

Psalm 92: What Is Church For?

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[0 : 0 0] If we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, for a short while, if we could just look at this passage of scripture that we read in the book of Psalms, Psalm 92.

Psalm 92, we're going to look at the whole psalm, but if we just read again at the beginning. Psalm 92 from the beginning, a psalm or a song for the Sabbath day.

It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High, to declare your steadfast love in the morning and your faithfulness by night.

As you know, this evening we're gathering together for our AGM, our annual general meeting. And this meeting, it's necessary, not only because the church is a charity, and all the accounts, they have to be open and they have to be transparent.

But you know, it's also a good opportunity for us to remind ourselves what the purpose of the church is. I mean, I could give a report on all that's happened in our congregation in the past year, and list all our strengths, and then list all our weaknesses.

[1 : 1 8] But I don't believe that that would serve any purpose. Because patting ourselves on the back for what we've done is not the purpose of the church. Nor is kicking ourselves for what we fail to do.

That's not the purpose of the church. That's not what the church is about. The purpose of the church is to encourage and enable saints and sinners to fulfil their chief end.

That's the purpose of the church. The purpose of the church is to encourage and enable saints and sinners to fulfil their chief end. Which is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

And so on an evening like this one, I believe that it's a good opportunity for us to remind ourselves what the church is for. As it meets on the Lord's Day and at various times during the week.

Because I don't think that an AGM is about praising or even punishing ourselves. Rather, it's an opportunity for us to come to the Bible and just ask ourselves, what is the church for?

[2 : 1 9] What is the church for? And as you would expect, you can find a psalm about almost anything, any question. And there's a psalm that answers this very question, what is the church for?

Because Psalm 92, Psalm 92 reminds us what the church is for. And that the church and coming to church should be viewed as a gift, not a grudge.

It should be viewed as a delight, not a dread. It should be viewed as a blessing, not a curse.

Coming to church on the Lord's Day and midweek, it's to be a highlight.

It's to be the highlight of our week. And it's that highlight of our week is to affect our whole week.

Coming to church on the Lord's Day and even midweek, it's to be something that we anticipate.

And something that we prepare for prayerfully. Church is the place where we come to worship. And it's where we should love to come to worship and worship the Lord for his faithfulness and his goodness towards us.

[3 : 2 1] And where we're encouraged and equipped, we're to be encouraged and equipped and go into what you could say a new week. Enabling ourselves to serve the Lord faithfully.

And so we're asking this evening, what is the church for? What is the church for? And Psalm 92, it reminds us that the church is for a day of gratitude. It's a day of grace and a day of growth.

What is the church for? A day of gratitude, a day of grace and a day of growth. So look first of all, a day of gratitude. A day of gratitude.

Look at the beginning of the psalm. A psalm or a song for the Sabbath day. It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High. To declare your steadfast love in the morning and your faithfulness by night.

Now the title of Psalm 92, it affirms to us that this psalm was used to remind the Lord's people what church is for. Because we're told that Psalm 92 is a psalm or a song for the Sabbath day.

[4 : 28] Which means that this particular psalm was always sung on the Sabbath day in the Jewish church, which was the synagogue. Psalm 92, it was always part of the Sabbath day worship.

And it was always there to remind the Lord's people as to why they had gathered together for worship. Of course the Jewish Sabbath, it's on the Saturday.

But you know, we can apply Psalm 92 to a Christian Sabbath, the Lord's day. But you know, what's interesting is that the Jews appointed a particular psalm to be sung in the synagogue on each day of the week.

And the schedule which the Jews followed was that on the first day of the week, which is the Lord's day, Sunday, they would sing Psalm 24. Then on the second day of the week, Monday, they would sing Psalm 48.

Then on Tuesday, it was Psalm 82. On Wednesday, it was Psalm 94. On Thursday, it was Psalm 81. On Friday, it was Psalm 93. And then on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, the Jews would sing Psalm 92.

[5 : 32] But even though Psalm 92 was always sung on the Jewish Sabbath, we have to see its relevance and its application for us as those who gather to worship on the Lord's day, the Christian Sabbath.

