 I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.”

Can't you feel it—

this burning desire to meet with God—

to come to his dwelling place, his sanctuary.

to join the festive throngs who gather there,

to offer praise to this magnificent God

who is most worthy of our complete adoration. /

I want to pause to reflect on this experience—

this “worship experience”—

for a moment.

I talked a couple of weeks ago about the fact that it is fitting

that we should praise God;

Now I want to contend that it is also fitting

that we should delight in praising God—

that we should find joy in it;

it is fitting that we respond emotionally to who God is as we praise him.

Think of your emotional reaction

when you experience a stunning sunset, glowing in red and orange

or you experience a piece of masterfully performed music;

or you experience a championship performance by your favorite team

or an outstanding achievement by your son or daughter.

Maybe it is the experience of falling in love.

It is more than mere happiness you experience;

it is joy—

you experience a deeper kind of satisfaction or pleasure or gratification—

whatever you want to call it.

You relish those moments;

you treasure them,

and you wish they could last forever.

But, of course, they don't.

They fade from our memories, like some half-remembered dream.

There is almost an aching in our hearts to recreate them,

to relive them in all their power.

We are left with a thirst which nothing in this world can quench;

a hunger for a kind of nourishment that this world cannot provide.

What are we to make of that?

I like the conclusion of C. S. Lewis--

"If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy

the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world."

In worship we are in some small way connected to that other world.

In our worship, heavenly reality intersects our earthly existence.

In worship, we discover what we are made for—

to glorify God and to enjoy him forever—

for they are ultimately the same thing.

Only he can give us a soul-satisfying joy that will never end.

It is fitting that we should respond to the experience of God with that kind of emotion.

"What is worship?

A. W. Tozer puts it like this--

“Worship is to feel in your heart and express in some appropriate manner
a humbling but delightful sense of admiring awe
and astonished wonder
and overpowering love
in the presence of that most ancient Mystery,
that Majesty which philosophers call the First Cause,
but which we call Our Father Which Art in Heaven.”²

The Lord God is worthy of our heart-felt praise—

that “God-ward gravity and gladness.”³

If we don’t give it to him, there is something wrong with us./

But of course, there is something wrong with us.

We are morally stained, unfit for God’s holy presence.

That’s why our worship must include atonement—

the atonement God provides to overcome our sin—

and the psalmist here refers in v. 3

to that altar on which the sacrifice was laid.

² A. W. Tozer, cited in D.J. Fant, *A.W. Tozer* (Harrisburg: Christian Publications), 1964, p. 90.

³ *Expository Exultation*, p. 47.

We need forgiveness from a holy God
if we are to come into his presence.

And because something is wrong with us,
our worship must be accompanied by prayer—
and prayer comes at the center of our Psalm—

v. 8—**“Hear my prayer, LORD God Almighty;
listen to me, God of Jacob.”**

Bring me to that place where you may be known in all your goodness and glory,
so that I might worship you as I ought,

And, in the words of Ps. 16:11,

**“you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”**

Isn't that kind of “worship experience” what our hearts most long for?

that real joy in the presence of God.

But where is it to be found?

As we've seen, in the mind of the psalmist

that presence of the Lord that is central to true worship--

that presence is associated with a particular place—

that place where God dwells—

that place where sacrifices are brought,

where atonement is accomplished,

that place given by God where he would make himself approachable,

and where the holy God could be worshipped by sinful human beings.

That place was the tabernacle, the temple, on Mount Zion.

So how does this psalm relate to us?—

Where is that place, that meeting place of God and man, for us?

That Samaritan woman that Jesus met by the well in John 4 raised that very issue.

“Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain,” she said to Jesus,

“but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

But Jesus changed everything--

“Woman,” Jesus replied, **“believe me, a time is coming**

when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. . . .

a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers

will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth,” (John 4:20-21,23).

Where can we find this Spirit and truth?

John tells us in the opening chapter of his Gospel.

He talks about that Word who was with God and was God—

that **“Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.**

We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son,

who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:14).

“No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, . . .

has made him known” (v. 18).

In Jesus Christ, God has come in the flesh to **dw**ell among us.

