

ADVENT
"GOD'S PROMISE TO BE WITH US"
PSALM 132

Personal Introduction

Hi everyone. If you don't know me, I'm Jeff - one of the pastors at HMCC of Jakarta. And I have the privilege of preaching God's Word for us today.

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Sermon Series Introduction

If we look at the date, it says Dec 1. Which means that it's almost Christmas.

So to prepare our hearts for Christmas... For this Sunday and for the next 3 Sundays, we'll be having an Advent sermon series.

- We'll be looking at a few Psalms to learn how it anticipates Jesus' coming and how Jesus fulfills the Psalms to their fullest meaning.
- For today, we'll be taking a look at Psalm 132.

Before we get started, let me pray for us...

<prayer>

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Introduction

Christmas is just a magical time of the year. Everyone seems to be in a better mood and smiling more, people's mindset is more on giving, people are taking vacation days and spending more time with family and friends. And if you go to the malls and cafes, there's Christmas lights and Christmas decorations, and Christmas music playing in the background.

People would say that it's a "jolly time of the year."

This may be true for some of us here. But perhaps for others, that's not the reality - it's not really a jolly time. Maybe there's something that's on our minds that's making us feel a bit restless (making us feel uneasy) as we head into this Christmas season.

We may be going through hardship, or going through heartbreak, or may be feeling tired, and asking God... "God, are you really with us right now?"

"Is your presence really with us? Are you really with me? Because if so, then why does my relationship with you feel dry, empty, or distant?"

Brothers and sisters, if that's you (and your relationship with God feels stagnant at this time), then this Psalm is for you.

And even if your relationship with God is not feeling dry right now, but feels deep and rich. Then praise the Lord! I hope this Psalm would enrich your relationship with God all-the-more.

And even if you're still exploring Christianity, and don't have a relationship with God yet, then this is also for you.

This is for all of us...

Scripture Intro

If you have your Bibles with you, please turn to Psalm 132.

The book of Psalms is a unique book in the Bible because it's a collection of Jewish songs of worship.

- The word "psalm" means "song."
- So this is song #132 in the Book of Psalms.

The author of Psalm 132 is unknown. But more important than the author is actually who this psalm would be sung by...

Because this is a special Psalm. If you look at the top of the Psalm, you'll see that it's labeled as "A Song of Ascents."

The Songs of Ascents is a special group of 15 psalms (consisting of Psalm 120-134) [Psalm 132 is one of the later ones]. And these songs are special because they'd be sung by the Jews during special occasions.

When it's time for one of the annual Jewish festivals (like Passover), Jews from various regions would make their pilgrimage to the city of Jerusalem because that's where the Temple is. And because the city of Jerusalem is on a hill, these pilgrims - as they make their way to the city... would be going uphill (or ascending up) to the Temple. That's why it's called Songs of Ascents. Because they'd be sung by the pilgrims as they're literally ascending up to the Temple in Jerusalem.

This is kinda like how Christians around the world would make extra efforts to go to church for Christmas. And how there are specific songs that are especially sung during the Christmas season.

So Psalm 132 is one of those special songs sung by the Jews during one of these special holidays/festivals.

So imagine the Jewish pilgrims singing this song as they make their way up to the Temple...
And they're longing to worship God in His presence...

Psalm 132 (ESV)

Remember, O Lord, in David's favor,
all the hardships he endured,
2 how he swore to the Lord
and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob,
3 "I will not enter my house
or get into my bed,
4 I will not give sleep to my eyes
or slumber to my eyelids,
5 until I find a place for the Lord,
a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."

6 Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah;
we found it in the fields of Jaar.
7 "Let us go to his dwelling place;
let us worship at his footstool!"

8 Arise, O Lord, and go to your resting place,
you and the ark of your might.
9 Let your priests be clothed with righteousness,
and let your saints shout for joy.
10 For the sake of your servant David,
do not turn away the face of your anointed one.

11 The Lord swore to David a sure oath
from which he will not turn back:
"One of the sons of your body
I will set on your throne.
12 If your sons keep my covenant
and my testimonies that I shall teach them,
their sons also forever
shall sit on your throne."

13 For the Lord has chosen Zion;
he has desired it for his dwelling place:
14 "This is my resting place forever;
here I will dwell, for I have desired it.
15 I will abundantly bless her provisions;

I will satisfy her poor with bread.
16 Her priests I will clothe with salvation,
and her saints will shout for joy.
17 There I will make a horn to sprout for David;
I have prepared a lamp for my anointed.
18 His enemies I will clothe with shame,
but on him his crown will shine.”