Now, we don't know who wrote Psalm 92, but it doesn't really matter who wrote it. Because Psalm 92, it speaks to all of the Lord's people in every generation.

Because the opening words of this psalm, in these opening words, the psalmist is giving this call to worship. He gives this exhortation and this appeal to come and give thanks to the Lord.

He says that we should come to church with a heart of gratitude and a heart of praise to the Lord.

He says, it is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High.

The psalmist says, it's a good thing. It's a good thing to give thanks to the Lord. It's a good thing to come to church with a heart of gratitude. It's a good thing to come to the Lord's house with joy in our heart and praise upon our lips and come and sing to the one who is most high.

[6 : 40] Because, well, what better thing could we do than come to church and praise the God who created us and called us to himself? What better thing could we do than come to church with a heart of gratitude and a heart of gratefulness to the Lord?

What better thing could we do than come to church with this attitude of adoration and appreciation for the Lord's goodness to us? What better thing could we do than give praise and thanks unto the Lord?

Because this is why we were created. And what better way to spend our Lord's day than to rejoice in the Lord's day? What better way to start our week than to have a day of gratitude and give thanks to the Lord?

And there's no doubt we ought to be thankful to all that we've received in and through our Saviour Jesus Christ. Because, you know, what always gets me is that we have received from the Lord. We have received in him exceedingly abundantly above all, more than we could ask or even think. But more than that, it seems to me that the psalmist, he is thanking the Lord even for the gift of the Sabbath day.

[7 : 58] He has this heart of gratitude when he thinks of the benefits and the blessings of the Lord's day. He says, it's a good thing. It's a good thing. And then he says in verse 4, You know, the psalmist rejoices.

He's rejoicing because of the Lord's creation. That the Lord has created everything by the word of his power and in the space of six days and all very good. And the psalmist, he's saying the work of your hands.

Where you have formed the hills and you've filled the seas and you've placed the sun and the moon and the stars. And you've named them every one. And he says, more than that, you formed me.

You formed me by the work of your hands. You made me in your own image and in your own likeness from the dust of the ground. And he says, the work of your hands has made me glad. And I sing for joy.

The psalmist, he has this heart of gratitude as he comes to the Lord's house. And he has a heart of gratitude for the Lord's creative handiwork. But you know, the psalmist, he's not only grateful for the creation.

[9 : 09] He's also grateful for what took place after the creation. The psalmist, you could say, he's thankful for the creation ordinance of Sabbath rest.

Where the Lord set apart one day in seven and made it holy to himself. And you know, that's how we should view the Lord's day. We should view it as he says, it's a good thing.

It's a good thing. We should see the Lord's day as a day of gratitude. Which, in which we set apart this day and devoted and dedicated to the Lord.

You know, we should view the Lord's day as, and coming to church on the Lord's day as the greatest blessing. Because with all that goes on during a week. Where we're so busy and we don't have time to stop and think.

And there's so many things going on. The Lord's day, it's a gift to us. It's a gift of which we should be so thankful that we can just come aside and rest a while.

[10:12] But you know, the psalmist, he not only teaches us that we need to have a day of gratitude. He also teaches us how we should spend that day of gratitude. He teaches us how we should spend the Lord's day.

And with this, John Calvin states, he says in his commentary. He says, the Sabbath day is not to be holy in the sense of being devoted to idleness.

As if idleness should be an acceptable form of worship to God. But the Sabbath day is to be holy in the sense of separating ourselves from all other occupations. In order to engage in meditating upon the divine works of God.

We need to be disentangled from all our care, says Calvin. If we would seriously apply ourselves to the praises of God. And so, the Lord's day.

The day in which we gather together in church for worship. He says, it's to be a day of gratitude. It's not a day of idleness. Where we spend most of the day in bed or sitting watching TV.

[11:13] That's not what the Lord's day is for. No, the psalmist is urging us to fill our Lord's day with a day of gratitude. It was to fill our Lord's day with this gratitude to the Lord.