The word there means “to pitch a tent”⁴—

“to tabernacle” among us.

Jesus said, **“Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days”**

‘But the temple he spoke of was his own body,’ John tells us (Jn 2:19,21).

Jesus himself is now that place in which heaven intersects with earth;

Jesus is now the place where God meets with men.

He is Immanuel—God with us.

No one comes to the Father except through him.

Shouldn’t we now read that Psalm with new eyes—

God’s lovely dwelling place that our hearts long for

and our flesh cries out for—

that place is now found in Jesus.

In him our sins are atoned for,

in him God’s grace is poured out,

in him we find strength to persevere in the face of hardship—

in Jesus Christ, risen from the grave, we have a living Savior.

He is the Lamb upon the throne

before whom the myriad angels of heaven cry out—

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,

to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength

and honor and glory and praise!” (Rev. 4:12).

⁴ e’skh/nwsen

If we want to find God, we must look to Jesus./

But where do we find him?

How can we dwell in his presence?

We can find Jesus in the Bible—

we find him especially in the four Gospels—

there we see him revealed to us in his life and ministry,

in his death for our sins,

and in his resurrection from the dead.

And the rest of the apostolic writings of the New Testament

spell out the significance of his saving work.

But the Bible can be simply words on a page,

and for many people,

and perhaps for some of you who are hearing these words,

that's all they are.

That's why God has done something more.

Before he ascended to the Father,

Jesus promised us more than just a verbal testimony;

he promised to send his Spirit, the Holy Spirit,

to make himself present to us in this world.

By the Spirit, Jesus comes to us.

We talk about “inviting Jesus into our hearts”—

that's not exactly how the Bible puts it,

but that's what happens.

By the work of the Spirit,

we see Jesus for who he is,

as our only Savior and Lord

and we are able see ourselves as God sees us—

as a guilty sinners

who, despite that, are loved and forgiven by a gracious heavenly Father.

And by that Spirit we turn in faith and receive the gift of God in Jesus Christ.

By the Spirit we are joined to him—

He takes our sin upon himself,

and we receive his righteousness as our own

and we are made right with God.

By the Spirit, Christ comes to live in us personally (Col. 1:27; Gal. 2:20).

And in him we experience the very presence of God.

The Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

and by that Spirit of Christ,

we can cry out in prayer just as he did,

when he said, "Abba, Father."

And instead of inviting the nations to come to Mount Zion in Jerusalem,

we now are sent out with the message of Jesus to the nations.

We can now meet with God through Jesus by the Spirit

anywhere in any place.

That's why this virtual worship can work as well as it does.

There is no sacred place—

we “**will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. . . .**”

but in the Spirit and truth that comes through Jesus Christ—

you can worship him right there in your living room.

So what wrong with our virtual worship, then?

What I’ve said so far is not the whole story.

There is more.

Where is the place where God is found?

Where does he meet with us?

It is no longer in the temple in Jerusalem,

it is in Jesus Christ.

And we are united to Christ by the Spirit.

And so Paul can speak of our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19)—

God dwells within us.

But that work of the Spirit also has a corporate dimension.

The work of the Spirit that unites us to Christ,

also unites us to one another in Christ’s **body**, the church.⁵

Paul writes, “**we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—**

whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free” (1Cor. 12:13).

⁵ Eph. 5:23,29; cf. also Col. 1:18,24.

That body is seen, it comes together as a body, when we gather as a church.

Gathering as a church is almost a redundancy—

for that's what the Greek word translated as "church" means—

it is "a gathering, an assembly."

As Christians we are born again individually, personally,

when we turn in faith to Christ,

but we are born into a family, a new community, the body of Christ—

and that body finds visible expression

in the gathered assembly the Bible calls "a church."

And though Paul can speak of our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit,

he more often speaks of that corporate body, the church, as a temple.

In that passage we read earlier—

he says, "you [all--plural] are members of [God's] household,

built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,

with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

In him the whole building is joined together

and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

And in him you [all--plural] too are being built together

to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (Eph. 2:19-22).

