

Sermon with Service Following

August 15, 2021

Psalm 84

“There’s no place I’d rather be.” Where’s your place? What place has you thinking: “There’s no place I’d rather be”? I think of Crandall’s Chicken over in Hebron. The food was good; all you can eat made it better; but the whole family together for Mom and Dad’s anniversary - “There’s no place I’d rather be.” Or coming back from vacation in Colorado, lunch with Lisa and her mom at her mom’s place out in the country, the fries were mushy; the fast-food burger was a dripping, sloppy mess; and it felt like 95 degrees inside at the farm-house table, but: “There’s no place I’d rather be.” Or at Cooper’s restaurant in Georgetown, the last table on the deck, next to the door opening and closing, too far away to really see the stream, but there with my Lisa after a day of hiking in the mountains - “There’s no place I’d rather be.” Just so you don’t think it’s always about food, I think of sitting on the rocks at the top of Mt. Evans. I’m thinking “There’s no place I’d rather be.” Lisa’s thinking: “I wish you weren’t so close to the edge.”

And there’s someplace else. Here. “There’s no place I’d rather be.” When I say that, there’s a voice in me that says: “Liar! Hypocrite!” My old sinful nature has all sorts of places he’d rather be. He’d rather be in the pews with you than up here. He’d rather be at home like you than in church. He’d rather be strolling downtown Grayslake, downtown Libertyville, pretending that all is good. He’d rather be doing his thing his way whenever wherever he wants instead of listening to somebody else. He’d even rather be doing chores, pretending that he can put his world in order and make his world right. Yes, there’s a part of me that would rather not be here.

I won’t tell you that he’d rather be sleeping in on Sunday mornings, or watching TV, playing video-games, or surfing the web on Sunday mornings - that gets old, old and empty, doesn’t it? I shouldn’t say that; our old sinful loves to pretend that empty is fulfilling, doesn’t it? And so I tell myself and you: “There’s no place I’d rather be” - not to pretend or to argue, but to win with Jesus and be wrapped in the blessing of God in the house of God.

Our lesson, Psalm 84, fits so well for a time like this. The psalmist sings: **“How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty!”** We can imagine him thinking: “There’s no place I’d rather be.” But he can’t be there. For some reason he can’t get to the house of the Lord; he can’t get to church. Maybe it was war; maybe it was sickness or plague; maybe some other trouble. It had to be something big that kept him away, away from God’s house. It wasn’t just comfort or convenience; it wasn’t just chores or bores that kept him from church. He cried out: **“My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.”** I’ve heard much the same thing from you: “My week, my life are all off if I can’t start it right with God in the house of God.”

Why? I think of what David said in Psalm 122, the psalm where he sings: **“I was glad when they said to me: ‘Let us go to the house of the LORD.’”** David points us to God’s house and says: **“there the thrones of judgment stand.”** In our house of God, we don’t have the Old Testament ark of the covenant or the altar for burning our offerings. We have better! We have the baptism font, where with water and the Word - where the Spirit of God makes us alive and new for life with God, where Jesus washes us clean for God and for heaven, where the Father puts his name on us and adopts us as his in the family of God.

Here we have the altar, rock solid, reminding us of God’s unshakeable, unmoveable promise; “I’m here for you!” Here we have the altar, the table, where Jesus shares his Supper, his covenant, his promise with us: “for the forgiveness of your sins.” Yes, here we have the altar where Jesus gives us his body and blood, where Jesus - God himself - gives us himself. Here we lay out our prayers to God and beg his mercy; here he promises: “I love you, I forgive you, I’m here to bless you.”

Here we have the pulpit and lectern where God gathers us to hear the Word of our God. Here in his Word he gives us his commands: **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength. And love your neighbor as yourself.”** Here he lays down his Law: **“The soul that sins, it shall die.”** Here he gathers us to hear his Gospel promise: **“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** Here he empowers us and calls us to action: **“You are the light of the world. Let your light shine”** Yes, here our Lord gathers us. He gathers us to forgive our guilt, to cover our shame, to heal our broken-ness, to make us strong for life and for love. Yes, here is where God loves to share his love and work his blessing.