Because, as he says in verse 2. The purpose of the Lord's day is to declare your steadfast love in the morning. And your faithfulness every night.

Which actually means to us that the morning service and the evening service on the Lord's day. They're not two separate acts of worship.

They're one act of worship. Their book ends to the entire day of gratitude and worship to the Lord. Therefore, the application of the psalm is that we're to try and make sure that we're in church.

Both ends on the Lord's day. And of course, I know it's not always possible. With young children or those who don't keep well. And their elderly and some people, they're only thankful to get out to church at all.

[12:13] Whatever end of the day it is. But you know, what's becoming more and more common amongst the Lord's people. Is that worship on the Lord's day is only a morning thing. Or an evening thing.

It's a morning or evening activity. But the day of gratitude is to be a whole day. And what sadly has happened is that the day of gratitude has become a half day.

Which only emphasizes our half-hearted commitment to the Lord. Because when it comes to the Lord's day, well, some take the liberty of having the morning off. Or they want a night in.

Too tired to come and worship the Lord. Too tired to give the best day of the week to the Lord. But you know, it all comes back to our priorities.

What are our priorities? Who is our priority? Because if there's too much going on during the week. These other six days. If there's too much going on. That we are too tired to give this one day of gratitude to the Lord.

[13:14] Then the Lord is not our priority. And we need to ask ourselves. Who is Lord of the Lord's day? Me or the Lord? Who is Lord over my life?

Me or the Lord? And you know, what I find so sad is that. Our commitment and our desire and our love for the Lord's day. It's diminishing amongst the Lord's people.

Because our love for the Lord's day. It's a reflection of our love for the Lord. And the Lord's day is a day in which we should be taken up with Jesus.

And that's actually what the psalmist is saying in verse 2. He's saying that we're to declare your steadfast love in the morning. And your faithfulness by night. The Lord's day is a day of gratitude.

To spend our day declaring his steadfast love and his faithfulness.

And those words steadfast love and faithfulness. They're translated in the New Testament as grace and truth. Which is the description that was always given to Jesus.

[14:15] He is the only begotten of the Father. Full of grace and truth. He's full of steadfast love and faithfulness. And so the psalmist, he's reminding us here. That our Lord's day.

Our day of gratitude. It's to be taken up with Jesus. That's what church is for. It's to be taken. Church is for being taken up with Jesus.

It's a day of gratitude. It's a day of gratitude. But secondly, it's a day of grace. It's a day of grace. Look at what he says in verse 5.

He says, How great are your works, O Lord. Your thoughts are very deep. The psalmist here, he continues his song for the Sabbath day by confessing the greatness and the vastness of his God. He says, How great are your works, O Lord. Your thoughts are very deep. He says, How great and how deep. How great and how deep.

[15:18] And with this, the psalmist, he's actually reflecting upon the infinite and immeasurable and inexhaustible character of the Lord. And the reason the psalmist says this is because he's considering the Lord's work of salvation in his life.

He's no longer thinking about the Lord's work of creation, which he did in verse 4. He's now thinking about a greater work. The work of salvation. And it's when the psalmist considers the wonder and glory of salvation, it's then that he says, How great are your works, O Lord.

How your thoughts are very deep. He says that the wisdom of God in saving sinners, it's great and it's deep. It's beyond his asking and it's beyond his thinking.

In fact, the words that are actually used in verse 5, They convey to us the idea of God's workmanship and his commitment to restoring and renewing his creation.

And that the Lord is working out his plan of salvation according to his perfect will. And you know, that's what the church is for.

[16:28] It's for a day of grace. Where we're reminded that salvation, it's all of grace. We're reminded that salvation is all of grace because it was planned and perfected in eternity and brought to fruition in our lives.

And tonight we gather together as those who have been saved by grace. It's not of ourselves, it's the gift of God. And yet the marvel is, is that we are God's workmanship. We are created in Christ Jesus for every good work.