This is a corporate reality—

together we are that dwelling place of God.

The church, the gathered people of God,

when we come together in the name of Jesus,

we become that place where God is found.

Isn't this what Jesus was referring to when he said,

"where two or three come together in my name,

there am I with them" (Matt. 18:20).

And I think Jesus is talking about a physical coming together.

A gathering of real people—men and women,

boys and girls—

in one place.

When we gather together for worship,

we are not just 200 individuals who happen to be in the same room,

each pursuing his or her own communion with God.

We become, in a sense, the body of Christ.

And it is as *church* --as that gathered people of God—

that we become a special place.

And our worship becomes something

that can never be replicated in the virtual world of the internet.

Don't get me wrong—

this virtual thing we have now—it's helpful in many ways—

but it's not the real thing.

There is a certain deception going on here.

It is not as real as it seems.

For one thing,

As you look at your screen, it appears as if I am looking at you,

but I'm not.

I am looking at a little iphone perched on a tripod.

I can only imagine you are out there

watching this projected picture of me speaking.

This is but a shadow of the real thing—

the internet allows us to share two-dimensional images

and voices, and thoughts, at a distance.

But we are not disembodied spirits;

we are flesh and blood human beings.

We are three-dimensional, embodied souls, existing in finite space—

and that physicality is important,

it is significant in our worship of God together.

Don't we call it "corporate worship"—

That word "corporate" comes from the Latin *corpus*, which means "body" or "flesh."

Paul in Romans 12 urges to offer our flesh and blood bodies as a living sacrifice—

which is our reasonable—our true and proper—worship (12:1).

Our bodies matter in our worship—

Don't we bow our heads when we pray, or in some places they actually kneel?

Don't we stand and sometimes clap and raise our hands when we sing?

(at least some of us do.)

And our African brothers and sisters--they love to dance in worship.

They call it our "psycho-somatic unity"—

our minds affect our bodies and our bodies affect our minds—

and hasn't this dreaded virus emphasized that very point.

But it's not just the bodily dimension to our worship that I'm talking about—

it is the fact that our bodies are in one place together.

For we are not angels—

I don't know much about angels,

but, as human beings, we are able to interact with one another

through our bodies.

When we come together to worship *corporately*--

we come to offer our praise to God,

but at the same time, we seek to build up one another

so that we might praise God more fully.

Paul never separates these two--

Notice what he says--

"Speak *to one another* with psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit.

Sing and make music from your heart *to the Lord*," (Eph. 5:19, also Col. 3:16).

The horizontal and the vertical go together--

when we sing, we sing to the Lord

and at the same time, we speak to one another.

Both are important in the corporate enterprise that is Christian worship.

This is something that just can't happen in our Zoom worship, not really.

We need to gather together as real people in a real place.

This horizontal dimension--our fellowship--

is the source of our encouragement--

Hebr. 10:25—"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing,

but let us encourage one another --

and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

And our being together is encouraging—

for in an amazing way, when we meet together,

we will also meet with God⁶--

for God will be at work,

revealing himself to us through one another.

You see, if Christ lives in you,

it is through you that I will encounter Christ,

and if the church is the body of Christ,

then it is **through the church** that you will encounter Christ.

When we come together we experience God's presence through one another--

I experience Christ through your smile,

or your words

or your singing

your service as you use your God-given gifts,

or just through your very presence—

through you I know that God is here in this place.

⁶ "We meet with God when we meet with one another." (Peterson, *Engaging with God*, p. 198)

And physical presence is visibly displayed
when we use the physical elements of the Lord's Supper—
the bread and the cup—
to enact tangibly both our communion with Christ
and our fellowship with one another.
I just can't get that same presence through a video screen.

So what I am saying is this--

This time of absence from one another
ought to stir within us a longing to be together again
to worship as a church—
as a gathered assembly—
as that holy temple,
that place where God dwells.

I am not talking about being in this building, as if this were somehow a holy place.
I am talking about us, as a people, gathering—
and this physical building just happens to be the place
where that physical gathering can take place.

When will that re-gathering happen?

