

Psalm 122:

WHAT I LOVE ABOUT SUNDAYS

INTRO Find the Old Testament Book of Psalms. Then turn to Psalm 122. While you are finding your place, let me ask you a question, What do you like most about Sundays?

I sent out texts yesterday and asked a few people what they liked most about Sundays, Here's what they said; Christopher Flickinger said, "Going to church to worship the Lord, then you leave church and it's like every other day", Caroline Mattheiss said, "Getting to go to church and learn about God. Kinda like "Bible School" to learn how to have a relationship with God and grow". Then little Langston said, "Going to church with my family, swimming, and ice cream sundaes". LOL, Janet Daniel responded that what she likes most about Sundays, is my sermons. :) Bless her heart, isn't she precious?

Well, you probably picked up on the theme of their responses. They all related to church.

You go to school to get an education so you can make a living. You go to work to make money so you can pay the bills. You go to the gym for exercise and better health. You go to the mall to shop for clothes and the grocery store to buy food. You go to the lake to fish, the ball game to cheer, and the golf course to get mad and cuss! NO, I'm kidding! I meant you go to the golf course for fun. But why do you go to church?

Why get up early on one of your few off-days? Why go through the hassle of dressing up and the getting the kids ready? Why go to the trouble of finding a parking space near the front and pew near the back? Why go to church?

If you've ever found yourself wondering about that little question, you're not alone. Surveys tell us that as many as 80% of Americans identify themselves as Christians, yet only 20% of Americans attend church regularly. I guess some people look at going to church as a bother—an unnecessary burden to be avoided whenever possible.

But to someone who understands church and what it's really all about, going to church can be the most spiritually fulfilling, inspiring thing you do all week. If Sundays aren't the best day of your week, you're doing it wrong.

In Psalm 122, David writes about a time when somebody invited him to attend church with them. I want you to see how David responded. Today I'm preaching on the subject, "WHAT I LOVE ABOUT SUNDAYS". Now, let's read together...

Psalm 122:1 *"I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD." Another translation puts it this way, "I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord." (NIV)*

Does that sound like a guy who was turned off by church? Who'd rather roll over and hit the snooze button? David got excited when he was invited to church. He was glad! He rejoiced! He couldn't wait to get there. Why was David fired up about the thing that so many people try to avoid today? What did he know that we don't know about church?

As we walk through the rest of this psalm, David lays out three reasons why he was glad to go to the house of Lord—first is the PRAISE of God, second is the PEOPLE of God, and third is the PEACE of God. When these three elements are present in our churches today, Sunday will become the best day of your week.

What I love about Sundays? Notice with me...

I) THE PRAISE OF GOD: v 4 *“That is where the tribes go up—the tribes of the Lord—to praise the name of the Lord.”*

Sundays give us the opportunity to gather together and worship our Creator. But the word worship conjures up many different thoughts in our minds, not all of which are accurate. When you think of worship, what do you think of? An old hymn poorly sung? Dramatic prayers laced with thees and thous? Irrelevant sermons painfully delivered? Near empty auditoriums and meaningless rituals?

In their surveys on the subject of worship, the Barna Research Group has found that the term "worship" means many things to many people. There is no single definition of the word that is common to more than one out of five adults in this country. Of the most likely definitions held by people:

- 19% related worship to expressions of praise or thanks to God
- 17% defined worship as praying to God
- 17% think it means attending church services
- 12% relate it to having a personal relationship with God
- 10% believe it to mean a particular attitude toward God
- 9% think of it as a way of living that reflects one's spiritual commitment

As I read through this list, I actually think worship is all of these things. Literally, the Hebrew word translated worship means “to bow down.” **ILLUS:** It reminds me of a story about Neil Marten, a member of the British Parliament, who was once giving a group of his constituents a guided tour of the Houses of Parliament. During the course of the visit, the group happened to meet Lord Chancellor Hailsham, wearing all the regalia of his office. Hailsham recognized Neil Marten among the group and cried, "Neil!" Suddenly, the entire band of visitors promptly fell to their knees! LOL

In many ways that's what worship is—bowing in reverence before a majestic and mighty God. But worship is also a celebration. In another Psalm of David the Bible describes worship like this: **Psalm 29:1-2** *“Praise the Lord, you angels; praise the Lord's glory and power. Praise the Lord for the glory of his name; worship the Lord because he is holy.”*

The essence of worship is simply this: giving God the praise he deserves. To worship is to applaud the greatness of God! And in the context of Scripture worship is both an attitude and an action. It begins as an attitude of mingled awe and reverence in our hearts toward God and then explodes into action through prayer, praise and the proclamation of God's goodness and grace.

I've always liked David invitation to worship: **Psalm 34:3** *“Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!”*

I) THE PRAISE OF GOD: v4 CONTINUED We come to worship so broken and bent out of shape—so full of sin, or shame, or stress. But when you stare into the face of the Father, your face will shine a little brighter. When you've stood in the presence of God, your step will be a little lighter. And eventually God will give you a new heart—a heart just like his.

