



water from rock

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – March 23, 2021

The Lord be with you.

Home. Can you think of a more wonderful, more lovely word than home?

The longing for home is deep, and most of us, that safe place where we can go just as we are, and they take a sin where we can kick off our shoes and relax and simply be who we are. We remember Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz who says, There's no place like home. And with those words and three clicks of her heels, Dorothy is back home from the land of Oz, back home with Auntie Em, the cowardly lion and the tin man and all that really matters. It's at home. Most of us know about Dorothy is feeling that there is no place like home. Sure, we love to travel and to explore the wondrous big world, but it is good to come home, home is where the heart is, we say. Bartlett Geomati, former commissioner of baseball, and before that president of Yale University, when asked to explain the popularity of baseball in America, Geomati said, Well, baseball is all about going home, and we all want to get home. It's our longing to get home. That is at the heart of a passage from the Psalms that I wanna share with you today in Psalm 84. It is a pilgrim song, a song that the people of God, saying as they traveled up to God's house in Jerusalem to worship. And the psalm opens with the Psalmist, rejoicing at the thought of coming home to God.

Psalm 84, I read the first four verses. How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of Hosts. My soul longs. Indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. 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. Happy are those who live in your house ever singing your praise. And then the Psalmist adds the Hebrew word, Selah, that is stop, look and listen, because this is important. Now, as the psalmist enters to the house of the Lord to worship, there in that magnificent temple built by Solomon, the Psalmist sees, he sees that right there at God's altar, that a sparrow has built a nest on the altar, and he sees that a swallow also built a nest there too. He says, Where the swallow may lay her young at your altars. Now, I wanna add here that the law of Moses prohibited moving a bird's nest, and that meant that no priest in the temple, no Levite, no sexton, and no custodian would dare to touch or remove a bird's nest even from the Lord's holy altar, so that even the birds of the air find a home in God's house. And there with their messy nest of grass and twigs and string and other bits, they are at home in that sacred space.

Now the psalmist looks at this and he draws a deeper lesson, a deeper lesson for you and me. As He sees in the sparrow and the swallow finding a home in God's house, he sees in them our longing for home, to be at home with God. Because for the ancient Hebrews sparrows and swallows



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represented something. The sparrow was a symbol of worthlessness of that person looked upon as insignificant as a no count, and the swallow symbolized that shiftless person ever going and coming restless in life, never settling down these pesky worthless no counts. Why, they have a place. They have their home with God. Even the sparrow finds a home, he says. And the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young at your altars. O Lord of hosts. In that Holiest of space, all are welcome. All are welcome to be at home with God.

Now our Lord Jesus tells a wondrous homecoming story about a worthless shiftless son bringing shame to himself and to his father, and the sun heads home. Listen to Jesus as He tells a story in Luke Chapter 15. While the son was still far off from home, his father saw him and was filled with compassion, he ran and put his arms around the sun and kissed him and said, quickly, bring out a robe, but the best one. And put it on him, put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get to the fatted calf and kill it and let us eat and celebrate. Because my son has come home.

Perhaps you have wandered and strayed far from home. Today, the Lord welcomes you home. Just as you are. So, come home, pull up a chair, relax, take off your shoes. For the Father loves you just as you are.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thanks for listening until next time.