



CrossRoads Notes:

Title: Reasons We Congregate

Theme: Reasons for Congregational Worship Services

Series: Girding up the Local Church

Introduction: Our key text today is written by King David (The Treasury of David; The Pulpit Commentary; Matthew Henry Commentary) and is part of a song that was to be sung as the people of God were going to Jerusalem to enjoy the holy feast. David is reflecting on the many times that he had heard the call to go to the house of the Lord. The language we are about to read expresses the happiness that is found in the heart of the child of God who loves the Lord. This child of God loves to be with other Christians for the purpose of publicly worshiping God in Christ's name under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Listen as I read Psalm 122:1, "I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD.'" We are told that this verse can be translated as, "I rejoice whenever they say to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'" (The Expositors Bible Commentary)

David expresses joy that is in the heart of the child of God who is offered a personal invitation to go to the house of public worship. This announcement meets the desire of the heart that is in the child of God who is in love with Christ and the invitation is to be responded to cheerfully and joyfully.

Propositions: *I would propose to you that even though Christians are the temple of God in this dispensation, they are still to congregate in public worship for the purpose of enjoying fellowship in the Holy Spirit.*

Corporate worship takes many forms such as congregational services, Bible studies, fellowship dinners, group preparation for ministry, and prayer meetings. The Holy Spirit moved the writer of Hebrews 10:25 to write, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing," because when one or more Christians choose to do their own thing and not fulfill their part of corporate worship the Body of Christ becomes anemic in the ability to publicly proclaim all the works of Christ on this earth. (1 Corinthians 12:12-31)

Christians must offer some Biblical explanation for what can be enjoyed in public worship services, whether it being a Sunday morning worship service, Bible study, fellowship meeting or in prayer ministry.

Interrogative Sentence: *Just what can Christians enjoy as they sacrifice time and energy to offer heartfelt praise to God and Christ in corporate worship services?*

Transitional Sentence: *The first step to enjoying public worship services is to understand that Christians are not their own. They were purchased at the highest price that could be paid. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price.”*

Servant” (doulos) means “a bond-servant” or “slave,” one who is in a permanent relation of servitude to the one who paid the highest price possible to set someone free. The practical application is the person who accepts the purchase price paid for him sets his will to the will of Jesus Christ. Jesus teaches that a faithful servant does the master’s will. (Matthew 24:45-46) Jesus is God in the flesh and He sets the example by making ‘...Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant...’ (Philippians 2:7)

In what condition does the Holy Spirit find your spiritual heart? Is yours the attitude of bond-servant or that of coming to the worship service with the attitude that the Lord is a bell-boy? Jesus says, “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other...” (Matthew 6:24)

Transitional Sentence: *Bond-servants get the most out of congregational meeting because they have chosen to live a life surrendered to the will of Christ. Christians who get the most out of congregational worship have learned the joy of greeting their brothers and sisters in Christ. At least four times in the New Testament Christians are told to “Greet one another.” (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14)*

Corporate worship opens the door of opportunity for Christians to find true satisfaction, joy, and fellowship walking in step with the Holy Spirit as they make time to “Greet One Another.”

The Apostle Paul proclaims a powerful truth about his work with the Lord that the Body of Christ should take note of. In 2 Corinthians 5:20 he says, “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf...”

All Christians are “Commissioned” to the work of the gospel of Christ in some way. They are to make disciples by “teaching [others] to obey everything [the Lord has] commanded [them to do]. William Barclay writes, “Here is the Christian’s proud privilege and almost terrifying responsibility. The honor of Christ and His church are in the hands of Christians. By their every word and action they make mankind think more or less of the Body of Christ and of Jesus.” Congregational worship is a wonderful opportunity to greet each other on behalf of Christ, thus letting Jesus live through us as people congregate for whatever reason in the Lord’s name.

Considering the truth of being Christ’s ambassador, Christians say “I rejoice in the opportunity to fulfill God’s Word in regard to greeting one another.” Every church that walks in obedience to the Written Word makes time for greeting one another and Christian fellowship.

Transitional Sentence: *Congregational worship opens a door of opportunity for Christians to greet one another and corporate worship offers Christians the opportunity to publicly sing the praises of God.* Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." (Colossians 3:16) Ephesians 5:19 says, "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,.." (Ephesians 5:19) Barnes Notes tells us Ephesians 5:19 is a passage of Scripture that has the force of a command. It is a matter of obligation on Christians to have corporate singing. Jesus sets the example and the importance in singing at the Lord's supper. (Matthew 26:30)

Steve Camp, in his written reformation to the contemporary Christian music industry wrote; "Music is a powerful tool from the Lord Jesus to His church intended for worship, praise, encouragement, edification, evangelism, teaching, admonishing and exhorting God's people to holiness. Its chief aim is always to glorify God and worship Him."