That's why, in Psalm 27, David sang out: **“One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD.”** In Colorado, up there on top of Mount Evans, some 14,000 feet above sea level, we heard a biker, a Harley Davidson biker, shout out: “There is a god!” Up on top of Mt. Evans, you can gaze out in any direction and see mountains below you. Up there in the mountains you can get a sense of the majesty of God; in the forests, along the rushing streams and cascading waterfalls where every turn could be another picture, even up above tree-line you can sense the creativity of God with such dazzling designs of beauty and enduring practicality. Up there it's easy to be awed by God.

And up there, with a slip, a fall, an afternoon lightning strike, it's easy to meet God. Are you ready to meet God? To meet the God of rock and stone, to meet the God of fire and lightning, to meet the God who demands: **“Love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength.** [Are you ready to meet the God who demands:] **Love your neighbor as yourself”?** Are you ready to meet the God who judges: **“The soul that sins it shall die”?** As wonderful as it is to see the beauty of God out there, to truly see the love of God, God doesn't point us to the mountains, lakes, and streams, the flowers, birds, and sunshine. No, he points us to his Son, Jesus.

In Jesus, we see a love so selfless, he took our sin, the sin that would damn us, as his own and paid the price for us on the cross. In Jesus, we see a love so gracious, he invites us, no matter where we've been, no matter what we've done, he invites us in close to forgive us and bless us. In Jesus, we see a love so enduring, week after week, day after day, he invites us in to his home to see and hear his love, to share his love forever. Sometimes it's good, just to sit here and see Jesus, isn't it? And let him heal our hurts and our hearts and make us strong for a new week.

That's what the psalm writer had in mind in our lesson. He thinks of people going through what we've been going through and worse, far worse. We go through our bitter times, our difficult times. And the God we see here, the God we meet here, the God who invites us here, he showers us with his blessings to keep us going - day by day, week after week until we meet him face to face in heaven. We will, because he will. We will see him face to face in heaven, because as long as we keep on with him, he will keep on blessing us.

That's why our psalm writer says: **“Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.”** That's why David says: **“I was glad when they said to me: ‘Let us go to the house of the LORD.’”** And why he said: **“One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD, and to seek him in his temple.”** And that's why we're here - filling up with Jesus, getting ready for heaven - **“There's no place I'd rather be!”** Amen.

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church

A Family Connecting in Christ



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August 14 & 15, 2021

DIVINE SERVICE I

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we see more and more anger and angst in hearts and minds starved of God's peace and promise. As our culture self-indulges in the rule of self-convenience, we see a growing apathy toward worship. As our culture self-indulges in the rule of self-rightness (my way is the right way), we see more of God's people leaving the church and/or putting others off to Christ's church.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we are reminded of the blessings of gathering for worship - the Holy Spirit strengthens our connections with God and with each other. Renewed in worship, we are set free from the rule of self-convenience and self-rightness, and we are equipped to meet the anger and angst of the world with the peace and promise of Jesus. God bless your worship!

PASTORAL REMINDER - At times, Christian love means we avoid sharing our germs with others. At times, Christian wisdom means avoiding the germs of others. We don't need to impose guilt where God does not impose guilt!

OPENING HYMN (PAGE 20)

"Open, Lovely Doors"
Hymn 912

OPENING DIALOGUE

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

M: I was glad when they said to me,

C: **Let us go to the house of the Lord!**

M: That you would allow us to gather in worship not out of duty but with joy and delight,

C: **We praise you, Lord!**

M: That you would bring us to a place where you promise to meet your people,

C: We praise you, Lord!

M: For the blessing of seeing the sacred symbols of your house and the mutual encouragement found in seeing one another,

C: We praise you, Lord!

M: For being with us in all places and through all situations, and bringing us together as members of one body of Christ,

C: We praise you, Lord!

M: Even as our hearts are rebounding with praise, we feel a sadness as we see room for so many who are not with us.

For those not here because they feel forgotten or put off,

C: Forgive us, O Lord!

