

Introduction

- Tell the person you are sitting next to your first, or best, or some positive memory of church!

Joy of Arrival (vs.1-2)

- End of pilgrimage, goal is in sight, city where God is to be worshipped
 - incidentally, as this Psalm was written by David, it pre-dates the Temple;
 - the ark has been brought up to Jerusalem, and as such Jerusalem has become the central place of worship;
 - as such "house of the Lord" probably has the force "dwelling place of God, tabernacle" rather than "Temple"
- If Psalm 121 could have been set against the perils of the journey, of the hazards of travelling to Jerusalem...
 - ...then Psalm 122 is set at the arrival in Jerusalem:
 - the hazards are eclipsed by the joy
 - this is a recurring theme of Christian discipleship, not that troubles are taken away - if anything they increase - but that in the light of the glories of a relationship with Christ, the promise of what is to come and the fore-taste of that which we enjoy now, such troubles are put into their proper perspective
- cf Jude, in the doxology at the end of his short letter, reflecting on what our arrival in heaven might be like:
 - (Jude 24, 25) *To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy - to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and for evermore! Amen.*
- A sample of such joy should be present each time we gather for worship
 - not always the full thing, and not just because we are sinners!!

Bonds of Unity (vs.3-5)

- Force of vs.3-5 is towards unity
 - (v.3) Jerusalem is built like a city that is closely compacted together.
 - "closely compacted together" - a city that is at unity with itself!
 - walls were expensive; you used the space within them well!!
 - of necessity you were living closely with others; we might interpret that as a trial, but here sense is of unity, closeness...
- Stark contrast with the Jerusalem of which Jesus spoke:
 - (Luke 13:34) *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"*
 - that is a city at war with its purpose of being a dwelling place for God!
- There is a sense of the idealised place of worship being one where unity is very much to the fore:
 - come to the ideal place of worship and what do you find? Unity!

(v.4) That is where the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, to praise the name of the LORD according to the statute given to Israel.

- That unity is not at all suggestive of bland uniformity:
 - diversity of the different tribes going up; it is a uniting point for those who are different, in parentage, in geography, in perspective & character
- Their unity is "in the Lord" - not merely blood or geography
 - the object of the pilgrim feasts, the coming up to Jerusalem, was to give thanks
 - not to promote unity!
- They were to come already one in the Lord:
 - hopefully they would subsequently then experience that unity, as a side effect of worshipping the Lord
- Worship is the point of our gathering, not any other laudable aim:

- seeing each other, sharing, supporting one another - secondary
- passing on information, teaching - secondary

(v.5) There the thrones for judgment stand, the thrones of the house of David.

- (thrones plural is puzzling - possibly a plural of majesty, of emphasis; ie "thrones of David" equals "the great throne of David")
- The contribution that this verse makes to the developing picture of the ideal place of worship is place of justice:
 - in the place of true worship there is justice;
 - this is what stands behind the "judgement" mentioned
- Things are sorted out, judgement is given, justice is wrought
- Unity since no injustice dividing God's new community

Vision of Peace (vs.6-9)

- That leads us into the closing chunk, vs.6-9:
 - a vision of the peace and security of the place of true worship
- Whole Psalm is an idealisation of current experience as a pointer, or as a fore-taste of ultimate reality
 - painting a wonderful, almost too good to be true picture of worship in Jerusalem
 - and utilising that idealised picture hint at the ideal of heaven
- "Jeru salem" - peace, salem/shalom
- Peace and security are proper results of justice:
 - and so consequences of the situation where God is truly and ultimately worshipped are peace and security

Conclusion

- The conclusion of the Psalm is that we should pray for this vision to become reality:
 - pray for the peace of Jerusalem (v.6)
 - seek its prosperity (v.9)
- For, you see, what Jerusalem was for the Israelite, the church is to the Christian:
 - here, in the church, are our closest ties, our "brothers and friends" (v.8)
 - it is for the peace and unity of the church that we must pray
 - it is for her prosperity, well-being, health that we must direct our attention
- And so many snippets of New Testament exhortation spring to mind:
 - (Hebrews 13:1-3) *Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.*
 - or even promises made by a minister at ordination or induction: "do you promise to seek the unity and peace of this Church..."
- Practical advice for applying the desire of this Psalm to everyday life!
- Move into time of open prayer for the peace and unity of the church, generally and specifically