

# "A Sabbath Song"

## Psalm 92

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Four Lakes Church of Christ



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### Introduction:

Over the past several months, we have been looking at various requests and questions that have been turned in by the members of this congregation. In fact, I would say that probably close to 90% of the Sunday morning sermons here over the past few months have been prepared in direct response to requests from our members. This morning, I would like for us to continue that tradition, but this morning we will be looking at one of my requests! This past summer, we took some time to visit family in the Washington, DC, area, and as we were sightseeing in one of the suburbs of Washington, as we were looking around in Alexandria, Virginia, we were leaving our car in a public parking lot right there by the Potomac River, and a certain license plate caught my eye. The license plate was on a nice-looking Mercedes Benz ML500—it was a beautiful car. »PPT» In fact, it looks like I must have still been driving and I must have asked my son to write it down for me. The little note is written on our parking receipt; it is in his handwriting. The note says, "Mercedes Benz ML500," and the license plate said, »PPT» "Psalm 92." I could hardly wait to get back to the house and look it up—Why in the world would the owner of a Mercedes Benz ML500 put Psalm 92 on his or her license plate? When we got home, I looked it up, and I have been looking forward to preaching on this passage ever since our trip to DC back in August! This morning, then, I would encourage you to look with me at Psalm 92. In our pew Bibles, the passage is found starting on page 947.

As we look at Psalm 92, even before we look at the Psalm itself, we notice something rather unusual about the heading. We know that the headings in our Bibles are not inspired. However, we also know that the headings in the book of Psalms are very, very old. In fact, the headings go all the way back to those days when the temple was still being used for worship. And so as we look at the heading for Psalm 92, we discover that this Psalm was written for a special occasion. In the NASB at least, the heading says, "*A Psalm, a Song for the Sabbath Day.*" »PPT» In fact, as far as I can tell, this is the only Psalm anywhere in the Bible that was written specifically to be sung on the Sabbath Day, so it is rather unique.

We understand from the book of Exodus that the Sabbath Day was given to the Jewish people under the Law of Moses as a day of rest, as a day to be set aside for worship and reflection. So here is a song that was written specifically for this particular day. The Psalm is addressed to God. In fact, God is addressed twelve times in Psalm 92, and seven of those references use the term Yahweh, or Jehovah,

God's sacred name. In the NASB, the name is translated as "**LORD**" (in all capital letters). It is a **Psalm** of praise and thanksgiving, then, that was to be sung on the day of rest, on the Sabbath.

Well, it is interesting that the Sabbath Day regulation was never repeated in the New Testament. As Christians, we are never commanded to take a day of rest. Certainly, taking a rest from work is a wise thing to do. As my father has often reminded me, at least, "**The human body was designed to get more done in six days than it could get done in seven.**" There is a value, then, to taking a day off from time to time. But as a religious ritual, the New Testament does not require a strict day of rest on the seventh day of every week, as was done in the Old Testament. In fact, the apostle Paul saves some of his most severe language for those who try to bind the Jewish Sabbath Day on New Testament Christians. In **Colossians 2:16-17**, Paul said, "**Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.**"

With that in mind, though, let us not dismiss the value of taking time to slow down and praise God. Under the New Covenant, we as Christians celebrate the "Lord's Day." The Lord's Day is not the Sabbath. The Sabbath happens on Saturday, the seventh day of the week. The Lord's Day takes place on Sunday, the first day of the week—the day the Lord was resurrected, the day we partake of the Lord's Supper, the day that we are told to give of our means. The two days are different, but there are some similarities. Like the Sabbath, the Lord's Day has always been a time for worship. Like the Sabbath, the Lord's Day is a time for us to refocus. Like the Sabbath, the Lord's Day is a time for us to keep our lives on track. Today, then, I would like for us to look at **Psalm 92** as a reminder of the value of spending a day with the Lord. If you will, please look with me at all **15 verses** of **Psalm 92**...