M: For all those things that got in the way of our reaching out to keep our family connecting in love - for our forgetfulness and inattention; for the way our care and love fall short; for our laziness, our insecurities, our busyness with things,

C: Forgive us, O Lord!

M: For the times and ways we have indulged ourselves in the rule of self-convenience instead of setting our hearts and minds to worship you; for the times and ways we have led others to indulge themselves in the rule of self-convenience instead of leading them to set their hearts and minds to worship you;

C: Forgive us, O Lord!

M: For any and all ways that we have indulged our self-glorifying opinions at the expense of your wisdom and love, for any and all ways that our love and wisdom simply fall short of your wisdom and love,

C: Forgive us, O Lord!

CONFESSION OF SINS

M: Beloved in the Lord: let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins to God our Father, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

C: Holy and merciful Father, I confess that I am by nature sinful and that I have disobeyed you in my thoughts, words, and actions. I have done what is evil and failed to do what is good. For this I deserve your punishment both now and in eternity. But I am truly sorry for my sins, and trusting in my Savior Jesus Christ, I pray: Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.

LORD, HAVE MERCY

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The first staff begins with a common time signature 'C' in a box. The lyrics are: Lord, have mer - cy on us. Christ, have mer - cy on us. Lord, have mer - cy on us. A - men.

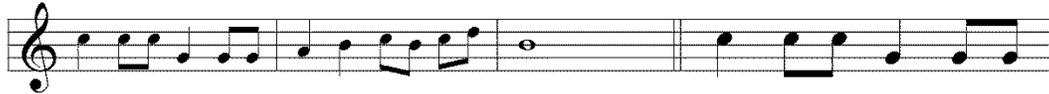
M: God, our heavenly Father, has been merciful to us and has given his only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

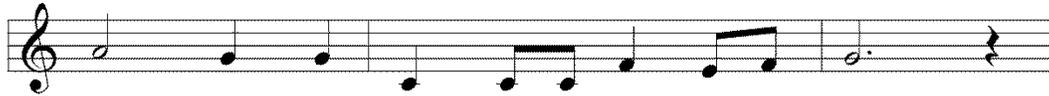
PRAYER AND PRAISE

M: In the peace of forgiveness, let us praise the Lord.

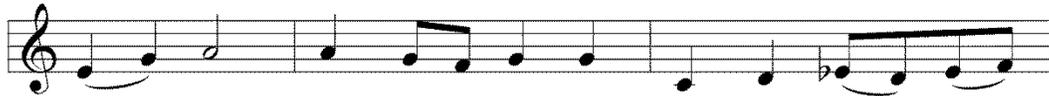
GLORY TO GOD



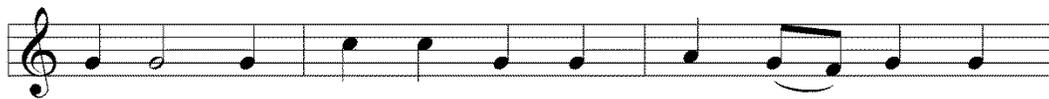
Glo - ry to God in the



high - est, and peace to his peo - ple on earth.



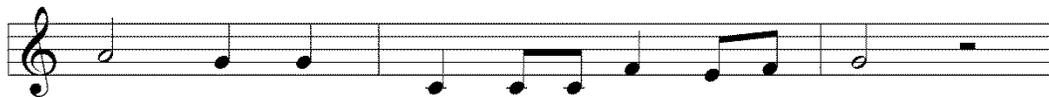
Lord God, heav - en - ly King, al - might - y God and



Fa - ther, we wor - ship you, we give you thanks, we



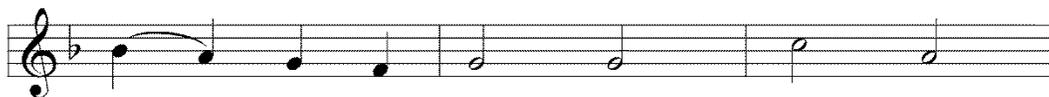
praise you for your glo - ry! Glo - ry to God in the



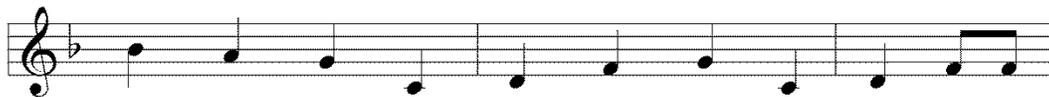
high - est, and peace to his peo - ple on earth.