This is God's Word.

The One Thing

We can worship God in His presence
because God's promise to be with us
is fulfilled in the promised King, Jesus.

Overview

The structure of the Psalm is very interesting with the 2nd half mirroring the 1st half.

1st half

- I. David's promise to build God's house (vv. 1-5)
- II. The people's desire for God to dwell with them (vv. 6-10)

2nd half

- III. God's promise to build David's house (vv. 11-12)
 - IV. God's desire to dwell with His people (vv. 13-18)
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I. David's promise to build God's house (vv. 1-5)

Imagine the setting:

- It's that special time of the year... one of the Jewish festivals is coming up (everyone is in a better mood), and it's a time of celebration for the Jewish people.
- So Pilgrims from various regions are making their way up to Jerusalem to celebrate together...

And as the pilgrims are ascending to the temple, they're singing to God this Song of Ascents about one of their past kings... David.

- And they sing... (and they're also using the words of this song as a prayer)... They're singing and praying... Lord, remember David and what he's gone through...

They're asking God to remember their king because blessings to the king would pour out unto the people. So to ask God to remember their king is to ask God to remember His people.

And they're asking God to remember one specific promise... Lord, remember how David promised and desired to build you a house / a temple. A dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.

- So as the people are heading to the temple, they're singing to God about the history of this temple and how it was David who wanted to build it for God...

But hold on... David wanted to build a physical house for God? For us, that sounds a bit strange... because God is Spirit.

And David himself knows that God doesn't need a physical house... In one of his psalms that he wrote, David says - if I ascend to Heaven, you're there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you're there! What he basically means is: God, your presence is everywhere! There's nowhere I can go to escape your presence!

So David knows that God is all-present; that He's everywhere all at once. And He transcends both time and space.

So it's not as if God needs a physical house. David knew that. But what's important to David and what's important for the people here is not the physical temple itself, but for the presence of God to be with them... living and dwelling among them...

That's what's important here. Not merely the physical house for the Lord, but for God to be with His people...

<pause>

Let's go back in time... to when God freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt... Moses asked God...

Exodus 33:16 (ESV)

"For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?"

Moses was asking, God... how can we know... and how can other people know that we specifically are your chosen people? Is it not if your presence goes with us?

- This is how important it was for the Israelites that God's presence is with them.. It assures them that they're truly God's people who are distinct from other people on Earth.

And so even though God transcends both time and space, God made it possible for Him to dwell and live with His people through the "Ark of the Covenant" (which showcases God's

presence on Earth). And the Ark would then be housed in “the Tabernacle” (Which was like a tent that could be taken down and set up again as the Israelites make their way to the Promised Land, so that God’s presence would always be with them).

Just think about that for a second... there’s just something very special and very intimate about God living together with His people... in one specific location... And in one specific instance of time...

- Because unlike God, we’re limited...
- But in that moment, the unlimited God was living with His people, who are mere humans. That’s quite amazing!

<pause>

Now, fast forward hundreds of years later... Generations after Moses... And we learned last week that Ruth and Boaz gave birth to Obed, Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David - who’d become king of the Israelites.

Then one day, King David had a realization... wait a second... where’s... the Ark of the Covenant?

- [Have you had one of those moments when you just remember that you might’ve misplaced something very important to you?]
- David remembered the sacred and holy Ark that showcases God’s presence with His people on Earth... where is it?!

The Ark had been lost (sounds crazy, but this is true. You can read about it in 1 Samuel 4). It was lost in battle to the Philistines, then recovered and kept by the citizens of a small town called Kiriath-Jearim in a region in Israel called Ephrathah... (basically in the middle of nowhere). And then over time, the Ark was forgotten...

It wasn’t till 20 years later, that David and his men recovered the Ark, and finally brought it back to the city of Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6).

<pause>

Now fast forward again to a time when Israel finally had peace under David and there were no more battles (at least for this time) (2 Sam. 7) - David had another realization - Wait a second... I’m living here in my palace, but the Ark of the Covenant is in a tent outside? That’s not right...

- David then felt a burden - a strong desire - to build God a house (not because he thinks God needs a physical house), but to honor and revere the presence of God.

