

Lent Devotional March 8, 2026

Scripture

Psalm 84

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.[\[a\]](#)*

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.*

Devotion

The Rev. Dr. Graeme Wilson '18

“Nostalgia isn’t what it used to be!”

This famous aphorism, often wrongly attributed to Yogi Berra, reminds us that our warm, fuzzy memories of past times may not have always been matched by the reality. Our nostalgic memories generally tend towards the pleasant and comfortable, locating us in happier and more congenial times while perhaps glossing over unhappier times. Nostalgia creates an aching longing inside us for better times with fondly remembered loved ones—gatherings, holidays, special occasions.

The word ‘nostalgia’ itself comes from the Greek ‘*nostos*’ (return home or homecoming) and ‘*algos*’ (pain or suffering); so, nostalgia is literally a painful longing to return home, or, more simply, a homesickness.

Psalm 84 has a strong sense of nostalgia, a deep longing to return home to Zion, to the Jerusalem temple where the presence of the LORD can be experienced. “How lovely is thy dwelling place ... my soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the LORD.” The yearning and anticipation of a return to that holy place are deeply felt. Home is where the heart is.

The strong, magnetic pull towards home reminds me of the house martins (part of the swallow family). Every spring, year after year, these birds returned to their nests under the eaves of the manse of my first congregation in the west of Scotland, having journeyed over 5,000 miles from sub-Saharan Africa to get there! For reasons that still remain a mystery to wildlife experts, house martins will travel these vast distances to return to the exact same nest, year after year, to “lay their young” (v. 3). The magnetic pull to return home, to nest, is powerful.

As we journey through Lent, we are reminded of Jesus’ powerful longing to return to Jerusalem to fulfill his calling and his destiny. A form of deep nostalgia, perhaps, but not a nostalgia for playing it safe. A longing for things to be made right.

May we too know that sense of longing for things to be made right—a longing for justice and peace to be restored in the troubled areas of our world, and a longing for peace in our lives.

May we have a healthy nostalgia for what should be.

Prayer

Lord, as “even the sparrow finds a home,” may we find a home in Your welcoming and protective care. Fill us with a sense of nostalgia—not for things to remain the same, but that we might ache for the world to return to the state of peace that You wish for it. Amen.