**Glad To Go Into**

**The House of the Lord**

**Introit & Gradual (Psalm 122)**

Trinity 18 – 10.08.2023

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go into the House of the Lord.” We confessed that today twice, both in our Introit and in our Gradual. I wonder if we truly believe it. If not, maybe it is something that should be encouraged in us all – and something we can especially talk about with others. It is my prayer that today you will be edified and come to a greater understanding what it means, and that you will find your greatest joy and gladness here – in the House of the Lord.

I love to talk with people whenever I have opportunity to do so, including strangers. It is an opportunity to talk about the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, especially if I am in uniform, that is, wearing a clerical. But, even if I am not, I ask the Holy Spirit to open my eyes to see opportunities to bring the Gospel into the lives of people. As I like to say, to “Look for the hook.” What is special or specific with this person or family that I can begin a conversation with them, and then bring the Gospel to them.

We might say that the goal of evangelism is to bring people into a new relationship with God. To lead people to find peace and comfort in this world and life in Christ alone, the only source of that peace, until they enter their eternal rest, hopefully with Christ.

I have had quite a few conversations lately – with both members and non-members – where people have commented about the state and condition of our world today, all the things going on. In those conversations where they bring up this topic, people have commented about how much worse it is in the world today. The comment upon how vile and how evil the world has become! They note that the world has wondered far from things of the faith!

I suppose from our perspective here in the Northwoods of Wisconsin in the United States, that appears to be true. But is it ***WORSE***? Or is it that we are more aware of it though all the advanced media opportunities?

Consider how bad the world has been in the past. At one time, God destroyed the whole earth with a flood because of how evil the people of the world were. Then again, God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of the vile evil that was taking place in those cities.

Are things worse today?

Some of these people talk about the signs of the end of the times. What are those signs? We are told that the signs are wars and rumors of wars, famine, plague, and cataclysmic events that rock the earth. The better question might be, “When has there been a time that these things were not taking place?”

Wars? Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan both almost conquered much of the inhabited world. One did it about 350BC and the other about 1200AD.

There have always been places suffering famine.

You can go online and look at the numerous plagues that have assaulted the world.

Pompeii was destroyed by a volcano in 79AD, and the number of volcanoes, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, and other cataclysmic events have been going on forever.

God’s message in the warning is simply this, “be ready today!”

Maybe what we should be asking ourselves is, where have God's people been taking comfort as the world goes through turmoil? What have God's people done when they have learned of their role in making the world such a place? Where do we flee for comfort, refuge, and peace!

If we will listen, the Introit and gradual, taken from the Psalm 122 we learn speak about the joy of God’s people. “I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord!”

In our Old testament lesson from Deuteronomy, we are reminded that the Israelites were sojourners in the land of Egypt, and then sojourners in the wilderness. These places were not their home. Where would they go for comfort and peace? They went to the Lord where he would be found.

In the wilderness He was found in His tabernacle.

Solomon built the temple, and He was there.

In our epistle lesson, Paul is writing to those in Corinth, those called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord. In God’s house is where they are sanctified, where they are made holy in God's sight. It is there that they wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There we find our Psalm reflected. Paul is declaring why, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord.” Peace within Your walls; and prosperity within your palaces.

And how is this? There is where God sustains you? In a manner similar to the way He sustains you in your physical bodies. He feeds and nourishes you! Where your body fails to be fed and nourished, it slowly withers and dies. So also faith! Where faith fails to be fed and nourished, it too will wither and die.

So, we come where Christ is promised to be that He may sustain us in our journeys through the wilderness. As we are sojourners in this world He promises to feed nourish us. We know of that place we call our eternal home and Kingdom. Where is our home here, in this veil of tears! In our Father’s house.

As it appears our world spins out of control, whether our own personal world or just that the times seem more trying and difficult than they ever have been, we have a place we can go!

Our Father’s house is where Christ comes to us. This is God incarnate comes to us, who endured the same struggles we endure in this world. With fleshly eyes like ours, He knows the pains, trials, and tribulations, enduring them in our own flesh. He suffered for the things of God that He taught and spoke at the hands of those who should have been bowing down before him.

His life He gave unto death that He might feed and nourish us with eternal food, food that strengthens us in body and in soul to life everlasting. The food He gives us to eat is His flesh and He gives us to drink of His blood.

Each week I prepare a sermon, studying God's word and praying the Spirit’s guidance so I may speak to you. In part, some of my preparation is self-examination, what do ***I*** need to hear to strengthen me and my faith? Whom have I hurt by my words and deeds? How has the world assailed me? What trials and tribulations am I enduring?

I am also considering you – your lives and the things you are enduring? What does God desire to say to you? What will bring you peace, comfort, and strength?

It is not always something that seems obvious.

You all lived through something! We lived through it together. I do not know that the best decisions were made by our government, either in the state or our nation. I am not sure the same decisions would be repeated. I think much was done out of fear and panic. Yes, I am talking of the beginning of COVID.

Did we respond with the appropriate actions? Did we act out of fear? As a pastor, I questioned every decision I made – even when I had already prayed, asking how best to respond to what was going on, how best minister to God's people? It was treading a minefield. We had no textbook nor any class to prepare us for it at seminary.

Do you know where I found – and where I find – my peace and strength? In God's house, gathered at His table! I was glad when they said to me, let us go into the house of the Lord!

This is where I find the strength to carry on each day and week in the face of trying and difficult decisions. In God's house, gathered at His table! I was glad when they said to me let us go into the house of the Lord!

At that table, my heavenly Father cares for me. In His house He sends me His son, with forgiveness and peace! I was glad to me when they said let us go into the house of the Lord.

He gathers me together with my brothers and sisters in Christ. I can look around and see that I am not alone. There are others who carry on in their struggles only by the grace of God who strengthens them. We eat together! We raise one another up in our prayers! We gather together as one family! I was glad when they said to me let us go into the house of the Lord!

It's sad that some see our gathering in this place as if it is somehow our own work for God! It's sad that some forsake this gathering together, thinking that it is not something they need! It is sad that some think the gathering together as their keeping of the third commandment, and nothing more.

I was glad when they said to me let us go into the house of the Lord is indeed the fulfilling of the third commandment! But it is not done out of fear, or of obligation, or even of some sense of duty! It is done by those who hunger and thirst for forgiveness, righteousness, peace and comfort!

Oh, I am sure there are those who come out of a sense of duty or obligation, those who think it is their fulfillment of something before God. For those, I weep and pray, for they do not yet know the joy which says, “I was glad when they said to me let us go to the house of the Lord!”

You and I are gathered here together, in our Father's house, gathered in our Savior's name. Christ speaks words of forgiveness into our ears for those times our sinfulness compounded the tumult of our world. With His body pierced and His blood shed, He feeds us that we might be nourished, strengthened, and fed for life today and for eternity!

We are gathered together as the dearly beloved children of God, His spirit moving us into God's house. Yes, I am glad to be in the house of the Lord! Here in His house, there is peace within His walls.

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge—as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. So that on the last day, you will be glad to enter the House of the Lord.

In the name of Jesus. Amen!