My friend, the Lord's day, it's a day of grace. And it's all about reminding us that salvation is all of grace. But then in verses 6 to 8, we're given this contrast.

Because the grace of God in salvation, it's contrasted with the blindness of a sinner. We're told in verse 6, The stupid man cannot know.

The fool cannot understand this. That though the wicked sprout like grass and all evildoers flourish, they are doomed to destruction forever. But you, O Lord, are on high forever.

[17:39] You know, the psalmist's description of the stupid man or the brutish man, it's someone who refuses to accept the grace of God in salvation. He says that this man, he rejects the gift of salvation because in his own eyes, he's flourishing.

In his own eyes, he's springing up like the grass. In his own eyes, he's progressing in life and he's enjoying life and he's filling his life with everything but the Lord. And yet the psalmist says about him, and those like him, they are doomed to destruction forever.

The rejection of God's gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, he says, it's absolute stupidity and foolishness. And yet that's what the church is for.

Church is a day of grace where God's gift of salvation is presented to the saint as a comfort and the sinner as a call. God's gift of salvation, that's what the church is for.

Church is a day of grace where God's gift of salvation is presented to the saint as a comfort and the sinner as a call. A call to come where the sinner, he's invited. He's pleaded with to come to Christ and embrace God's gift of salvation that's freely and graciously offered to them.

[18:59] But as the psalmist warns, he goes on to warn in verses 9 to 11, those who reject Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour will perish.

He says in verse 9, Now what we must notice about these verses, verses 9 and 11, is that the psalmist describes in verse 9 that those who reject salvation, he describes them in verse 9 as the Lord's enemies.

But then in verse 11, the psalmist describes those who reject salvation as his enemies. Now I want to say that I don't believe that the psalmist is actually referring to these enemies as his personal enemies who shall perish.

I believe that the psalmist is speaking prophetically. He's speaking from the perspective, you could say, of Jesus. Jesus, whose mission was to destroy his enemies.

And I say that it's from the perspective of Jesus, where Jesus, you could say, is speaking in verse 11. My eyes have seen the downfall of my enemies. And I say it's from the perspective of Jesus because of verse 10 and the reference to the exalted horn and the fresh oil.

[20 : 34] Because that language of the exalted horn and the fresh oil, it's royal language. The horn was a symbol of power. The fresh oil was something that was always used to anoint a king.

And so it's royal language. And of course it's drawing us, drawing our attention to Jesus. Because, well, we come to the New Testament, the fulfilment of this psalm.

And we see that Jesus, he was given all authority and power in heaven and on earth. Our Jesus, he was anointed. He was Christed as the saviour of sinners.

But more than that, our Jesus, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. But what I always love about it is that our Jesus, he was highly exalted.

Highly exalted and given a name above every name. That at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that he is Lord. To the glory of God the Father.

[21 : 35] And so our Jesus has been highly exalted. He's been highly exalted because he rose again on the third day. He rose again on the Lord's day. And his victory over all his and our enemies, it took place on the first day of the week.

And you know, this is why coming to church is a day of grace. Because we're reminded that it was on the Lord's day that Jesus defeated death and conquered the grave.

It was on the first Lord's day that our king, the one who is the horn of power. The one who was anointed with the oil of gladness.

He's the one who stood over death and all our enemies. And said, oh death, where is your sting? Grave, where is your victory? And so church and coming to church is a day of grace.

Where we're reminded that salvation is all of grace. It's God's gift of salvation presented to the saint as a comfort. And the sinner is this call.

[22 : 41] The call to come to Christ. So what is church for? It's a day of gratitude. It's a day of grace. And a day of growth. A day of growth.

It's what we see lastly. Look at verse 12. The righteous flourish like the palm tree. And grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the Lord.

They flourish in the courts of our God. In the closing verses of this psalm. The psalmist, he draws our attention to the effects that coming to church should have in our lives.

And the effect that coming to church should have in our lives is that we should grow. In fact, the psalmist says that the effect church should have in our lives is that we grow and even flourish.

