

The King's Hardship, the People's Joy

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[0 : 00] I got curious about what people meant when they said divine experience, so I looked up other instances where people might use that term, and as it turned out, even though our society is no longer religious, they have no problems describing some experiences as divine.

And they even chase after those divine experiences. So some people might join political or social causes. In this case here, they might fight for climate change so that they can get the experience of being involved in something greater than themselves, something beyond themselves, and perhaps they might access the divine or find the divine in that article there.

Or they might go to a stadium and watch a live sport where they might witness divine moments. How do Christians get to the presence of God and enjoy His presence?

Well, not through social causes or sports, even though they are good things, and certainly not from mushrooms. Here in our passage, it shows what it takes for us to be in God's presence.

But first, we need to remember the context of the songs of ascent. As Michelle said, these songs were sung by the Jews as they ascended to the mountain in Jerusalem, the temple mount, to the temple to worship God.

[1 : 48] They knew that they went to Jerusalem to be in God's presence. Because in the temple was the Ark of the Covenant, and it was a symbol of God's presence.

Now, this psalm can be divided into two sections. The first section is a prayer, and the second is God's answer. And so, during the ascent, when they sang this psalm, they were first of all praying in verse 1 to 5.

Lord, remember David and all his self-denial. He swore an oath to the Lord. He made a vow to the Mighty One of Jacob. I will not enter my house or go to my bed.

I will allow no sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids till I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob. Now, presumably, this prayer was to make sure that God did not leave them and would stay present by the Ark in the temple.

They were praying for God to remember all the effort that David had gone through to put the Ark in Jerusalem. You see, during the reign of Saul, the king of Israel before David, the Ark of the Covenant was almost forgotten.

[3 : 21] It lay in a place called Kiriath-Jarim, which in this psalm is called Jar in verse 6, before David brought it to Jerusalem.

And so, as the people prayed for God to remember, in verse 6, they recall how they found the Ark in Kiriath-Jarim.

We heard it in Ephrathah, which is another name for Bethlehem, the city where David came from. We came upon it in the fields of Jar. We came upon the Ark in the fields of Jar, which is another name for Kiriath-Jarim, where the Ark lay, as I said.

And then in verse 7 to 9, let us go to his dwelling place. We found the Ark. Let us go to his dwelling place. Let us worship at his footstool, saying, Arise, Lord, and come to your resting place, you and the Ark of your might.

May your priests be clothed with your righteousness. May your faithful people sing for joy. This is still in the context of the prayer, asking God to remember.

[4 : 31] The people recall how, when they found the Ark, they called each other to go and grab the Ark in Jar, so they might worship God in Jerusalem, so that they might take the Ark to Jerusalem among the people in the capital city, and how they called upon God to move along with the Ark from Jar to Jerusalem.

Arise, Lord, that's what it says, and come to your resting place in the temple in Jerusalem. Be with the people. The presence of God must stay with his people.

And as God moves with the Ark to Jerusalem to be among his people, God's presence might make the priests be clothed with righteousness, in verse 9, and the people to be joyful.

Now that God is present, he might make the priests be clothed with righteousness, and the people sing. Notice there that the priests are clothed not with their own righteousness, but with your righteousness, with God's righteousness.

And lastly, the focus of the prayer goes from a remembrance of the past to the present. In verse 10, the people pray for the present king.

[5 : 54] For the sake of your servant David, do not reject your anointed one. Do not reject your anointed king. Depending on when they sang this song, the present king might have been righteous, or he might have been very wicked.

But the plea here is based on not what the present king has done, but on what David has done for the sake of your servant David. And so here, during their ascent to Jerusalem, I think there's a sense of anxious hope that God might be there in the temple to receive their worship.

Hopefully God is there. God's presence is the essential component of their worship. Without God's presence in the temple, David's self-denial is worth nothing, and their ascent to Jerusalem would be in vain.

So here, the song starts with the people's prayer as they exhaust all possible reasons to give to God, so that he might stay in the temple and meet with them.

