

***Your Favorite Place***

Psalm 26

Vindicate me, O Lord,  
for I have walked in my integrity,  
and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering.  
Prove me, O Lord, and try me;  
test my heart and my mind.  
For your steadfast love is before my eyes,  
and I walk in your faithfulness.

I do not sit with men of falsehood,  
nor do I consort with hypocrites.  
I hate the assembly of evildoers,  
and I will not sit with the wicked.

I wash my hands in innocence  
and go around your altar, O Lord,  
proclaiming thanksgiving aloud,  
and telling all your wondrous deeds.

**O Lord, I love the habitation of your house  
and the place where your glory dwells.**

Do not sweep my soul away with sinners,  
nor my life with bloodthirsty men,  
in whose hands are evil devices,  
and whose right hands are full of bribes.

But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity;  
redeem me, and be gracious to me.  
My foot stands on level ground;  
in the great assembly I will bless the Lord.

Where do you love to go? Some folks love to go to National Parks. Maybe you have a favorite restaurant. A good friend's house is a place we can go to hang out, to talk, and know there is a listening ear and a sympathetic heart. These are special places to us.

For the psalmist, it is the Lord's house. Because the Lord is there. ***Lord, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells.*** Yes, it is true that God is everywhere, but He is in His house in a special way and for a special purpose: to be with us for the forgiveness of our sins.

Most people know God's house is a special place. They go there to pray. They go there to get closer to God. Even people who don't go to church know this is a special place, often saying that if they were to go, lightning would strike them! That's not exactly true, but it shows that even they know there's something about God's house. Something special. And indeed there is. God is there because He wants to be with you.

Isn't that something? Lots of people avoid us, but not God. He wants to be with us. Maybe we don't want to be with Him because we've done what we know we shouldn't have done, or haven't been very good people. But if that's the case with you, God *especially* wants to be with you because He wants to forgive you. He doesn't want your sin to divide you from Him, and so He came to take it away. That's what Jesus did for you on the cross. Whatever punishment your sins deserved, He took, there, and died for it. All of it. And He wants you to know that. He wants you to hear Him say: *I forgive you.*

And if that's what we get to hear in God's house, no wonder it's the psalmist's favorite place to be! He doesn't want to hang out with sinners who are just going to lead him into more sin and farther away from God. No! Rather than be with folks who love sin, the psalmist would rather be with the God who loves *him*! And, honestly, doesn't that make sense?

So if you haven't been to church in a while, maybe now's the time to go back. To be in the house of a God whose glory it is to come and serve sinners and

die for us. A God whose glory is that He was not ashamed to be born as one of us and be our brother. A God whose glory is to come now to be with you, listen to you, and forgive you. That's a God worth being with. And maybe, just maybe, you'll find that you love the habitation of His house, too.

*Lord Jesus, You came at Christmas as the baby laid in a manger because of Your great love for me. You came to go to the cross for my forgiveness, and I need it! Help me to go to Your house and hear you say to me: I forgive you! And give me joy in hearing those words, and joy in then saying those words to others too, who need forgiveness. Life is really tough, but with You I know there is hope now and forever. Amen.*