The Word of God tells us some powerful truths concerning Christian music. (1 Samuel 16:23) (2 Chronicles 5:13-14) (2 Chronicles 20:21-22) (Psalm 40:3) (2 Kings 3:15)

Corporate worship also allows us to enjoy those who have the gift of music for the house of the Lord. In 1 Chronicles 25 we read that there are blessed children of God who are "trained and skilled in music for the Lord." (1 Chronicles 25:6-7) Verse one says that it is the ministry of "prophesying." "Prophesying" (*naba*) here is to sing songs as led by the Spirit of God. This singing uses the voice of the child of God's in a sacred service unto the Lord under Divine impulse. The Bible Knowledge Commentary says, "It is called a ministry of prophesy which no doubt means a sort of musical proclamation of divine revelation and expressions of hymnic praise and worship."

Where does the Holy Spirit find your heart in regard to the song service? Corporate song services present to everyone the opportunity to participate in singing praise to God and about the Lord through songs He has chosen.

Transitional Sentence: *Those illuminated by the Holy Spirit want to enjoy as much of the corporate song service as possible. Congregational services open the door to our enjoyment of the Holy Spirit gift for proclaiming God's Word.* Jesus said, "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)

Romans 12:6 says, "We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith." The exercising of the gift of prophesying" (*propheteia*) is "...not primarily prediction but the communication of revealed truth that will both convict and build up the hearers." Fitzmyer defines "prophecy" as "Inspired Christian preaching" and he says that "It denotes not one who predicts the future, but one who speaks in God's name and probes the secrets of the heart."

Regardless of what the world's view is on the local preacher, God's spokesman must make it priority one to be in the Word of God. Robert Wilson writes, "Many of the great preachers of the past had the practice of spending extended time in preparation. Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, for example, closeted himself with the Bible and his study aids all morning long. He did not permit anything to interfere unless it was a genuine emergency. And when this well known British preacher arose to preach he had something valuable to say to his listeners." The Apostle Paul has this exhortation for those who truly want to be workman approved by God, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15) James Braga wrote, "But the man who is to preach the message of the Book must also be a man of the Book. He must study the Scriptures not to just get a message for his congregation. He must live in the Book. The Word of God must become his meat and drink. This is only accomplished as the preacher spends much time in secret with Jesus, holding daily, uninterrupted, unhurried communion with the Lord and His Word."

Congregational worship opens the door for the children of God to enjoy the gift of "prophesying" because the one possessing the gift has stood his watch in prayerful study of the Word of God as well as in intercession for the people to whom he is to proclaim God's message. He gets revelation (*hazon*) meaning the collection of messages and he writes them down. The Lord was telling His prophet Habakkuk just as he tells those who possess the gift of prophesying today, "Write My message down that it may hang in public display so others may read and spread the message on."

One of my favorite commentaries is the Matthew Henry Commentary. Matthew was in his study at 4:00 a.m. and remained until 8:00 a.m. After breakfast and family prayer, he would return to his place of prayer and study until 12:00 noon. After dinner he resumed to his books and pen until 4:00 p.m. Most days Matthew spent ten and half to eleven hours per day diligently writing down the message the Lord had for him, thus, leaving us with one of our greatest Bible Commentaries.

Where does the Holy Spirit find your heart regarding the spoken message or the teaching of God's Word? Is there joyful expectation to get to that place where the Word of God will be proclaimed? Where is your heart in making sure the messenger has time to spend uninterrupted time with the Lord?

In Closing: *Corporate worship is enjoyed by those who say in their hearts, "I rejoice whenever they say, 'Let us go to that place of public worship.'" It all begins with a surrendered heart to God's will. It is enjoyed when the Body of Christ is faithful to greet one another, sing the praises of God and hunger for the Word of the Lord to be proclaimed. The Body of Christ needs every Holy Spirit gifted child of God in corporate worship fulfilling their place so the Body of Christ can enjoy all the benefits ordained by the Lord. Christians are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit of Christ who is the light of the world. (John 8:12) Let your epistle say, "I rejoice with those who say, 'Let us go unto the house of the Lord.'"*