- <sup>1</sup> It is good to give thanks to the LORD**
- And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;**
- <sup>2</sup> To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning**
- And Your faithfulness by night,**
- <sup>3</sup> With the ten-stringed lute and with the harp,**
- With resounding music upon the lyre.**
- <sup>4</sup> For You, O LORD, have made me glad by what You have done,**
- I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands.**
- <sup>5</sup> How great are Your works, O LORD!**
- Your thoughts are very deep.**
- <sup>6</sup> A senseless man has no knowledge,**
- Nor does a stupid man understand this:**
- <sup>7</sup> That when the wicked sprouted up like grass**
- And all who did iniquity flourished,**
- It was only that they might be destroyed forevermore.**
- <sup>8</sup> But You, O LORD, are on high forever.**
- <sup>9</sup> For, behold, Your enemies, O LORD,**
- For, behold, Your enemies will perish;**
- All who do iniquity will be scattered.**

- 10 But You have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox;  
I have been anointed with fresh oil.***
- 11 And my eye has looked exultantly upon my foes,  
My ears hear of the evildoers who rise up against me.***
- 12 The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree,  
He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon.***
- 13 Planted in the house of the LORD,  
They will flourish in the courts of our God.***
- 14 They will still yield fruit in old age;  
They shall be full of sap and very green,***
- 15 To declare that the LORD is upright;  
He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.***

This morning, then, I would like for us to study **Psalm 92** as a reminder of the value of spending a day with the Lord. With that in mind, the author of **Psalm 92** gives us several reminders.

**I. First of all, we find in verses 1-4 (right here in the first paragraph) that IT IS GOOD TO PRAISE GOD. »PPT»**

For the Jews, the author was making a strong case that it was especially good to praise God on the Sabbath Day. There were so many things that they could have done on that day. They could have been tending to their animals. They could have been planting or gathering crops. They could have been traveling to see family. They could have been buying and selling. They could have been chipping ice off of their driveways. They could have been taking care of so many things. But the author of **Psalm 92** says that it is good to praise God. It is good to give thanks to the Lord and to sing praises to the Most High.

In **verse 1**, the word **"good"** refers to something that is pleasant or proper. It refers to something that is right, to something that is best or delightful to do. It carries the idea that praising God is something that we enjoy doing—something that we are happy to do. The word has also been translated in other passages as **"beautiful, beneficial, charming, cheerful, delightful, favorable, fine, festive, gracious, handsome, happy, pleasing, precious, pure, splendid, sweet, and worthy."** It is the same word that God used after each day of the creation. God looked at the light, and the earth, and the vegetation, and all of the things that He had made, and He said that those things were **"good."** In a similar way, it is **"good"** for us to give thanks and to praise the Lord.

Specifically, the author of this **Psalm** refers to singing. It is good to sing praises! In **verse 3**, the author refers to various instruments that were used at that time—in the New Testament, of course, there is no command or example for the early church using instruments in worship to God—but what we share with the Jewish people is a love of singing. It is good to sing praises to God!

For thousands of years, God's people have joined together in singing. When Pharaoh's army drowned in the Red Sea on their way out of Egypt, God's people sang a song of praise. After a big victory, the judge Deborah sang a song. As Solomon dedicated the temple, the people sang a song of praise to God. After the Lord's Supper was explained and instituted, Jesus and the apostles sang a song before going out to the Mount of Olives—on the night before Jesus was murdered, they sang a song together! After Paul and Silas had been beaten, as they sat there in prison in the middle of the night, both men were singing songs of praise to God. In fact this, the largest book of the Bible, the book of **Psalms**, is a songbook—150 of the songs that were sung by God's people in Old Testament times!

