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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.

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!

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.

Devotional

I am reminded today of a friend's story about sitting in a parking lot waiting for an extraordinarily crucial business meeting to begin. Darting around the shrubbery separating the lot from the cars on Main Street, a grey squirrel passed his car window with a huge acorn in its mouth, actively hunting for a place to bury its treasure.

It found the perfect place and dug a huge hole as its underground safe. Then it carefully dragged new dirt over the place, rearranged the soil, patted it down, eyed its work, made a few adjustments, and scampered away for another nugget.

It dawned on my friend that this squirrel ritual of finding, burying, hiding, covering, patting, and evaluating had been going on for *thousands* of years . . . an unbroken history of squirrel work in the Lord God's creation. Suddenly my friend's vital work for the day didn't seem all that important.

The author of Psalm 84, verse 3, had exactly the same experience some 3,000 years ago, as he watched swallows and sparrows flit in and out of a man-made altar wherein they no doubt nested. He too longed to lay down his burden and place himself in the hands of a loving Lord God.

Whether sparrows or swallows or squirrels . . . or each of us in this hectic world . . . *Happy are those this Lenten Season who live in the Lord's house, ever singing Your praise.*

Prayer

God of hosts, even in this time of Lent our hearts and flesh sing for joy to you, the living God. Amen.