Look at David’s promise in verses 3-5, “I will not enter my house or get into my bed, I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place *for the Lord*, a dwelling place *for the Mighty One of Jacob*.”

Imagine the feeling and the conviction that David is having as he's saying this. He's so committed to this, and treating this so seriously..

This was not a mere project or a mere task for him! Because what's important to him is God's presence, and he's doing this FOR THE LORD! This was a matter of worship!

2 Sam. 6 - So even though the Lord would tell David that it won't be him building the Temple (because his hands have shed much blood), but it'll be his son, Solomon. Even then... he was still committed to this - And he continued to make preparations for his son to build the Temple...

- David wrote down the blueprint that God gave him.
- He gathered materials for the building (gold, silver, bronze, iron and cloths).

And he even gave precious metals from his own treasury... What does that show about what David actually treasures and worships? He treasures and worships God.

To be clear, the takeaway here is not "be like David" because David was not a perfect man (he's shed blood, he's committed adultery, he planned murder), but what's admirable about David is that he was a man after God's own heart...

- Amidst the ups and downs of his life, he had a strong desire for God's presence to be with him.

This is what David is losing sleep over. His mind is fixated on the significance and importance of God's presence in his life.

- This is something that we tend to forget about.
- We may laugh at the Israelites... How can you forget about the Ark - the very presence of God? But how often do we go about our lives not thinking about God's presence?

We tend to forget... And as the pilgrims are singing this song, as they're headed to the now-completed temple, they're reminded of how special God's presence is...

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II. The people's desire for God to dwell with them (vv. 6-10)

Look at verses 6-8 - As the Pilgrims are singing, they're reminded of that awesome day when the Israelites found the Ark of the Covenant in the region of Ephrathah... in the middle of nowhere in the fields of Jaar in Kiriath-Jearim...

They sing and pray... "Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool! Arise, O Lord, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might."

They want to celebrate this special time of the year worshipping before God's very presence!

And they continue to sing and pray...

- God, may you dwell with us...
- And God, may your priests be covered with righteousness (may these temple priests serve you in righteousness & godliness)!
- May they lead your saints (your holy people) to shout and worship you with joy!
- May you not turn away from, but show favor to your anointed one (referring to the king).

What's being described here and what the people are singing about - and praying for - is a beautiful picture of the intimate relationship between God and His people.

- Where God is truly dwelling and present with His people, and His people are truly present with Him - where the king is blessed and thus... blessings would also pour out unto the people and the people may have joy and they're worshiping God before his presence... with the priests leading worship with righteousness and godliness!
- This is definitely something worth singing about and praying for!

This is their desire, and - as God's people - this should also be our desire...

<pause>

But sadly, the reality is not like this...

Around the time of Jesus... when the pilgrims were making their way to the temple in Jerusalem... This was not the reality that was awaiting them...

- The priests were not clothed with righteousness, but instead the priests and the religious leaders were clothed with unrighteousness, selfishness, hypocrisy, pride, and legalism.
 - They no longer worshiped God, but worshiped themselves - they cared about their own power, status, and influence.
- They didn't lead the Jewish people to worship God. Instead, they misled the people, and took advantage of them...
 - You see... The pilgrims traveling from afar couldn't bring their own animals to give to God as offering. That'd be such a hassle to bring animals throughout the journey...
 - So what did the religious leaders do? The temple started selling animals that were pre-approved for sacrifice (that were deemed to be spotless and clean and worthy of sacrifice to God). Not to help the people, but to make money from them.
 - Then, guess what? You can't buy the animals using your local currency, you need to exchange it for the only currency that's acceptable at the temple. And you can bet that there's also a fee for that.
 - The temple has become a marketplace of sellers and money changers (And this is why Jesus would later on drive out the sellers and money changers from the temple. They've turned God's temple to a marketplace)...

- The temple was not a place where God's presence was revered and worshiped, but it was becoming more of a place where man was worshipped - where it was more about worshipping self & where you can gain recognition, status, and power.

This was not the picture that the people were singing about... The priests were not clothed in righteousness, but in self-centeredness.

And we should be careful about this... Because it's not only the religious leaders of that time that's guilty of this, but we also have this sinful tendency...

- Our natural tendency is to forget about God's presence just like how the Israelites forgot about the Ark.
- Our natural tendency is to forget about God... making things focused and centered on us instead of on God.

