

CHRIST, OUR JUBILEE

WEEK 7 – JUNE 16-20, 2025

Psalm 133-134: Christ, All in All

As we meditate on this devotion, we are just a few days away from the 50th District Conference. If Psalms 120-134 are called the Songs of Ascent, then Psalms 133 and 134 can be said to be the two highest steps of this series of praises, truly wonderful experiences for the pilgrims, and also the pinnacle of each of our spiritual journeys.

Psalm 133 speaks of the unity of God’s people, and Psalm 134 speaks of worshipping God. We have had the opportunity to meditate on some of these Songs of Ascent to recognize the foundational roles of Christ in our personal lives and in the Church, to see that Christ is All In All – He is the Savior, the Protector, the Restorer, our Refuge, and the Source of all Blessings. Recognizing Christ as all in all and living with that realization will bring us into unity and worship.

UNITY – PSALM 133. The corrupt nature of humanity has made love and unity within a community difficult to achieve. Right after the Fall, the first couple experienced discord (Genesis 3:9-13). Then, a conflict between the first two human born on earth happened that led to fratricide (Genesis 4:1-16). From that point onwards, human history has been a history of wars and conflicts. In the book *The Lessons of History* published in 1968, two renowned American historians, Will and Ariel Durant, observe: “*In the last 3,421 years of recorded history only 268 have seen no war.*” Note that the concept of “war” here applies only to large-scale armed conflicts of national or international scope, not including minor ethnic conflicts, local civil wars, or undocumented armed violence. And amidst a world full of hatred, wars, and conflicts, a community of people from diverse backgrounds yet able to get along in unity stands out.

The admiration for the unity of God’s people made the psalmist begin the Psalm with a word that draws the reader’s attention – “*Behold.*” This word also serves as a marker for the reader to highlight the exclamation that follows – “*How good and pleasant it is!*” The unity of God’s people as brothers dwelling together in harmony is extolled as a very precious thing.

Like a pilgrim stopping at the Temple gate suddenly realizing the beauty and value of unity when beholding the joyful throng of people from different places gathering together, greeting each other with holy kisses, let us also pause for a moment and look at the Church and the District at the upcoming Conference. Do we rejoice when coming together as God’s family in unity? Do we truly cherish this unity? Do we seize every smallest opportunity to build up fellowship in the Church and in the District?

A question often asked is: What makes a spiritual community (the church) different from other ethnic communities in our society? To answer this question, the psalmist used the image of

the anointing of Aaron, the high priest (verse 2). The anointing was performed according to God's instruction, in His way, by His authority, and all accompanying blessings came from Him. In the original language, the verb "*come down*" repeated twice in verse 2 emphasizing that the blessing from Aaron's anointing came from above, that is, from God. And this anointing oil flowed from Aaron's head to his beard, running down onto the collars of his priestly robes where two onyx stones were engraved with the names of the 12 tribes (Exodus 28:9-12) even to the skirts of his garments. The whole nation of Israel, from top to bottom, great to small, became God's consecrated people and were brought into unity through His anointing.

Social communities are formed by human will when they share a common purpose, interest, or object of worship, but the spiritual community comes from God Himself. God's people do not create unity, but they are brought into unity by God's gracious choice. This is a precious truth: we do not create unity in the Body of Christ; we are brought into the Body of Christ when we receive Jesus and participate in that unity (I Corinthians 12:13). And therefore, we also cannot break spiritual unity. Just as children born into a family forever have a blood relationship with one another, those who are *born-again* forever have a spiritual relationship with one another. Even if I look different from other born-again members of my church, I know that they and I are brothers and sisters in the family of God; this is an eternal truth that nothing can change, and because of that I must love them. Moreover, loving brothers and sisters in the faith is also a sign of a truly *born-again* person (I John 3:14).

We do not create nor can we break unity of the universal Church, but what we can do together is to build up unity in the local church so that through it we can experience the wonderful blessings that come from unity in our church. That is the image of dew falling on Mount Hermon, the highest mountain in the North with a height of nearly 1,000 ft, down to the "*mountains of Zion*" in the South, which are not very high. Dew from above came down upon both the small hills of Zion as well as the majestic Mt. Hermon. When a spiritual community – family, Church, District – together cherishes and wholeheartedly "*maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" (Eph. 4:3), not only important or prominent people benefit, but everyone is blessed. Conversely, discord hurts everyone.

The image of oil flowing from Aaron's beard down to the skirts of his robe shows that blessing spreads. The oil anointed on Aaron was compounded from choice spices, myrrh, fragrant cinnamon, fragrant cane (Exodus 30:22-24), so the anointing would diffuse a sweet aroma wherever Aaron went. Similarly, when a child of God has peace in their heart, or when a church has unity, wherever they are they will be a source of blessing. They tend to spread unity to others. Jesus said that the love among believers positively influences society and is a testimony to this ungodly world (John 13:34-35). In other words, what we say and do in our local church will directly impact ourselves, our brothers and sisters, our children's generation, and even in our society.