Lord, remember David. Lord, remember how David has moved the ark to Jerusalem. Lord, remember all the effort that it took to move the ark from Jar to Jerusalem.

[7 : 24] And if you read the story in Samuels, I think, it's not an easy process. Someone died while transporting the ark to Jerusalem.

Lord, don't reject your current king, even if he is unrighteous. Please stay where the people are.

There's a sense of anxiety. And the same anxiety exists in other religions as well as they strive to access the divine.

For example, in Hinduism, they try to access the divine presence through self-denial. through doing things that make them forget about their physical existence, like fasting, meditation.

But they might ask, what if, after all these self-denials, we still don't reach the divine? They never know.

[8 : 38] Instead of going to the divine presence after they die, they might end up being reincarnated as a pig. In Islam, in the Sharia path, Muslims try to maintain closeness to God's presence through doing their religious duties well.

If they pray, if they fast, if they read the Koran, if they go on a pilgrimage to Makkah, and so on. The Muslims might ask, what if, after doing all these religious duties, fasting year in and year out, buying expensive animals every year to be sacrificed, spending thousands of dollars to go to Makkah, what if we still don't make it?

I've asked a Muslim friend of mine that question, and their only answer was, well, if I do my duties correctly, inshallah, God willing, I will get there.

So the only answer is, if you do it more correctly, if you do more, then you will get there. It depends on you. But the answer that our God gives is utterly different.

If in the first half of the psalm, like I said, the people pray, the second half is God's answer. And the answer starts not with, if you do this or if you do that, in fact, it doesn't start with you at all, it starts with the Lord.

[10 : 20] God has promised that he will establish David's throne forever.

And this is a sure oath in verse 11, a sure oath that he will not revoke. And so if we ask ourselves, what if we fail in doing our duties, what then?

Will we lose God's favor? Will God abandon us? Or in the case of the Old Testament, will God abandon his temple? God's answer would be, I have sworn an oath which I will not revoke.

It doesn't depend on you. It depends on me and on the king. In verse 12. And then in verse 13 and 14, the answer continues, for the Lord has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his dwelling, saying, this is my resting place forever and ever.

Here I will sit enthroned for I have desired it. The word Zion there means the place that God has chosen. It could refer to the temple mount or Jerusalem or the nation of Israel as his people.

[12 : 03] In other words, the people don't need to woo God into staying in the temple. No, God has chosen them and desired them for his throne forever and ever.

nothing's going to change that. He has desired his people. God's answer far exceeds the people's request.

In verse 15 to 16, I will bless her with abundant provisions. salvation. Her people's will satisfy with food.

I will clothe her priests with salvation and her faithful people will ever sing for joy. In answer to the people's prayer in verse 9, God promises abundant blessings.

He will bless even the lowest of the society, the poor. He will clothe the priests not only with the requested righteousness, but with salvation.

[13 : 15] And the people will rejoice not only momentarily but there it says her faithful people will ever sing for joy forever. Again God's answer exceeds the people's request.

And finally in verse 17 to 18, here I will make a horn grow for David and set up a lamp for my anointed one. I will clothe his enemies with shame but his head will be adorned with a radiant crown.

God promises that David's horn which is a symbol of power and rain will grow and his enemies will be defeated.

So in answer to the people's prayer God assures them of blessing after blessing. And all these blessings are given not because of their own worth and effort but because of two things God's own desire and in verse 12 the performance of God's king.

Well hang on what if the king who reigns fails? Well yes a human king can fail and if we read the Old Testament many kings in the Old Testament have failed.

[14 : 40] But this song also hints at the coming of the Messiah. In verse 11 God says something about one of David's descendants.

In verse 10 and 17 there is a hint about the anointed one which literally means Messiah. It reminds the people that God has promised a Messiah one of David's descendants in whom we can put our hope.