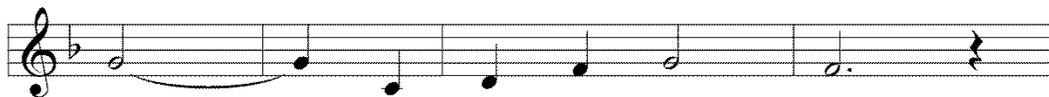
Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly



Son of the Fa - ther, Lord God,



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the



world; have mer - cy on us.

You are seat - ed at the right hand of the
 Fa - ther; re - ceive our prayer, re -
 ceive our prayer. Glo - ry to God in the
 high - est, and peace to his peo - ple on earth. For
 you a - lone are the Ho - ly One, you a - lone are the
 Lord, you a - lone are the Most High,
 Je - sus Christ, with the Ho - ly Spir - it in the
 glo - ry of God the Fa - ther. Glo - ry to God in the
 high - est, and peace to his peo - ple on earth.
 Glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God!

PRAYER OF THE DAY (*Spoken Together*)

O Lord Jesus Christ, bless this family of believers gathered together in your name with your never-failing mercy. Preserve us from that which would keep us apart. Bind us together with the bond of your love. Help us avoid whatever is harmful and wicked. And guide us in the way that leads to our salvation; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

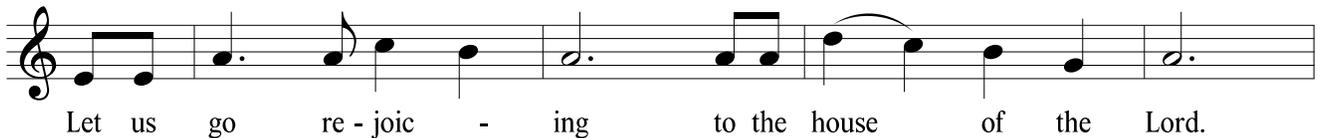
FIRST LESSON

Acts 2:42-47

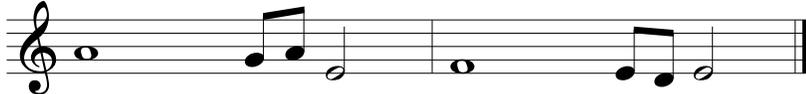
They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

PSALM 84 (CW)

Refrain



Psalm tone



How lovely is your `dwelling place,*
O LORD Al`mighty!

My soul yearns, `even faints,*
For the courts `of the LORD.

Blessed are those who dwell `in your house,*
They are ever `praising you.

Refrain

Better is one day `in your courts*
Than a thousand `elsewhere;

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house `of my God*
Than dwell in the tents of the `wicked.

O LORD Al`mighty,*
Blessed are they who `trust in you.

**Glory be to the Father and `to the Son*
And to the Holy `Spirit,
As it was in the be`ginning,*
Is now, and will be forever. `Amen. *Refrain***

SECOND LESSON

Revelation 7:9-17

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”

All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying:

“Amen!
Praise and glory
and wisdom and thanks and honor
and power and strength
be to our God for ever and ever.
Amen!”

Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes - who are they, and where did they come from?"

I answered, "Sir, you know."

And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore,

 "they are before the throne of God
 and serve him day and night in his temple;
 and he who sits on the throne
 will spread his tent over them.
 Never again will they hunger;
 never again will they thirst.
 The sun will not beat upon them,
 nor any scorching heat.
 For the Lamb at the center of the throne
 will be their shepherd;
 he will lead them to springs of living water.
 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

PSALM 122:1

M: I rejoiced with those who said to me,

C: **"Let us go to the house of the Lord."**

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 4:14-19

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

HYMN

“God is Here! As We His People”

Hymn 532

God is here! As we his people Meet to offer praise and prayer,
May we find in fuller measure What it is in Christ we share.
Here, as in the world around us, All our varied skills and arts
Wait the coming of his Spirit Into open minds and hearts.