We need to be mindful of this because even in our worship, we can have the tendency to make it about ourselves:

- Making it about our performance and our reputation and our good works.
- Worshiping ourselves... disguised as worshiping God.

Let's be mindful that this can happen to the best of us if we lose sight of God's presence in our worship.

<pause>

For the pilgrims heading to the temple, sadly there's more disappointment. They sang for the people to shout for joy...

- But during that time, the people were not shouting for joy, but they were groaning in pain because there were no blessings poured out to them from the king... because there was no king. Jerusalem was ruled by Herod - a governor appointed by the Roman Empire.
- Israel has been taken over by Rome around the time of Jesus...

This is the backdrop of what's happening around the time of Jesus... when the Pilgrims were singing this song, it's not as if everyone were all jolly.

- I imagine that some were tired of their lives; tired of being ruled by the Romans and getting taxed.

And they're longing for God to be with them during this time... "Arise, O Lord, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might" - They're saying, "God, please be with us..."

<pause>

Friends, as we head into this Christmas season, some of us may also have gone through a lot this past year - You may be tired of the relationships and friendships that are difficult at this time.

Or you may be tired of looking for a job, tired of your financial situation. Tired of going to church. Tired of serving. Tired of trying... Tired of life...

- And maybe it makes you question, "Is God actually with me? Because I kinda feel alone right now..."

Or maybe even if He's with us, He feels distant and far away. And so maybe your relationship with God may feel dry or stagnant at this time...

- And so it becomes difficult to worship God.
- I know that can be frustrating and discouraging.

And this is when we may stop spending time with God in Word and in prayer. And this is when reading the Bible and praying and going to church become something that we HAVE to do instead of something we WANT to do.

- And this is when worship may feel more like a task.

Because when God is distant... And when we lose sight of God's presence in our lives... We get tired and feel dry and empty...

- That's when worship becomes... not worship...
- That's when going to church becomes a task.
- When reading God's Word becomes reading a book.
- When prayer becomes an empty chant or like talking to yourself or a wall.
- When singing songs (to God) becomes like a sing-along and feels meaningless.

And I'll be the first to admit that my relationship with the Lord and His church is not always rich, and it goes up and down...

- Sometimes, what I do can also feel more like dry task management instead of worship...
- So we're all on the same boat..

But you know what? I don't think we'd be the first Christians (or the last) to feel this way. I can't imagine all 100% of the pilgrims making their way to the temple to worship God to feel 100% jolly.

- As they're singing this song, I imagine that some feel dry (just like us)...
- And maybe that's why they're lifting up a prayer to God...
 - Praying, "Lord, may your presence be with us! Help us to worship you! Help us to shout for joy! Help us to make this about worship! ... Because some of us are feeling tired and dry and we almost want to give up..."

Well, as the pilgrims pray for a rich relationship with God, it's at this time that the Psalm takes a turn, Praise the Lord that there's a second half to this Psalm... Notice how the Psalm now transitions to God's perspective...

III. God's promise to build David's house (vv. 11-12)

God hears His people's songs and prayers (even those that are sung and prayed in tiredness and fatigue). And He now responds to His people's pleas...

And He'll respond to both David and the people (Again, notice how this second half is going to mirror the first half). So first, God responds to David's desire... and then He'll respond to His people's desire...

So in response to David - David is basically telling God, "God, I want to build you a house!" God basically responds with, "No, David. I'm going to build you a house - I'll establish your dynasty."

And the Lord swore to David a sure oath from which He will not turn back: "One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne."

- This refers to God's promise to David (from 2 Samuel 7:16) - "And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever."

This promise is unconditional - this will happen (it's a sure oath that God will not turn back on).

- There will be a King from the line of David who will reign forever.

This is then followed by a conditional promise - "If your sons keep my covenant and my testimonies that I shall teach them, [then] their sons also forever shall sit on your throne."

- But what we now know is that the sons of David will not keep their covenant with God.
 - Many kings after David ended up turning away from God and worshipping idols, which led the people to turn away from God to worship other gods.
 - And David's sons ended up not sitting on the throne at all times - the kingdom of Judah was exiled to Babylon, and then some time after they returned from exile, they'd be ruled by the Romans.

So for the pilgrims singing this song, this Psalm leaves them longing: "Will God keep His promise to David?" "Will the promised king truly come?" "Because things aren't looking good right now..."

It leaves them longing, but it also leaves them with hope...

