Introduction

The collection of Psalms known as 120–134 is often called the Psalms of Ascent. They are songs that accompanied God's people on the regular pilgrimages up to Jerusalem. They are the collective soundtrack or playlist for pilgrims in transition. These psalms are for God's people who have not yet arrived. The Rabbinic tradition syncs these fifteen psalms with the fifteen steps of the Temple that a worshipper would have to traverse on the way to worship.

These fifteen steps, these fifteen songs, will be United's playlist for this fall semester. Each Monday, you will receive the song for the week. Read it, repeat it. Sing it in the car or on the bus. Let its rhythm, hook and tone become your companion as you journey on the way to your future in Christ. I will offer two words each week: the first will be a word stating a present reality. The latter is a word from the song that beckons us to our next step. Hold them in tension with one another as you pray each week for God’s wisdom for your journey.

Text: Psalm 134

1Come, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who stand by night in the house of the Lord! 2Lift up your hands to the holy place, and bless the Lord. 3May the Lord, maker of heaven and earth, bless you from Zion.

Reflection

Word: Bless the Lord

Fifteen weeks ago we began this ascent together. We’ve arrived. So, what do we do now?

We bless the Lord.

God has shared God’s very self with us. God has sustained us on the journey. God has blessed us, and we are to respond with that which we have received.

Eugene Peterson tells us that this psalm gives us both an invitation and a command: bless the Lord. We are invited to bless the Lord for the ways in which God sustained and provided for us. We are commanded to bless God because that is the whole point of both the journey and the destination. It is not to make our name great, but the Lord’s. We are invited to bless the Lord with a word of gratitude. We are commanded to bless God, if not with our words (because some days what we utter wouldn’t fall in the “blessing” category), then with the lifting up of our hands.

I know the ascent has been difficult. But you’ve arrived at this resting spot. Bless the Lord.

…even though you grumbled on the journey. You’re here. Bless the Lord.

…even though you doubted yourself, others and God. You’re here. Bless the Lord.

…even though some of the work this semester wasn’t your best. Bless the Lord.

…even though your legs and body are weary. Bless the Lord.

…even when your emotions aren’t there yet. Bless the Lord.

If you have web access, let this song lead you into your blessing. Click to listen.
Come, Let Us Adore Him

Luke 2:8–20 tells the story of the lowly and the insignificant being invited to bless and be blessed by the Lord Jesus. Let us read this story and hear God’s invitation and command to bless God.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Come, bless the Lord.