God knows that singing brings us together. God knows that singing is how we learn. Probably some people here this morning can list the ingredients in a Big Mac, and we can remember something so trivial, because it is tied to a song—we remember the jingle from the commercial! Over in the New Testament, the apostle Paul says in **Colossians 3:16**, "***Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.***"

According to **verse 2**, we praise God when we get up in the morning and we praise God at night. As we learned several months ago from **Lamentations 3**, "***The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.***" The compassions of God are new every morning, and so the author of this **Psalm** says that we praise God every day.

In **verse 4**, we find that we praise God because He has made us glad. We may be tempted to think that true happiness comes from having a lot of money or that it comes from going to a big party, or that it comes from being accepted and loved by the people around us. But here, at least, the author of **Psalm 92** tells us that joy comes from praising God. This morning, then, on the Lord's Day, we remind ourselves first of all, that it is good to praise God.

**II. As we look back at Psalm 92, we go ahead to verses 5-9, and we find something else that God's people were to remember on the Sabbath Day, and that is, THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD LEADS TO A FULFILLED LIFE. »PPT»**

In **verse 5**, the author of the **Psalm** praises God, "***How great are Your works, O Lord! Your thoughts are very deep.***" The idea is that God has a plan and a purpose for our lives and that God's plan is much deeper and more profound than any of us can ever imagine.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul wrote about God's plan in **Romans 11:33** as he said, "***Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!***" Paul thought about God's plan, and the apostle Paul was almost overwhelmed with it.

And as God's children who study that plan together every Lord's Day, we come closer to leading a life of fulfillment. We are here for a reason. But on the other side of that coin, we see the situation with those who do not have that understanding. In **verse 6**, the author says, "**A senseless man has no knowledge, nor does a stupid man understand this.**" He is not talking about having a low I.Q. here, but he is talking about those who do not understand that God has a plan for their lives. He is referring to those who turn away from the wisdom that we find in the Scriptures. In fact, the word "**senseless**" was sometimes used to refer to animals. So, those who are ignorant of God's plan (those who refuse to worship) are almost pictured as animals standing out there in the field. Some people go through life like that—eating and sleeping, and that's about it—like the cattle that eat and eat and eat and do nothing but get bigger and bigger and bigger—all the while they are just getting ready for the slaughter. They have no idea what is about to happen. In **verse 7**, the wicked are pictured as blades of grass that sprout up quickly, they seem to do well for a short time, but then (in **verse 9**) they perish and they are scattered. They are "**destroyed forever**" (**verse 8**).

But in contrast, God's people know better than that. As those who take time out to worship God, we understand that God has a plan for us. As God's people, we realize that God is bigger than we are. We understand what the author wrote in **verse 8**, "**But You, O Lord, are on high forever.**" As Christians, we know that worshiping God is a way of life, and by worshiping God, we are demonstrating that our lives have meaning. We are fulfilled by knowing that God has a plan for our lives. We have a reason for living. We know that the knowledge of God leads to fulfillment.

**III. As we come to the last paragraph of this Sabbath Song, we notice another reminder of the value of spending a day with the Lord, and that is, GOD BLESSES THOSE WHO WORSHIP. »PPT»**

When we come together on the Lord's Day, when we come together to praise God, we remind each other that God rewards those who acknowledge Him. God's blessings are a natural result of worship. We do not necessarily worship so that we can get a blessing, but (generally speaking) when we take God's word seriously, when we apply what we learn in the Scriptures, when we take time to praise the Lord, when we live a righteous life, we end up testifying that God's plan works.

Starting in **verse 10**, the author paints a series of pictures for us. He talks about oxen, and oil, and looking down on our enemies. He says, "**My eye has looked exultantly upon my foes.**" Do we do this sometimes? Will we admit it? Apparently, it is not always a bad thing to do. This past week, I read an interesting old quote from Clarence Darrow, "**I have never killed a man, but I have read many obituaries with great pleasure.**" Very interesting!