I wish I could just pick a date, and it would come about.
And I wish it could happen all it once, for all of us.
But I'm afraid that's not going to happen.
I suspect it will come in phases, or in fits and starts,
and it could be confusing and messy.

We'll see.

Please pray for the elders as we meet this week (by Zoom)

to talk about what it might look like.

But until we gather, may this time of absence make us appreciate all the more

what we have missed.

And stir within us a longing to worship together

in the body of Christ.

But I want to close with one more move—

We've gone from Old Testament worship

to the work of Christ and of the Spirit

and then to us gathering in this church age—

but that's not the end—

there's more to come.

For our gathering together as a church for worship—as precious as it is--

is itself just a shadow,

just a pale reflection,

a partial glimpse of something far greater.

We gather in anticipation of that heavenly assembly

which the Lord will bring about in his time.

Now there remains a great gulf between where God dwells in heaven

and our earthly existence.

Our God makes a way for us to meet with him, as we've seen;
that meeting is real—we do know God in a real sense,
but it is still only partial and provisional.

The present work of the Spirit uniting us to Christ and to one another
is only a deposit, a mere down payment,
of the glory that is still to come.

What we experience now, even at its best,
is, in the words of C.S. Lewis,
just “the scent of a flower we have not found,
the echo of a tune we have not heard,
news from a country we have never yet visited.”⁷

Our corporate worship can only point us to that glorious future—
when we come to the ultimate Mount Zion—
to that heavenly Jerusalem,
the city of the living God,
to the **“thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly,
to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.”**

There will a great multitude that no one could count,
**“from every nation, tribe, people and language,
standing before the throne and before the Lamb,
crying out in a loud voice:
“Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”**

⁷ *Weight of Glory*, p. 31.

Isn't that what we should be longing for?—

Isn't that what will finally and completely quench our thirst

and satisfy our deepest hunger?

Won't that be the fulfillment of those longings to hold on to the joy

that seems all too fleeting?

Maybe our absence from each other

will also stir within us a longing for that greater gathering of God's people

when our feeble praise will find its full expression.

'How lovely is your dwelling place,

LORD Almighty!

My soul yearns, even faints,

for the courts of the LORD;

my heart and my flesh cry out

for the living God.'

Prayer—

We thank you for what we have—

but we long for more—

for that gathering of your people in which you promise to be present—

and for that far greater gathering in heavenly glory—

give us the joy of meeting with you as we meet with one another
as we praise you in your presence.

Closing Song: *Behold Our God*

Benediction:

Rom. 15:4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us,
so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures
we might have hope.

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement
give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus,
so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify
the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May 10, 2020

**“What Are We Missing?—
The Weakness of Virtual Worship”
(Psalm 84)**

This morning we turn to Psalm 84 to see the importance of place as it relates God’s presence, which will help us to appreciate our meeting together as an integral part of experiencing God’s presence in our worship.

**I. The Psalmist’s longing for that place
to experience God’s presence.**

*“How lovely is your dwelling place,
LORD Almighty!
My soul yearns, even faints,
for the courts of the LORD” (vv. 1,2)*

The soul-satisfying joy of worshipping God.

*“Blessed are those who dwell in your house;
they are ever praising you” (v. 4)*

II. Connecting the Psalm to Us—

•In Christ---

Jesus as the new Temple

•By the Spirit—

Christ lives in us by the Spirit

- Through the Gathered Church—

*“Where two or three gather in my name,
there I am with them.” (Mt. 18:20)*

- In Anticipation of that Heavenly Assembly--

*“After this I looked, and there before me
was a great multitude that no one could count”
(Rev. 7:9)*

Sermon Response:

**“What Are We Missing?—
The Weakness of Virtual Worship”
(Psalm 84)**

- What has your experience of our virtual worship been like for you?

- What was so significant about the temple to the worshippers of the Old Testament? How does that apply to us as Christians today?

- Why is an emotional response of joy fitting when we worship God?

- Why is our physical presence with one another in worship significant?

- How do you experience the presence of God through other people when we come together as a church?

- What is the role of congregational singing in our worship?

- What can you do when we gather in worship to help others see Christ?