

SERMON FOR AUGUST 22, 2021

TEXT: PSALM 122:1

In the name of Jesus:

It is good to be back. It is good to be with you, I have missed you. And

THEME: IT'S GOOD TO BE BACK

“I was glad when they said let us go to the house of the Lord.” I have missed worshipping with you. Being away will do that for you, when you are away from someone, or something, you tend to miss the person, the people, the thing you are away from. And I have missed you. It is good seeing you!

Our text for today is from Psalm 122: “I was glad when they said let us go to the house of the Lord.” The Psalmist, probably David, wrote this Psalm because he loved the Lord and wanted to be in His presence. He misses the Lord, he misses worshipping in the Lord’s house, not at a time when he was away on vacation, he truly misses being in the Lord’s house in worship.

Let’s be honest. That isn’t always the case, now is it? Do we usually think that it is good to be in the Lord’s house to worship? Do we miss worship when we are away? I would certainly hope so! I hope you thought when you got out of bed this morning: “Hey, it’s Sunday, it’s time to go to church. I don’t have to go to church, I want to go to church, I get to do this, I love being in God’s house. It’s good to go to worship.” That was David’s attitude. And that was Jesus’ as well. But when I was little, I didn’t think that. When I was a

small boy, my dad would wake me up and tell me to get dressed. We were going to church. My dad trained me to go to church, to love the church, so I learned to love to go to church. It is one of the reasons I am a pastor, I love to be in church to worship.

But how many times do we find ourselves in church and looking at our watch? Wondering when the service will end? How often is it that we think: “well, if Pastor cuts the sermon short, and doesn’t offer up a lot of prayers, and if people just hustle during communion, I can be out of here in under an hour and on my way to do the things I need to do today?”

Maybe you come to church today out of habit. It is good that you are here, but maybe you come because you are forced to, or maybe because it is tradition that you go to church on Sunday. So you come and go through the motions during worship, putting in your time for another week. If that is the case, are you really glad that you when they said let us go to the house of the Lord?

Remember the third commandment? It says to remember to keep the Sabbath Day holy. What does it mean to keep it holy? The Catechism says: We should fear and love God so that we do not despise the preaching and teaching of God’s Word but rather hold it special, sacred, and gladly hear and learn it. Or, in other words, be glad when they said let us go to the house of the Lord.

When we find it difficult to come to church and when we aren't glad to come to church, we show a lack of love for Jesus. After all, this is His house, and where two or three are gathered in His name there He is in the midst of them! Jesus is here! He is present! Do we understand and recognize this fact?

Once there was a Sunday School teacher who challenged her children in her class to write God a note after church on Sunday. One little boy got the message, and wrote to God: "Dear God, I had such a great time in church today, I wish you could have been there!"

Well God Is here, and He comes not to condemn you but to save you. Even when we come to church reluctantly or with mixed up motives, Jesus is here, present, and not only happy to see you but happy to bless you.

That is what coming to church is all about, to receive what God has to give you. That is why God says in the Third Commandment to remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy or special. To sabbat means to cut off. That is why we are called to set aside a day, to cut if off from the rest of the work week, so that we can come together to worship and receive God's gifts. We are called to cut off work so that we can be refreshed. God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, and this serves as a model for our lives today.

As a fan of the Cleveland Browns I remember all too well the pain of their moving the old team to Baltimore Maryland in 1996. I also remember a fan in Cleveland lamenting Cleveland not having a team in the NFL, saying, “Now my family and I have no place to go on Sunday.” Really?

Sunday has turned into fun day for many in our society. People live for the weekend. What many have forgotten is that we don't teach values to children and to other people, we model them. Leading by example is not the first thing, it isn't the best thing, it isn't main thing, it is the only thing.

The Psalmist says that he was glad when they said let us go to the house of the Lord. If we aren't glad going to worship, it will show. That quick glance at the watch, that yawn during the sermon, the times you miss church, all send a message, to God and to others.

The Good News is that Jesus loves coming to church. He loved going to church throughout His life. He was dedicated in the Temple as an infant, at the age of twelve He was immersed in learning and worshipping in the Temple, “being about His Father's business.” Throughout His life Jesus loved going to church. Why? Because He loved you!

Forgiveness is the main thing in this Church. The Church is all about Jesus and Jesus is all about forgiveness. So Jesus is here today, really present to show you that He loves you. How? He forgives you, through the words of

the Pastor who says: "In the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all of your sins in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Jesus is present to forgive you, He is present to speak to you in and through His Word. He speaks His Word to forgive, to instruct, to guide, and to feed your soul. Jesus is present, really present, in the Supper, to give you His very body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins and the strengthening of your faith. And He is present to hear your needs, your concerns, in prayer, so that we can individually and corporately bring our petitions before His throne for He loves to hear our prayers and answer our prayers! Jesus says ask and it will be given, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be open. We cast our cares upon Jesus, for He cares for us.

So there are plenty of reasons why we can be happy, joyful, yes, glad to come to church this Sunday and every time the doors of our church open, for when we come to church, we come to God's house. Jesus is here. He is present. In love, to bless.

There was a time in the Gospel of Mark when the apostles were all busy doing the work Jesus gave them to do. And do you know what Jesus said to them? He said, "Come with Me to a quiet place where you can get some rest." (Mark 6: 31). You need your rest. And this is the place where Jesus is, to renew, forgive, and refresh.

It is great to be back from vacation. But it is even better to be here with you, to be refreshed and forgiven by Jesus. May we all be exceedingly glad to be back in church in worship, so that we can say with the Psalmist: "I am glad to be in the house of the Lord."

Amen