Yes other kings have failed but there is one the Messiah and in our New Testament reading in Luke 2 Jesus is revealed to be the long awaited Messiah the horn that grows out of David the anointed one who has God's lamb the one who in verse 18 wears the crown and Jesus does not fail the contract in verse 12 regardless of the failures of the other kings Jesus has not failed so we get all these blessings promised in this psalm righteousness salvation everlasting joy not because of ourselves but God's anointed king Jesus has not failed like David Jesus is the king who fought for the presence of

God to be with his people and literally he fought to his death didn't he so that God and his people might be in fellowship once again the ark of the covenant had to be carried by priests well Jesus is the priest who carries the ark so to speak as he came down here to bring God's presence in himself and he's the priest who is clothed with righteousness and salvation as promised in this psalm Jesus is the ark and unlike the actual physical ark which only symbolized God's presence Jesus literally is as Matthew says God with us he is God's presence the actual ark is lost now it has been lost for thousands of years but we don't need to wait for the ark to be found we've got the best ark we don't even need to go to

Jerusalem to meet with God we have him with us God himself with us and he's different when the ark went to Jerusalem it was put in a temple it was shut in the holy of holies so that no one could access it except for once a year by the high priest but when Jesus went to Jerusalem to be crucified he was not shut in a room but rather the curtain of holy of holies got torn into two and thus God's presence truly went to be with his people everywhere not only in the temple of Jerusalem but everywhere forever in Australia in Papua New Guinea as long as there's his people there God is there isn't that what he has promised how amazing is that there's no need to try to prove our worth to

[18 : 28] God through doing religious duties or partaking in a social course or sport events even though these are good things but there's no need to prove our worth by doing these things to gain the divine experience no God himself came here and shared his divine presence with us in Jesus through his Holy Spirit and what is our role in this effort well what is the role of the people in Psalm 132 if we read in this Psalm the main players are only God and David the king the people have almost no role except for rejoicing enjoying God's blessings worshipping him being amazed that they get to share God's presence and praying to God to keep his promises based on not what they have done but in verse 1 based on what

David has done it's the same with us we get to enjoy God's presence because of what God has done for us and what Jesus our king our David has done to bring God's presence to us so if you've been waiting for the application of this sermon what's the application of this psalm well nothing except be amazed sing rejoice enjoy God's presence how good is it to know that God is present with us now in Jesus when Kai was about one year old there was a period where he would wake up in the middle of the night crying every single night and either Hannah or I would usually wake up and go into his room regardless of whether he had been naughty during the day and trust me he had been naughty a lot if he needed us at night we would be there and when

I arrived at his room I usually picked him up and he would immediately throw himself onto my chest and stop crying and when I put him back into his grip even while he was still awake he would be very calm and quiet even though the room was very dark and I'm sure he could not see me but he knew that I was there waiting for him to go back to sleep and he was going to be all right because I was there that's what it means to know that God is present with us in Jesus through the spirit right now often especially when life gets dark we can't see or feel that God is there but if we truly know if we truly know God like a child knows his parents and if we trust him we know that he's there and we will be all right and he's ready to pick us up any time and we can throw ourselves onto his chest any time even if we've been naughty during the day if we return to him and call upon him father he is there every time not because of what we have done but because of what

Jesus our king our David has accomplished and we will see him won't we we are looking forward to the day when we arrive in the spiritual Jerusalem the new creation and we will literally be in his presence sharing his joy forever and ever just as God has promised here and we will sing forever and as we are now walking towards that spiritual Jerusalem ascending ascending during this ascent sometimes our walk is hard but we know that God is with us and we might call upon him anytime and pray to him Lord I know that I haven't always been righteous but just like in verse 1 of this psalm says remember not what I have done but remember the king remember

Jesus our David and what he has done and for his sake stay with us let's pray father we thank you for what Jesus has done for us how he died for our sins how he was obedient unto death on the cross for our sake and how he was raised to eternal life so that we can share his eternal life with him and now we can enjoy your presence with us forever because Jesus lives forever and so as we are ascending to the new Jerusalem strengthen us Lord and grow our righteousness as we are called to be priests that the world might gain salvation in Christ through us in Jesus mighty name our

[24 : 25] King we pray Amen