

Psalm 15 – Who can come to Church?

Psalm 15:1-5 (NIV2011)

¹ LORD, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain?

² The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart;

³ whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbor, and casts no slur on others;

⁴ who despises a vile person but honors those who fear the LORD; who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind;

⁵ who lends money to the poor without interest; who does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Whoever does these things will never be shaken.

Now here is a weird question. Who can come and worship God? Who can come to church? Our basic answer is – everyone

Then why the question? This Psalm asks that question –

¹ LORD, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain?

Other translations say it differently. ()Like last week I am still looking at what the different translations say)

NIV (The old one uses the term sanctuary.

King James versions say:

Psalm 15:1 (KJV)

¹ LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

RSV states:

Psalm 15:1 (RSV)

¹ O LORD, who shall sojourn in thy tent? Who shall dwell on thy holy hill?

They all use different terms for the temple / tabernacle or the place you go to worship God.

So we could make it applicable to us.

O Lord who can come to this church worship time? Keep that thought.

The rest of the verse:

Who may live on your holy mountain? Again different ways of putting it. Most say
who shall dwell in thy holy hill? RSV

What's this Holy Hill? NO car enthusiasts it is not Mount Panorama!

Zion or the Holy Hill is originally the rocky escarpment at the end of Jerusalem. Originally it was noted as the safe place because of its natural fortifications, then it came to mean the whole city of Jerusalem.. The concept for the Jews was that this was God's city, as well as David's city. It is also where the temple was built. And yes there is some mention that the tabernacle was there before the temple was built.

To the Jews, its where the experience God's presence.

So is it saying the same thing? Yes, in some ways. Psalms and in fact Hebrew poetry does that. A repeated statement in parallel. This technique is creatively called parallelism. There are other ways that the concept is used which we may touch on in later Psalms. But the question is asked.

And Ok there's the question. Who can be here.? Again we say everyone., That is in our Baptist DNA – everybody is welcome.

But why the question. Well the Psalm is termed an **Entrance liturgy**. IN some ways a preparation for worship. A thinking about worship as you go to the temple. (They walked, we drive still worth using as we come to gather)

But, there are some issues here.

While this verse talks about being physically present at worship, the rest of **the Psalm talks about spiritual character.**

So maybe – the issue is not who can be here but who can be in God’s presence with integrity? Or even how can we be in God’s presence.

Well, simply put, none of us have the right to stand in God’s presence, after all we are all sinners, yet this passage gives us some boundaries, it gives us some characteristics to develop to be in relationship with God.

Notice the next verse:

Psalm 15:2 (RSV)

² He who walks blamelessly, and does what is right, and speaks truth from his heart;

Wo, I don’t know about you, but I find this a bit unattainable. I am not blameless, I try to do right but it doesn’t always work that way and truth – that is a furry edged subject these days.

So if I need to be perfect, to worship God how does it work?

Here is a list with both positive and negative and “The positive and negative are important, for the person who would enter God’s presence must have a life characterised not only by active goodness but also by the absence of evil.” (Peter Craigie, 151)

Here we have the issue: In the history of Christian worship, there have emerged two extremes toward which the worshipper may be tempted to move. On the one hand, there have been times when the holiness of God has been stressed so powerfully, that the ordinary mortal has felt it impossible to approach God in worship or prayer. On the other hand, the open access to God in prayer has

sometimes been so stressed that admission to God's presence becomes a thoughtless and casual matter. (Craigie, 152-3)

Where do we sit if we are to think about it, are we one extreme of the other or somewhere in the middle?

Do we feel we can come to God, or is it just a given in our lives?

Let's look where the Psalmist takes us:

²The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart;

³whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbor, and casts no slur on others;

⁴who despises a vile person but honors those who fear the LORD; who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind;

⁵who lends money to the poor without interest; who does not accept a bribe against the innocent.

See what is underlined.

Blameless, righteous, speaks truth, no slander, no wrong to neighbours, casts no slur, yet despises evil people, honours those who love God, keep their word, doesn't change their mind, lends money to those in need, doesn't accept bribes.

Now that is some list. We could look at each individually and as I prepared I did that then I thought, "This is making a picture" This makes a picture of a good bloke, one who tries to do what God wants him to. In some ways it is the picture of a good Aussie Christian bloke who does his best, and helps where he can, keeps his word and does the right thing.

Is it achievable?

It must be – we have been instructed to have a go.

What comes across here is integrity. **Come to worship with integrity.** Come to church with integrity. Will we get it right? No – The Psalm is attributed to David as the author. David the friend of God mmm, who committed adultery, then murdered Uriah, made mistakes, yet writes a Psalm like this and heaps of other Psalms. In fact wrote some amazing Psalms of worship AFTER he had committed adultery and murder. How does that work?

Let's be real, David wasn't blameless, righteous, nor was he truthful, if we go through the list – David at some strange in his life as recorded in the bible fell short – and so will we.

So it's not about perfection, but about having a go.

We can worship God if we have a go at being His person. Now, here we get to a bit that makes us sit up and take notice. It isn't mentioned in the Psalm, yet in reality the whole Old Testament points in some way to Jesus, and we know that **Through Jesus Christ, through His death and His resurrection we can be attributed with His status.** He took our place – He was and is the perfect one, we can be blameless, righteous and truthful – because of that relationship through Jesus. Goodness that sounds like the theological implications of double imputation! (More about that in a later Psalm)

Here is a thing: **We need to prepare ourselves for worship.**

Do we spend time working through our life before this time of corporate worship?

I remember as a kid having to be quiet before church because people were praying and preparing themselves for church. Not much of that happening any more. Sure, I get here early and spend some time praying and contemplating, there is a group who meet in the counselling room to pray for the days activities yet mostly we come in some in a rush to get here on time and we really aren't

giving God a chance to speak to us. (Some of you may do that before coming I realise)

So here is a template for before church.

Arrive early

Pray

Personally evaluate your relationship with God

Recognise God's place in your life.

Worship.

If that seems cumbersome, use this Psalm or one of the other Psalms that talk about being prepared for worship.

For us as Christians we can take this Psalm as a template for lifestyle and preparation to interface with God in a way that comes out as worship because we know Christ allows us to be in God's presence with integrity – Jesus' integrity.

So who can come to worship today? Everyone – who has that relationship with Jesus.

Note where it all finishes.

Whoever does these things will never be shaken.

It kind of assumes that worship is a primary essence of relationship with God. Yep. Worship, and prayer can not be divorced. We can't be living a Christian lifestyle without aspects of worship.

So who can come to church to worship. We can.