The psalmist says: "*For there the LORD commanded the blessing – life forever*" (verse 3^b). "*There*" refers to Zion and Jerusalem (Psalm 132:13-18), "*there*" also refers to the place of unity among His people (verse 1), and "*there*" is also "*Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels*" (Hebrews 12:22). The unity in the church, no matter how beautiful and blessed, is only a foreshadow of a perfect blessing in heaven where we will not only meet Christ again but also the saints throughout the ages.

Do we love God? Let us answer that question by loving our brothers and sisters, loving the Church of God (I John 4:20). Do we look forward to that glorious day when we will meet the Lord and our brothers and sisters in the Kingdom of Heaven? Let us answer that question by keeping the unity of the spiritual community God has placed us in, which is our local church and our District.

WORSHIP – PSALM 134. Psalm 134 is the last Psalm of the Songs of Ascent that speaks about worshipping God. In one sense, all these Songs speak of worship, but Psalm 134 is more special. It is the climax. The call: “*Bless the LORD*” (verse 1) is the concluding theme of the entire book of Psalms. This phrase is repeated seven times in Psalm 135, and the last five Psalms begin and end with that phrase.

Bless the LORD is not only the duty and responsibility of all creation, but also the privilege of God’s people. How can we not praise God, for He is “*who made heaven and earth!*” (verse 3), the God full of lovingkindness and mercy who has rescued us from the “*depths*” of sin (Psalm 130:1) to bring us into the family of God (Psalm 133), the One who constantly watches over our lives to guide and care for us (Psalm 121:4), the One who bestowed on us all spiritual blessings (Psalms 127, 128; Ephesians 1:3-6).

Bless the LORD not only in solemn and well attended worship services but also “*by night,*” not only in the Temple but wherever we are, we are to “*lift up your hands toward the holy place and bless the LORD!*” (verse 2). This is the spirit of worship and praise that each of us needs to pursue. Many people may worship and praise God when things go smoothly, but when difficulties in life arise, their praises suddenly turn into lamentations. However, a true worshiper will continue to praise and worship God even when He grants no blessings (Habakkuk 3:17-18), when being imprisoned (Acts 16:25), or when their lives are taken from them (Job 13:15). God’s servant, Pastor Charles Spurgeon, once said: “*Any man can sing in the day,*” but “*he is the skillful singer who can sing when there is not a ray of light by which to read – who sings from his heart.*” A true worshiper will not cease to love God, nor cease to be grateful, nor cease to praise Him!

Bless the LORD and Blessed. The verb “*bless*” in verses 1 and 2 and the verb “*bless*” in verse 3 are the same word in Hebrew. Praising God brings God’s blessing upon us.

We do not worship God as a means of exchanging blessings with Him, but here it shows a connection between praise and blessing. The greatest and surest blessing we receive through worshipping God is the privilege of coming into His presence in a wonderful loving relationship. Worship also brings us the blessing of finding life’s purpose, recognizing the reason for our existence (Isaiah 43:21). Worship also helps to put our focus on God, to have complete trust in Him and to have peace regardless of our circumstances (Psalm 121).

Psalm 134 is a very short psalm; only Psalm 117 is shorter. In Hebrew, this Psalm has only 23 words. Though concise, this Psalm is immensely powerful. Derek Kidner writes: “*The Songs of Ascents, which began in the alien surroundings of Meshech and Kedar..., end fittingly on the note of serving God, ‘day and night within His temple.’*” Eugene Peterson says: “*The way of discipleship that begins in an act of repentance... concludes in a life of praise.*”

Notice who issued the call in verse 1. It could be the words of a priest calling on other priests to praise God, or it could be a responsive call between the priests and the Levites serving in the Temple. Nevertheless, the most widely accepted explanation is that the pilgrims, having come to the Jerusalem Temple to worship God and now when the feast was over, they were to leave Jerusalem for home and back to their daily life. As they were leaving the holy city, they called out and encouraged the priests and Levites to continue worshipping God unceasingly. They also called out and encouraged one another that no matter where they might be, they would “*Lift up your hands to the sanctuary And bless the LORD!*” (verse 2) they also called out “*May the LORD bless you from Zion, He who made heaven and earth!*” (verse 3). The good and powerful God will always accompany them, bless, care for, and guide them. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

PRAYER. We conclude our seven-week spiritual preparation journey leading up to our 50th District Conference here. On Monday, June 23, 2025, we will also conclude our 50th Conference and each one will return to their family and their church. All events or programs will end, but may the worship and praise of God will never cease.

The festive days will pass, difficulties and challenges will remain, but may the Lord enable us to face them in a spirit of praise and worship, by fixing our eyes on Him, by loving our brothers and sisters, and by keeping the unity that God gives us through the Church and the District.

See you at the 50th District Conference in a spirit of unity and worship.

Amen.