As the pilgrims are singing this, what they're holding on to is hope (Hope that God will fulfill His promise, and that the promised King - will come!). And this is what's leading them to keep going and singing... even though they may be tired... It's the hope that God would indeed fulfill His promises to His people.

And it's the same hope that we have amidst our struggles - We may have hope because God hears our songs and our prayers (even those that are sung and prayed in tiredness and fatigue).

- When we sing and when we pray, our words are not floating away into emptiness, but they're received and heard by God.
- If there's no God or if God doesn't hear us, then we'd be right to feel hopeless, but because God hears us, then this completely changes everything...

IV. God's desire to dwell with His people (vv. 13-18)

Look at verse 13 - God responds to His people. Now, notice the language used in verses 13-18: I will... I will... I will... (Do you see that repeated throughout?)

- There's a language of certainty that's repeated here for emphasis... And it shows that what God promises to His people will indeed be kept and will come to pass...
- So it seems like the Pilgrims' hope (and our hope) would not be in vain...

And notice that what God will do... It mirrors exactly what the people sang and prayed for: the people sang and prayed for four things: (1) For God to dwell with them, (2) for the priests' righteousness, (3) for the saints' joy, and (4) for the king (the anointed one)'s favor.

And now, God responds to each of those four things...

First, regarding God dwelling with them, God responds and says...

- The Lord has chosen Zion [AKA Jerusalem]; He has desired it for his dwelling place: "This is my resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it.
 - This will happen! God will dwell with His people!
 - Not because He HAS to but because He WANTS to!
 - This is not like a mere task for God. God loves us and WANTS to be with us.
 - Like a father who longs to be with his children... This is something that God desires in His heart...

Second, regarding the priests' righteousness, God says...

- I will clothe [them] with salvation.
 - This will happen...

Third, regarding the saints' joy, God says....

- [They] will shout for joy.
 - This will happen...

And fourth, regarding the king (the anointed one), God says...

- I will make a horn to sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed. His enemies I will clothe with shame, but on him his crown will shine."
 - A horn symbolizes strength and power; It refers to the Anointed One who's going to come from the line of David.

- And a lamp symbolizes God's favor. He will not turn away from His Anointed One.
- These things will happen...
 - The promised King from the line of David will come...

And these are God's promises to His people...

And this is what the pilgrims are looking forward to! Even though some may be fatigued and burnt out, they're singing about God's promises and keeping that in the forefront of their minds. And it gives them hope!

<pause>

Church, this Christmas, we're reminded that the pilgrims who sang these songs (the saints who've come before us) - They may no longer be with us today, but we know that they did not sing and pray and hope in vain... because God promised them that He will send a promised King.

And on this side of Redemptive History, we know with absolute certainty that God has fulfilled His promise to them (and to all His people) because He has indeed sent His promised King from Heaven to Earth...

This is what we're celebrating this upcoming Christmas day...

<pause>

One night... a group of shepherds were watching over their flock... For them, it was like any other night...

Then suddenly, there's a bright light in front of them!

Luke 2:9-11 (ESV)

"And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you *good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*"

- Christ - which means "the Anointed One" (And in Hebrew: Messiah)... the promised King from the line of David.

Jesus Christ is the promised King who was born in the line of David.

- God's promise to David is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.
- And on Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the promised King.

And Jesus not only fulfilled God's promise to David, but Jesus also fulfilled God's promise to His people - That He would dwell with them...

Matthew 1:23 (ESV)

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, *God with us*).

Jesus Christ is not only the promised King, but he is Immanuel - God with us.

Jesus is fully God and fully man. And Jesus - God the Son - dwelled and lived with His people; He is God in the flesh... Truly dwelling and living with His people...

- He ate with them.
- He drank with them.
- He taught them.
- He befriended them.

- And... he died for them...

Friends, the question that we haven't asked is this: God promised to dwell with His people. But God is holy and His people are not (we've all sinned and fall short of the glory of God). So how can we - who are unholy - be in the presence of God (who is holy).

The answer is Jesus -The unlimited, holy God... made it possible for His limited, sinful people to dwell with Him... through Jesus Christ, our Lord AND Savior...

This is why Jesus is also called our Savior. Because he saved us from the punishment of sin, which is eternity in Hell (Maybe we don't like to talk about Hell during Christmas - but that's what made Jesus' birth amazing). Because on that day - our Savior was born. And Jesus died so that the sins of his people may be forgiven, so that those who believe in him will not go to Hell, but go to Heaven!

