

No Longer Homesick!

**⁴ One thing I ask from the LORD,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.**

Ever felt homesick? Sometimes children feel homesick. A child agrees to spend the night at a friend's house. It is the first night away from his parents and he feels a bit homesick that night. Anyone might feel homesick when they are away from the family. Within months of our marriage, my wife went away for the weekend to some retreat. I didn't mind it at all. Actually, I was quite excited as I could cook my favorite bachelor meals again. Today, if she is gone for the weekend or I am off to conference, I don't like being separated from her. You are felling homesick right now. Your wife, your mother has left. She is with her Lord in heaven. You miss her. You wish she was still here.

But there is one person who is not homesick today. It is Diane. Don't get me wrong. She loved every minute God gave her. If he waited another three weeks to take her to heaven, she would have been very comfortable with that. Even if her quality of life was not good like it was, she knew every minute God gave her was a chance to love and serve you. But she is home now. That is what this passage meant to her and what it means to us. We are homesick until we go home to heaven.

God used King David to give us this psalm. We don't know when he wrote it; the best guess is when his son, Absalom, rebelled against him and he fled for his life. Whatever the circumstances, David was on the run and he was homesick. Did he miss his money and wealth? No. Did he miss his house? No. Did he miss his family? No. What made him homesick was church. On the run, he couldn't go to church like he used to. **⁴ One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.** David wished he could go back to church like he did before.

Diane missed church. Oh, she would come with Dennis once in a while, but Covid and health issues made that difficult. So church came to her. Ella mailed or delivered devotions to her, the bulletin, copies of the sermon, and I would visit her for Communion, and members would visit her. One good thing that came out of Covid was online services. Many of our shut ins love that. But it is not the same as stepping in church, singing with others, greeting and being greeted, standing at the communion table with fellow believers.

How about you? Is God and his church so important that you miss it when you are not there? Is taking Communion regularly your highest priority? Do you crave God's guidance as you join other believers in church or Bible class? Are the hymns more beautiful to you than your favorite artist? Sadly, for far too many, it is not.

So we admire folks like David who miss church so much. We admire folks like Diane who craved church. Why is church so important? Why is spending time with the Lord so good? The Lord offers us a safe place we can't find anywhere else in the world. Listen to the following two verses: **⁵ For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock. ⁶ Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the LORD.** God promises we will triumph over our enemies including death. It doesn't seem that way. Christians don't escape disaster and death in this world. But we do. If the only thing that mattered is our life now, then yes, we don't escape. But God is giving us a bigger and better life. We have life after this world. And it is ours because God is merciful and forgiving. Let's look at the next three verses.

⁷ Hear my voice when I call, LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. ⁸ My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, LORD, I will seek. ⁹ Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, God my Savior. ¹⁰ Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me. You would think there is no tighter bond than between parents and children. Yet, headlines sadden us when parents abandon or do harm to their children.

But God will never forsake or abandon us. Here is the amazing part. We give him every reason to. Even Christians still sin though they try not to. And we know what sin does. It angers a holy and just God. He should be furious with us. But what do we find in his presence? He doesn't reject us. He doesn't hide his face from us or send us away in his anger. He embraces us by forgiving us our sin. He can't ignore or sweep sin under the carpet; it would still be there. He removes sin's guilt by having someone else take it away. Did you notice David called him, "God my Savior?" He is. He saves us through Christ who came to become sin for us. He died for our sins and rose again as proof God accepts his sacrifice. See why David was homesick for the Lord? Who wouldn't?

Diane didn't seem to be very demanding, at least to me. And she was that way with the Lord. She didn't demand anything from him. Sure, she prayed for this or that, but she was willing to accept any answer he gave her. That is why she always prayed, "not my will but yours be done." But she did have one thing she demanded of the Lord, and it was her confirmation verse: **⁴ One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the**

LORD and to seek him in his temple. She demanded that God would keep his promise and make her live in the house of the Lord forever. Starting last Wednesday, she will never miss church again. She is gazing upon the Lord's beauty as we speak. She is in church before him because of Christ. Only one thing is missing, her body, but that will be remedied when Christ returns and raises us all.

How about you? We got God's forgiveness and promise to live in his temple forever. Until then, we can still be in God's presence through his Word and Sacraments. May these be more important than anything else we have. Amen.