

Introduction

- Read vs.1-3
 - that is **exactly** what most people expect to hear from the Bible
 - its just a fancy religious way of describing who can come to church, who may be a Christian, who may be saved...
 - who can? Anyone who is a self-righteous, prudish, goody-goody!!
 - so people quite naturally think, "No thank you!"
 - there are quite enough things out there telling me to be good as it is - be good, cut fat intake (more immediate results!); be good, don't dress in **that!** be good, get more exercise...
 - in fact, Christian or not, there seems to be something about being human that means that this is the kind of view we default to - we imagine that Christianity is all about being good, being moral
 - indeed, quite often those of us who are Christians buy into that myth - and we go all out to be respectable, even if deep down all we feel is guilt, because we know we are not as good as we make out
- But, if we look at Psalm 15 closely now, we'll see it doesn't encourage us in that direction **at all!**
 - rather than piling on the guilt, Psalm 15 removes it
 - open up Psalm 15 and we swap guilt for the sweet smell of very good news

Exposition

- Psalm is all about answering those questions in v.1:
 - *Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill?*
 - to make sense of the rest, we'd better be clear about what those questions are actually about!
 - what is this sanctuary? what is this holy hill? And why do we care anyway!?

Holy Hill

- First mentioned in Genesis 2:10
 - water flowed from Eden, implies on a hill!
 - there man was in paradise, then he sinned, then he was banished from the holy hill - guarded by cherubim and a flaming sword (celestial bouncers!) - so because of his sin, man was barred from being with God on his holy hill
- By the time David writes, all that is not forgotten
 - now the holy hill is the mountain of Zion, in Jerusalem; on the mountain top cherubim still guard the holy presence of God from which man is excluded - on the top of the ark of the covenant, in the tabernacle, and woven into the massive veil or curtain that stopped you seeing into the **sanctuary** were cherubim
 - the sanctuary **served** as a copy, a visual picture, of the reality in heaven
- So in Psalm 15 the **holy hill, the sanctuary**, is the place where God lives, its paradise!
 - and the question being asked is who can be guaranteed a place in paradise, an eternal home with God
 - not just a couple of weeks on a Caribbean cruise!
 - but forever!
- There is no more important question to ask!
 - Adam fell out of paradise - who may go back up the hill?

Blameless?

- Run through the questions of the Psalm:
 - can we answer **any** of them positively?
 - not fudging!
 - the more the Psalm goes on the more we know we are not like this!
- Some think its easy - heaven is for everyone - that's the seductive lie - but look at the qualifications listed here!
 - *cf Psalm 14:2-3*
 - **all** have turned aside... there is **no-one** who does good, **not even one**

- However good we may sometimes feel ourselves to be, we're not good enough!
 - *Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? (v.1)*
 - not me!
- We can't do it - we need a holy one to rescue us!

The High Priest can go up

- Look forward to bits of Psalm 16, v.8ff
 - this holy one so good, pleasing to God, that God won't let his body decay, will restore to him life, v.10
 - who is he?
 - ask any Israelite who it was, they'd tell you straight away! After all, he had it written on his forehead - kinda hard to miss!
 - he was the High Priest!
 - on gold plate on front of his turban "holy to the Lord"
 - only High Priest, covered by the blood of sacrifice, who was entitled to enter the Lord's presence.
 - no other Israelite was ever arrogant enough to think **they** could enter the sanctuary!
 - answering our original question, *who may dwell in your sanctuary?* the answer is only the high priest
- Still not full answer:
 - historical high priests only ever went into the earthly sanctuary, the mini-model, the copy
 - likewise, those high priests were just models, copies, of the true high priest, Jesus Christ himself, who with the blood of his definitive sacrifice entered the heavenly sanctuary, went up the holy holy, entered paradise, and there he sat down at the right hand of God
 - so, *who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill?* **only, only the great and true high priest, Jesus**
- What we could never do on our own, live the holy life that would qualify us for paradise, Jesus has done for us
 - its good to have friends in high places!
 - we have a best friend in the highest place!
 - that's where these Psalms take us (14, 15, 16 together)
 - where we are corrupt and unholy, there is one who has been holy for us, who has won for us entry into paradise!
- Trusting in him we may enjoy all he has!
 - replace all our dependence on ourselves with dependence on him
 - replace guilt, self-obsession, all striving to win God's favour with rejoicing and trust in a paradise already won for us
- Any hope for heaven based on dreams of our own holiness or decency are just that - **mere dreams**
 - replace that false, arrogant hope with trust in the great high priest, Jesus himself!
 - our acceptance in heaven is not based on how we feel - we may, this morning, not feel close to God at all! - but the guilt within us should not drive us to despair, but should drive us to Jesus and to rejoicing that his perfect love covers all our sin
 - our feelings do not tell us reality - the reality is that Christ sits on the throne in heaven, and rescues us from all evil
 - and then, we'll begin to do the things mentioned in vs.2-5, because **already** we may live in the sanctuary, in paradise
- Psalm finally leaves us with comfort:
 - *He who does these things will never be shaken.* (v.5)
 - anyone who knows Christ will never be shaken out of paradise!
 - persecution, trouble, failure, nothing will shake us out of heaven - Jesus is our unshakeable hope