This is the Good News of joy for all people! Because of Jesus, Psalm 132 is fulfilled...

- For those who believe in Jesus... Jesus' righteousness will cover them, and they will be saved... clothed with salvation (just as God promised).
- And there will come a time, when God's people will be with God in Heaven... where we will dwell with God forever... And forever, we will shout for joy (just as God promised).

This is what Apostle John prophesied...

Revelation 21:1-4 (ESV)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, *new Jerusalem* [AKA Zion], coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell

with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

Friends, this is the Good News of Jesus. This is why Christians celebrate Christmas. So if you have not yet responded to God's invitation to dwell with Him, I invite you to know Jesus, the promised King who died to save His people...

<pause>

Brothers and sisters, for those of us who've already placed our faith in Christ, we know that Jesus did not remain dead. In 3 days, he resurrected, defeating sin and death. And then he ascended to Heaven!

Which begs the question, if Jesus is currently in Heaven, then is God's presence no longer with us on Earth?

Well, before Jesus ascended to Heaven, this is what he told his disciples...

John 16:7 (ESV)

"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper [the Holy Spirit] will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you."

And let's consider what Apostle Paul wrote:

1 Cor. 3:16 (ESV)

"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit *dwells* in you?"

Church, God's presence continues to dwell with us today... Because His Spirit now dwells IN us... Making His home in the hearts of those who've received Jesus as Lord and Savior.

So going back to the questions: will God keep His promise with His people? Will God be with us?

- I hope we can see from Scripture that because of Jesus... the answer is a clear and definitive, "YES!"
- God is with us now, and tomorrow, and forever.

<pause>

And if God is truly present with us... and IN us... Then no matter what we're currently going through - even amidst hardships and a season of spiritual dryness - then we know that everything will be ok.

If God is not present with us, then I think it would be appropriate for us to be fearful and anxious as we live our lives. Because we don't know and can't know for sure if everything will be ok or not... But that's not the case.

The truth is that He is with you even now...

- Imagine God the father is watching over you.
- Imagine Jesus, God the Son, is in Heaven, praying for you.
- Imagine God the Spirit is in you - working in your hearts, giving you peace and hope...

For those who believe, we don't have to imagine this, we know from God's Word that this is reality (even during those times when we feel like God's presence is distant and far away... The reality is that He is near, and is always with us and in us).

<pause>

And church, I hope that this truth would lead us to worship...

Because if God truly keeps His promise with His people, and He is truly present with us... and sees us and hears us... then this means that worship matters...

When we personally worship God in our homes, that matters! When we gather together as a church and worship Him, that matters!

- This means that **Reading the Bible** is not just you reading a book, but it's you reading God's Word... It's God speaking with you... through His written Word (which is as good as His spoken Word).
 - So I encourage you to spend time reading God's Word (As you do, be mindful that you're reading the words of the God of the universe).
- And this means that **Praying** is not just you talking to yourself against a wall. But you are speaking to the God who is with you and who keeps His promises.
 - If we hold on to that truth, how would that transform our prayer life? And how would that transform how we worship...
 - I encourage you to pray through Psalm 132 this upcoming week. May it help you to fixate your eyes on God's presence.
- And this means that **Singing worship songs** is not just singing along like you're in a concert, but you're singing to God (And God hears your praises and laments, just as he heard the pilgrims who sang the Songs of Ascents).
 - And this means that congregational singing is not about being entertained by the church band and merely enjoying music, but it's about lifting up songs to God in one voice as His people, and what we're enjoying is His presence!

- I encourage you to incorporate songs even in your personal worship - sing to God and know that He hears you (don't focus on your vocal performance but focus on the God who you're singing to).
- And finally, this means that **Going to church** is more than just a task, but you're going to worship the Lord.
 - How would that change how you view church if you see it not as "I'm going to church," but... "I'm going to worship the Lord"?
 - I encourage you to be prayerful in your preparation for SC next Sunday.
 - Be prayerful even as you're "ascending" up to L2 of Heartline Center // L5 of Lotte.

As you worship the Lord this upcoming week and beyond, I pray that your personal relationship with God would not be dry but grow richer and deeper. And I hope that our corporate relationship with God as a church would also deepen...

The One Thing

We can worship God in His presence
because God's promise to be with us
is fulfilled in the promised King, Jesus.