The Swiss Theologian Karl Barth summed it up this way: "Christian worship is the most momentous, the most urgent, the most glorious action that can take place in human life." So why do I love Sundays and why should you? I love Sundays because I love to praise God! I love church because, as David put it, *"That is where the people go... to praise the name of the Lord!"*

Notice secondly,

II) THE PEOPLE OF GOD: vv 3-4 *"Jerusalem is a well-built city; its seamless walls cannot be breached. 4 All the tribes of Israel—the LORD's people—make their pilgrimage here. They come to give thanks to the name of the LORD..."*

Another translation reads, *"Jerusalem is built as a city where people come together. That is where the different families go, the families of the Lord. There they give thanks to the name of the Lord..."*

The Temple, or "the house of the Lord," was located in the heart of Jerusalem so Jerusalem became a gathering place for God's people. I'm reminded of the old Sunday School rhyme: "Here is the church and here is the steeple. Open the door and see all the people." Do you remember that? The only problem with it is that it draws a distinction between the church and the people. The Bible tells us however that the church isn't a place—it is the people. Church isn't just something you attend. It's something you are!

The Bible uses a lot of metaphors to describe the church, but the most persistent is that of family. In the New Testament, believers call each other brothers and sisters, the book of Romans describes our "adoption" as "children of God", the church itself is called the household of God, and in his letter to the church at Ephesus, in **Ephesians 2:19**, Paul writes: *"Now you...are not foreigners or strangers any longer, but are citizens together with God's holy people. You belong to God's family".*

Take a moment to let this amazing truth sink in. You belong to God's family. When you place your faith in Jesus, God becomes your Father, you become his child, other believers become your brothers and sisters, and the church becomes your spiritual family. That's what church is about. It's about having brothers and sisters who love you, who can come along next to you and see you through life's trying times. Being included in God's family is the highest honor and the greatest privilege you will ever receive. Whenever you feel unimportant, unloved, or insecure, remember to whom you belong.

That's what family is, isn't it—a place to belong? Everyone needs a place where they belong, where people smile when you arrive and say, "See you soon!" when you leave. A place that fits you like a favorite pair of jeans, that's as welcoming as your much-loved and much-worn recliner at home. That's the way we're made. Not to be isolated. Not to be alone. Even in the perfect paradise of Eden, God said, "It is not good for man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18).

I) THE PRAISE OF GOD: v 4

II) THE PEOPLE OF GOD: vv 3-4 CONTINUED Stephen Ilardi, is a professor of psychology, and clinical neuroscientist. He calls social isolation “a modern plague,” noting that “25% of Americans have no meaningful social support at all—not a single person they can confide in.”

Listen to me, isolation takes its toll, making us more vulnerable to mental illness, depression and addiction. We are not meant to live lone-ranger lives; rather, we are created for communion and community. You might be able to praise God at home or in the car or even up in a deer stand, but you cannot be part of a family in isolation.

A Christian without a church home is like a child without a family—an orphan. Today’s culture of independent individualism has created many spiritual orphans—“bunny believers” who hop around from one church to another, never really connecting.

Being a part of God’s family means connecting with each other—laughing together, crying together, and dreaming together. In fact, the Bible says that Christians are put together, joined together, built together, members together, heirs together, fitted together, held together, and will be caught up together. There’s a lot of togetherness in God’s family! Today many people believe you can be a “good Christian” without joining (or even attending a local church), but God Word strongly disagrees.

The Bible says in 1 Peter 3:8, *“And now this word to all of you: You should be like one big happy family, full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds”*

Belonging to God’s family is a precious gift. And it’s another thing I LOVE ABOUT SUNDAYS! Notice lastly,

III) THE PEACE OF GOD: vv 6-8 First David describes being invited to the house of the Lord and standing at its door (vs. 1-2). Then he describes all the people gathered there—the families of the Lord (vs. 3-4). Then he tells us what they gathered to do, praise the name of the Lord (vs. 4). Finally, in the closing verses of this psalm, David writes this: vv 6-8 *“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May those who love you be secure. 7 May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels.” 8 For the sake of my family and friends, I will say, “Peace be within you.”*

Here, David prayed for the peace of his family and friends and all those gathered at the House of the Lord that day in Jerusalem. The tribes of the Lord, the people of God, gathered at the house of the Lord, for a day of praise and worship. And as they departed, David says to them all, “Peace be with you.” In fact, the Hebrew word shalom (which is translated “peace be with you”) was a common way to say goodbye to friends and family. It was blessing that meant “may the peace of God go with you.”

In the New Testament, Paul expected peace to be a hallmark of those who belonged to the church. He writes in Colossians 3:15, *“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace”*. I’m convinced that when we do Sundays God’s way, we’ll experience the peace of God not just on Sunday but all week long.

CONCLUSION: What do you love most about Sundays? What does your church mean to you?