



Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 22, 2024
Psalms for Advent



OUR LORD HAS COME!

Psalm 118

Note: This week the discussion questions are in a different format. Since many will have lots of family and social commitments in the coming week the questions will not be divided into daily segments. Just use them when you have the opportunity. Also, there will be no questions next week (the 29th). Regular questions will resume on the first Sunday of 2025.

1. **Opening Discussion Questions:** (in a group setting you may not want to use all of these)
 - a. Have you ever gazed up at the stars on a really dark night, perhaps while in the country away from city lights? What was your initial response? How did it make you feel about yourself?
 - b. How important are traditions to your Christmas celebrations? Do you have a favorite tradition that has been passed down from earlier generations? How much has that tradition changed over the years? How far would you go to preserve the tradition?
 - c. Describe a time when you received a phone call or message that caused you to drop whatever you had been doing and immediately respond or take some action. What kind of information would such a message need to contain? After you had responded, and the crisis was over did you keep the information to yourself or share with others about the causes?
2. **Sermon Outline/Key Points**
 - a. The Lord Came to Become Our Gate to Righteousness
 - i. We're only made righteous through Jesus.
 - ii. If you're in Christ, you are righteous!
 - b. The Lord Came to Become the Cornerstone of All Things
 - i. Jesus came to be rejected and raised as the cornerstone.
 - ii. Is Lord Jesus truly the cornerstone of your life?
 - c. The Lord Came to Be the Last Sacrifice
 - i. Our salvation and righteousness were accomplished by the Lord's sacrifice of Himself.
 - ii. Give thanks to the Lord - extol Him!
3. **Study/Discussion Points:**
 - a. *After the sermon*
 - i. As soon as possible after listening to the sermon set aside some time to ponder these questions prayerfully:



- ii. What one thing most stood out to you in this sermon?
- iii. What new truth did you learn or of what truth were you reminded?
- iv. After listening to the sermon, is there a Scripture passage you feel led to meditate on or commit to memory this week?
- v. What is one thing you feel God is leading you to do after hearing this message?
- vi. Did God convict you of a need to make any changes in your life and walk with Him?

b. Psalm 118

- i. Read Psalm 118
 1. What title would you assign to this Psalm? What is the main idea(s) of the Psalm?
 2. Traditions suggest that in Jesus' time, Psalms 113-116 would be sung before the Passover meal, and Psalms 117-118 would be sung after. If true, Psalm 118 would be the last hymn Jesus sang at the Last Supper before leaving for the Mount of Olives (see Matthew 26:30). Reread the Psalm with this thought in mind. What attitude do you think Jesus and His disciples would have had as they sang?
 3. Although the author of this Psalm is unknown, many believe it was written after the return of the Jews from exile at the dedication of the restored walls and gates of Jerusalem. Read Nehemiah 2:19-20, 4:1-9 and 6:1-9. Do you see a parallel between these passages and any verses of Psalm 118?
- ii. Now read and meditate on Psalm 118:19-21.
 1. In the ESV verse 19 begins "Open to me the gates of righteousness".
 - a. What does "righteousness" mean to you?
 - b. Who is righteous according to these verses: 2 Thessalonians 1:5-6, 2 Timothy 4:8, Luke 23:47, Acts 3:14 & 7:52? Who is not righteous according to Romans 3:10?
 - c. What significance do you see in the fact that the "gates of righteousness" need to be opened to (for) me? How do John 10:7 & 9, 14:6, and Ephesians 2:18 help frame your answer?
 - d. What do both verses 19 & 20 say we need to do? How do John 14:6 and Acts 4:12 clarify what we need to do?
 2. What do verses 19-21 say our response should be after entering through the gate? How often do you do this?
- iii. Read and meditate on Psalm 118:22-24.
 1. This passage is quoted frequently in the New Testament. Read Matthew 21:42-44, Mark 12:9-12, Luke 20:17-18, Acts 4:11-12, Romans 9:32-33, and 1 Peter 2:6-8.



