

## **Psalm 84, 1-10**

- 1. How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of Hosts!  
My soul has a desire and longing to enter the courts of the Lord,  
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.*
- 2. The sparrow has found her a house  
and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young:  
even your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.*
- 3. Blessed are they who dwell in your house: they will always be praising you.*
- 4. Blessed are those whose strength is in you,  
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.*
- 5. Who going through the barren valley find there a spring,  
and the early rains will clothe it with blessing.*
- 6. They will go from strength to strength and appear before God in Zion.*
- 7. O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; listen, O God of Jacob.*
- 8. Behold our defender, O God, and look upon the face of your anointed.*
- 9. For one day in your courts is better than a thousand.*
- 10. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God  
than dwell in the tents of ungodliness.*

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!

**Happy are they who dwell in your house!**

Psalm 84 is a pilgrim psalm, in which the pilgrim cries out in admiration of the beauty of the temple, and in his present experience recalls how he has longed to see it. The birds (sparrows and swallows) show him that to be in the presence of God is life's greatest good.

The middle verses (5-7) show that God's blessing is not limited to the temple, but shines out to those in remote places, who are contemplating a pilgrimage to Zion.

The pilgrim has come to the autumn New Year festival, when the enthronement of God as king was celebrated. It is also appropriate to pray for the human king: 'Behold our defender, O God, and look upon the face of your anointed.'

Then the psalmist states that trust in God means spiritual and material prosperity. A single day spent outside the temple gate is better than a thousand in the homes of those who reject God.

So, in the midst of all that happens in the world (war, disease, difficult situations and relationships) God is seen as the one who provides protection (see Psalm 23), and God is present in every part of life and will be there for evermore.

There are many beautiful and awe-inspiring churches and cathedrals, which raise us beyond ourselves and which speak of the presence of God in the world as it is. In the present virus crisis, when churches are closed and we are unable to attend as we have been used to doing, we may long for the day when we can return, even if we find the services and other material being put out on the internet during this time a helpful substitute.

**Prayer** (Christopher Idle)

Lord God, heavenly Father,  
grant to your Church today  
the faith of her apostles,  
the hope of her martyrs,  
and the love of her Lord,  
even Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.