But I would like for us to focus in (starting with **verse 12**) on the picture of a palm tree and a cedar tree. Unlike the picture of grass back up in **verse 7** (very temporary), we find here that both trees represent stability and strength. For most

of us, the palm tree is rather unusual. We do not have many palm trees here in Wisconsin, and yet I have read that there are around 2,600 species of palm trees around the world—ranging in size from 3 to 100 feet tall. The palm tree is able to withstand some amazing wind. We think of the hurricanes that have gone through Florida, and we are amazed that there are any trees still standing down there! Those in the Middle East tell us that they have at least 360 different ways to use the palm tree: ropes, sacks, mats, hats, sandals, oil, the sap is mixed with water and used as a drink, and on and on. The date palm produces more than 300 pounds of fruit every year. The palm tree is very important, therefore, and the writer of **Psalm 92** tells us that, ***"The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree."***

In **verse 12**, we find that those who are righteous are also compared to a cedar tree. The cedar is also very strong—not like a palm tree at all, but still very strong in its own way. Last week on our trip to Tennessee, we got to walk around my grandfather's farm, and we noticed those cedar trees on the way out to the barn. Whenever I see a cedar tree, I am always amazed at how straight they are. I noticed that my grandfather had even cut down some of the cedar trees and had used them as fence posts—the electric fence was on some of them—one of them even had a huge farm gate attached to it—incredibly strong, very straight, and very resistant to rot and insect damage. When you go to Home Depot or Menard's and start looking at material for building a fence, you notice that cedar is rather expensive—it is a very nice wood for building a fence or a deck. The wood has also been used for ships, and palaces, and even for the temple in Jerusalem. We have a friend in central Wisconsin who builds beautiful outdoor furniture using nothing but cedar. The wood is used in saunas, in cedar chests, and is also used as shingles and siding and as a lining for closets. A cedar tree can live for many years. They love growing in the mountains—they grow in the snow and they grow in the tropics. They are strong and they survive very well. The cedars of Lebanon grew up to 120 feet tall and were up to 30 feet around the base of each tree. And in **verse 12** we are told that the righteous will, ***"...grow like a cedar in Lebanon."***

But these are not just any trees—we find in **verse 13** that the righteous are compared to these trees being ***"Planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God."*** Back in Bible times, people would sometimes live in a home with several rooms, and the rooms would be arranged around a courtyard. Each room would have a door into the courtyard. The owner would plant trees in that courtyard—for shade and for food. You can imagine that those trees would be cared for unlike any tree out in a field somewhere. These trees were special. I remember traveling down to Chicago when my wife took an architecture class down at UW Whitewater. We toured some of the homes designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. I think it might have even been Mr. Wright's own home and studio that had a tree growing up in the middle of the house. You could walk down the hall, and there was a tree trunk coming up through the floor and going out through the ceiling. You know that was one of the best cared-for trees in all of Chicago! The writer of **Psalm 92** was saying that God will take care of us in the same way—like a tree in the courtyard of God's house. God blesses those who worship.

**Conclusion:**

As we come to a close this morning, I would like to thank whoever it was who put "**Psalm 92**" on their license plate! I realize that as someone's favorite Scripture, they may do a Google search for it someday. I would only ask that if you are out there and you find this reference to your car—seen in downtown Alexandria, Virginia, on Saturday, August 16, 2008—please send me an e-mail! I would love to learn why this is your favorite passage! But for the rest of us, we have seen some reminders this morning. From the only **Psalm** specifically written for the Sabbath Day, we have seen the value of taking time to think about God. As the **Psalm** points out:

- First of all, it is good to praise God.
- Secondly, having knowledge of God (and respecting God for who He is) leads to a fulfilled life.
- And then finally, God blesses those who take time to worship.

The Bible teaches that spending a day with the Lord is never wasted. If you are not yet a Christian, the Bible has good news—Jesus died for our sins. We respond to that sacrifice by turning away from sin and by allowing ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins. If you have any questions, we would love to talk with you. But if you are ready to obey the gospel right now, you can let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: [church@fourlakescoc.org](mailto:church@fourlakescoc.org)