Because it's in church that we're taught from the word of God. And we're encouraged from the word of God. And we're challenged from the word of God. And we're even prepared by the word of God to go out into a new week.

[23 : 46] And you know, all of our activities that we do, whether as Christians or as a congregation, they're to flow out from and they're to be a result of what we do in church on the Lord's Day.

Because church on the Lord's Day has been gifted to us so that we will flourish in our faith. We'll flourish, as the psalmist says, like the palm tree.

And that will grow like the cedar in Lebanon. And you know, it's a wonderful description. Because the palm tree, it was one of the most beautiful trees in Israel.

And they said it gave this great provision of food for the Lord's people. But it was also a great provision of shelter. The leaves of the palm tree, they stretched out about eight feet.

And it would provide protection from the heat of the sun. And so the illustration of the palm tree, it's one of provision. With the psalmist, he's reminding us that the Lord's Day and gathering together in church under the word of God is to be viewed as a provision from the Lord.

[24 : 53] It's a gift from the Lord in which we flourish in our faith. But then we're also described as the cedars in Lebanon. And the cedars in Lebanon, they were the oldest and also the largest trees in Israel.

And they're often mentioned in the Bible because of their strength. They were used to make buildings. Solomon's temple was used. They used the cedars of Lebanon. And you know, that's what the psalmist is reminding us.

That coming to church on the Lord's Day, gathering together around God's word, worshipping the Lord together, it's where we're strengthened. Strengthened in our faith and strengthened in our walk with the Lord.

That's where we flourish. We flourish in the Lord's house on the Lord's Day. But as the psalmist concludes this beautiful psalm about what church is for, he says that those who have been planted in the house of the Lord, they shall continue to flourish even in old age.

He says in verse 13, They are planted in the house of the Lord. They flourish in the courts of our God. They still bear fruit in old age. They are ever full of sap and green.

[26 : 09] To declare that the Lord is upright. He is my rock. And there is no unrighteousness in him. Even after all the years have rolled on, the psalmist says that they're still bearing fruit.

That even though life has taken its toll, despite all the trials and temptations, all the persecutions and pitfalls, he says that those who reach that good old age, they still bring forth fruit.

They're still flourishing. And they'll flourish, he says, because they've come to discover that they're planting. They've been planted in the house of the Lord.

They're planting and they're growing and they're flourishing and even they're keeping. It's nothing to do with them. This is the wonder of salvation. It's nothing to do with us.

It's all solely the work of the gardener. Our Jesus. Our Jesus. And you know, what's remarkable about those who continue to flourish in old age is that their confession, it doesn't change.

[27 : 16] Their confession still remains the same. And they still go on to say in old age, as it is in verse 15, they declare that the Lord is upright. He is my rock.

And there is no unrighteousness in him. You know, what a confession to have. To flourish in the latter years of your life. To say the Lord is upright.

He is my rock. And there is no unrighteousness in him. You know, my friend, we have good reasons. Good reason to gather together in church on the Lord's day.

We are the Lord's people. And we have been given the gift of the Lord's day. And church on the Lord's day, it's to be a day of gratitude. A day of grace.

And a day of growth. So may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, we give thanks to thee for thy word.

[28 : 15] Thy word that brings light into our lives. And thy word that gives to us direction. And Lord, we pray that we would be attentive to it. That we would study it.

That we would meditate upon it. That we would seek to apply it in our lives. And live it out for thy glory. And for the furtherance of thy kingdom. We thank thee, Lord, for the Lord's people.

That we are thy people. That we are a chosen generation. A royal priesthood. A holy nation. We are that peculiar people. We have been called to thyself.

From darkness unto thine own marvellous light. And help us, Lord, as the Lord's people. To meet together on the Lord's day. That we might grow together. That we might worship together.

That we might, Lord, seek to live lives that bring glory to thy name. And extend the kingdom in our community. Lord, do us good and we pray. Bless us in all that we seek to do.

[29 : 11] For thy glory. For we ask it in Jesus' name. And for his sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Well, we now come to the part of the...