- a. In what way was Jesus rejected? Who were the builders that did the rejecting?
 - b. After His rejection what event enabled Him to become the cornerstone (see 1 Peter 1:3)?
 - c. Why do so many find Jesus' sacrifice for our sins a stumbling block?
2. According to verse 23 who is the one responsible for making the rejected stone the cornerstone (remember the meaning of LORD in caps)?
 - a. How does verse 24 reinforce verse 23?
 - b. What should our response to these acts by the LORD be?
- iv. Read and meditate on Psalm 118: 25-29.
 1. "Save us" is the Hebrew equivalent of the Aramaic word "Hosanna". With that in mind, what New Testament event do verses 25-26 bring to mind (Matthew 21:9, Mark 11:9-10, and John 12:13)? In what ways does verse 27 point forward to the same event?
 2. If these verses are prophetic predictions of events in Jesus' life, what do you think the last phrase of verse 27 about the altar is referring to?
 3. Psalm 118 ends the way it began. Based on everything between verses 1 and 29, what can we conclude the Holy Spirit is teaching us about how we should respond to life's circumstances, even when they may be adverse? How did Paul capture this same truth in 1 Thessalonians 5:18?

c. Advent – The Angels:

- i. The final Sunday of Advent highlights the role of angels in the events surrounding the birth of Jesus. From your recollections of the various Bible passages normally read during Advent, how important of a role do angels seem to play?
- ii. Read Matthew 1:19-21, 2:13, Luke 1:8-20, 1:26-38, and 2:8-14.
 1. How would you describe the primary function that angels play in the Christmas story?
 2. What important additional role does the "heavenly host" perform in Luke 2:8-14?
 3. After reading Luke 2:8-14 carefully how does what the scripture says compare with how you expect the scene to unfold? Is it normally portrayed the way the Bible presents it?
 4. According to Luke 2:9 what reaction did the shepherds display? What were the two possible causes for that reaction? Of these two, which do you think would have been more likely to cause the shepherds to fear? What other Bible passages can you think of where God's glory is displayed? How did people react?



5. What did the heavenly host do when they appeared with the angel? What did they say? According to Revelation 5:13, who is eventually going to say the same things? What does this suggest about what we should be doing now?

d. Advent - Peace:

- i. Read Luke 2:8-20 again.
 1. Then, if you have one read Luke 2:14 in the King James Bible. How does this translation differ from what the ESV, NIV, or CSB says?
 2. Did Jesus bring peace to the world, or does He bring it to those who believe and accept Him (see Matthew 10:34, Luke 12:51, John 14:27, Romans 5:1, and Ephesians 2:14)?
- ii. Peace is a frequent topic in the New Testament – occurring in every New Testament book except 1 John – and can be used in at least four different ways:
 1. For greetings and farewells: Luke 10:5-6 and Revelation 1:4-5
 2. The absence of hostilities: Matthew 10:34 and Revelation 6:4
 3. Life in relationships: Mark 9:50 and Hebrews 12:14
 4. Messianic peace accomplished by Christ and experienced by the Church: Romans 5:1, Colossians 1:20, Romans 14:17, and Galatians 5:22
- iii. Read Ephesians 2:11-22.
 1. What has the peace of Christ accomplished for us who are not Jewish?
 2. How did Christ accomplish this according to verses 15-16?
 3. What does verse 22 tell us that provides us assurance of that peace?

4. Application:

- a. The image of the “Cornerstone” is often seen as applying to the Church, but it should also be applied in our individual lives as Christians. Spend time this week thinking and praying about what it means for Christ to be the Cornerstone of your life. How does (or would) having Him as your personal Cornerstone change your priorities and the way you live?
- b. Psalm 118 certainly encourages us to “give thanks” and at this time of year as we commemorate the birth of Jesus we should especially give thanks to God for the Incarnation – that Jesus was not just a special baby but that He was God Incarnate come to pay the penalty for my sins that I could never pay myself.

5. Prayer Points:

- a. Adoration – Psalms 8:1 and 29:1-2
- b. Confession – Proverbs 28:13 and 1 John 1:8-10
- c. Thanksgiving – Psalms 95:1-2 and 100:4-5
- d. Supplications – Matthew 21:22 and John 16:19