

still waters

home church studies

Psalm 84

[Worship]

1 How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!
2 My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. 3 Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God. 4 Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise. Selah

5 Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. 6 As they go through the valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools. 7 They go from strength to strength; the God of gods will be seen in Zion. 8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah

9 Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed. 10 For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than live in the tents of wickedness. 11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield; he bestows favor and honor. No good thing does the LORD withhold from those who walk uprightly. 12 O LORD of hosts, happy is everyone who trusts in you.

Consider:

[Words]

Solomon's obsession with the temple, its ritual, and the self-reverential power base it represents in his expanding empire smacks of "business as usual." However, tucked away in the small print of the Old Testament reading is Solomon's prayer to God that if "foreigners come and pray in this temple," God will "listen and grant all that the foreigner asks of you, so that all peoples of the earth may acknowledge your name and revere you" (1 Kings 8.43). Within the vision of the temple there lies, too, the hope that it will be the focus for a unified creation.

The vision of the temple as a symbol of harmony for creation, between nations and between the cosmos and God, is sadly unfulfilled. Jesus tackled the oppression and exploitation of God's house in an extraordinary demonstration of resistance (John 2.14-

20). His insistence that his body is the new temple (John 2.20-21), and that it is to be eaten, is regarded as intolerable language to those who hear it, including the disciples (John 6.60-66). And yet a glimmer of hope exists. When it seems all will fall, Peter says, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life and we believe; we have come to know you as the Holy One of God" (John 6.68-69).

Words, however, will not suffice. Belief has to be matched with a preparation for the inevitable struggle for justice and harmony. Put on the full armor of God so as to be able to resist the devil's tactics, commands Paul (Ephesians 6.11). All systems and structures, however benign, will seek to usurp the place of the spirit that gives life. But, as the psalmist writes, the dwelling places of God are still lovely, and we who would see them must yearn and pine for the living God.



Reflection and Action

In what ways have you come to know and believe Jesus as the Holy One of God? How does this inform your action for justice?

[Scripture]

Ephesians 6.10-20

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. 15 As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. 16 With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 6:18 Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. 19 Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.