Here are symbols to remind us Of our lifelong need of grace.
Here are table, font, and pulpit; Here the cross has central place.
Here, in honesty of preaching, Here, in silence as in speech,
Here, in newness and renewal, God the Spirit comes to each.

Here our children find a welcome In the Shepherd's flock and fold;
Here, as bread and wine are taken, Christ sustains us as of old.
Here the servants of the Servant Seek in worship to explore
What it means in daily living To believe and to adore.

Lord of all, of Church and Kingdom, In an age of change and doubt,
Keep us faithful to the gospel; Help us work your purpose out.
Here, in this day's dedication, All we have to give, receive;
We who cannot live without you, We adore you! We believe!

SERMON

Psalm 84

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Gluten free wafers are available; please see Pastor.)

(Before and after Communion prayers are found in *Christian Worship*, page 11.)

M: The Lord be with you.

C: **(Spoken) And also with you.**

M: Lift up your hearts.

C: **We lift them up to the Lord.**

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: **It is good and right so to do.**

M: It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who promised that wherever two or three come together in his name, there he is with them to shepherd his flock till he comes again in glory.

M: Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY



ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless -
 ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san -
 na in the high - est. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my † body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

M: Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my † blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: **Amen.**

O CHRIST, LAMB OF GOD

O Christ, Lamb of
 God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have
 mer - cy on us. O Christ, Lamb of

God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have
mer - cy on us. O Christ, Lamb of
God, you take a - way the sin of the world;
grant us your peace. A - men. A - men.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN

M: O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

C: **And his mercy endures forever.**

M: O God the Father, source of all goodness, in your loving kindness you sent your Son to share our humanity. We thank you that through him you have given us pardon and peace in this sacrament. We also pray that you will not forsake us but will rule our hearts and minds by your Holy Spirit so that we willingly serve you day after day, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: *(spoken)* **Amen.**

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.

C: **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

“Go, My Children, with My Blessing”

Hymn 332

Go, my children with my blessing, Never alone.
Waking, sleeping, I am with you; You are my own.
In my love’s baptismal river I have made you mine forever.
Go, my children, with my blessing— You are my own.

Go, my children, sins forgiven, At peace and pure.
Here you learned how much I love you, What I can cure.
Here you heard my dear Son’s story; Here you touched him, Saw his glory,
Go, my children, sins forgiven, At peace and pure.

Go, my children, fed and nourished, Closer to me.
Grow in love and love by serving, Joyful and free.
Here my Spirit’s power filled you; Here his tender comfort stilled you.
Go my children fed and nourished, Joyful and free.

I the Lord will bless and keep you And give you peace;
I the Lord will smile upon you And give you peace;
I the Lord will be your Father, Savior, Comforter, and Brother.
Go, my children; I will keep you And give you peace.

OFFERING

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Open, Lovely Doors

912

1 O - pen, love - ly doors, and let me come in - to God's
2 With a song I've come to greet you; come to me, dear
3 You de - serve my deep - est rev - 'rence; sanc - ti - fy me

house to - day! This is where great joys be - set me
Lord, I pray. Where you let your peo - ple meet you
through and through. Let my wor - ship in your pres - ence

more than I can sing or say. Here I view God's
heav - en's light is bright as day. Let my heart your
clear - ly show my love for you. Lord of mer - cy,

glo - rious face, see his light, re - ceive his grace.
heav - en be; Sav - ior, make your home in me.
hear my cry: lift my heart to you on high!

Text: Benjamin Schmolck, 1672–1737, abr.; tr. Michael D. Schultz, b. 1963
Tune: Joachim Neander, 1650–1680; setting: *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 1941, alt.

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Ps 84: 1-4, 10; 122: 1; Jn 14: 23