

Psalm Sundays

Text
Psalm 133

Topic
David recalls the holy oil
running down on Aaron's beard
when he was anointed as High Priest

Title
***"Running Down the Hair
of My Chinny-Chin-Chin"***

I doubt that most of us have ever heard of Jason Kiley - despite the fact that he was 2019's US National Champion.

Or the 2019 World Champion, Lucio Battista (who, BTW, is an American).

They were the freestyle champions in the annual national and international beard & mustache competitions. Among thousands of competitors, their beards were voted the hairy-best.

Beards are back in a big way. Proctor and Gamble has publicly blamed the beard for slumping sales of shaving products.

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Like everything else, beards & mustaches are a COVID19 public health concern. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has suggestions for those with facial hair. It's a chart illustrating proper mask placement with thirty-three styles of facial hair.

I have to stop and read you a few of the beard styles they list: French fork... Garibaldi... Chin strap... Balbo... Van Dyke... Hulihee... Walrus... Tooth brush... and Zappa.

You bearded guys might want to check it out. (You bearded ladies, too, I suppose).

Beards can affect history; at least one beard did anyway. According to biography.com,

Abraham Lincoln's beard is now an indelible part of his image. Lincoln decided to grow out his whiskers in part thanks to some well-meaning advice from a young supporter. In 1860, 11yr-old Grace Bedell wrote Lincoln a letter that said in part: "I have yet got four brothers, and part of them will vote for you any way, but if you let your whiskers grow I will try and get the rest of them to vote for you. You would look a great deal better for your face is so thin. All the ladies like whiskers and they would tease their husbands to vote for you and then you would be President."

Lincoln thus became our nation's first fully-bearded president. Following Lincoln, our 18th, 19th, and 20th presidents were fully bearded. As far as I can tell, after them there were presidents with only partial facial hair.

I might need a fact-check on this, but it seems that Taft, #27, was the last US president to sport *any* significant facial hair.

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A bearded man is prominent in Psalm 133. Let's read it through, and meet this person.

Psa 133:1 A Song of Ascents. Of David. Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* For brethren to dwell together in unity!

Psa 133:2 *It is* like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments.

Psa 133:3 *It is* like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing - Life forevermore.

Surveying the crowds of pilgrims jammed into and around Jerusalem during one of the annual feasts, David was impressed by their "good" and "pleasant" "unity" as they "dwell[ed] together."

The LORD was going to inspire David to turn what he beheld in that moment into a psalm. The Holy Spirit whispered to David, "What you are seeing, compare to the oil running down Aaron's beard, and the dew on Mount Hermon."

Thus this precious chorus comes through time to us. Gathered together, in unity, is still God's blessing for His saints.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Dwelling Together In Unity Is A Sight For You To See**, and **#2 Dwelling Together In Unity Is A Scent For You To Diffuse**.

#1 - Dwelling Together In Unity Is A Sight For You To See (v1)

I have a hard time with an abstract concept like "unity." It's hard for me to get a handle on it. I'm therefore thankful for what David did in Psalm 133.

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He gave us a visual presentation of unity.

Ever give a *PowerPoint* presentation? You could present Psalm 133 with three main slides:

1. The twelve tribes attending a feast.
2. The High Priest being anointed for service.
3. Mount Hermon in the background.

We will fill it out more, but here is the nutshell version:

1. Israel was a diverse nation of twelve tribes spread out all over, and outside, the Promised Land. Three times annually they were invited to journey to Jerusalem to gather together and celebrate one of the feasts.
2. Their High Priest wore a breastplate with twelve stones on it representing each of the twelve tribes. He stood in the line of Aaron, as one of his descendants, anointed by the LORD to represent Israel.
3. In the background was majestic Mount Hermon. If we can trust the commentators, they say this tallest mountain was blanketed with heavy dew.

The priest & the people beautifully, visually, depicted Israel as one man, standing before the LORD to receive His blessings, poured out from Heaven like the abundant morning dew on Mount Hermon.

Unity was a snapshot David could “behold” in that moment. It was a unity all Israel could “behold.”

We can “behold” unity even more than David did:

🧑 We are described in the New Testament as being “in Christ.”

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- 👤 We are described as being members of His one “body.”
- 👤 We are described as being stones in His earthly Temple, fit together as one building.

Jesus is described as our Greater High Priest. He carries us upon His heart - proven at Calvary, on the Cross where He gave Himself as a Substitute for your sins.

Our ‘Mount Hermon’ isn’t a place; it’s a Person, the Holy Spirit, by whose living water rushing into and through our lives we enjoy abundant spiritual blessings.

There are a lot of ways we could approach a talk about “unity.” Whatever else it is, **in this psalm**, unity was God’s people gathered together to worship the LORD as prescribed in God’s Word.

Same with us. As we gather together to worship Jesus as prescribed in the Word, we are “one in the Spirit; we are one in the Lord.” We are a visual of unity for ourselves and others to see.

Psa 133:1 A Song of Ascents. Of David. Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* For brethren to dwell together in unity!

Psalm 133 is the next-to-the-last of the psalms (or songs) of ascent sung by the pilgrims going up to Jerusalem.

The spiritual unity David could visualize was something that ought inspire the Israelites to aspire to in practice. They were one; *they ought to act like it.*

Here is another way of putting it: They could (if they chose to) “dwell together in” *relational* “unity” with one another. They could be kind to one another,

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forgiving one another, preferring one another. They could get along. Could and should. So can we - only more so.

Dwelling in practical unity is “good” and it is “pleasant.”

The word “good” can be rendered *better*, *best*, and *bountiful*.

- 👤 Unity is *better* than contention and strife.
- 👤 Unity is *best* for everyone.
- 👤 Unity's *blessings* are bountiful rather than meager.

Dwelling in relational unity is “pleasant.” It may sound selfish, but the idea here is that you experience *delight* rather than *difficulty*. You're not distracted from worshipping and serving the Lord.

The apostle Paul exhorted us,

Eph 4:1 ... to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,

Eph 4:2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,

Eph 4:3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Unity is our default position. It is part of being a Christian. Jesus unites us as His body, as His building. Our practice can either maintain unity, or it can undermine it.

The qualities Paul listed are not exhaustive. He is essentially saying, “Act like a Christian should,” then reminding you of a few characteristics. You *can* act like a believer on account of being in Christ, and of His Holy Spirit being in you.

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#2 - Dwelling Together In Unity Is A Scent For You To Diffuse (v2-3)

When we first relocated to Hanford in 1985, we noticed the area had its own peculiar fragrances:

- 👤 There was (and still is) Dairy Smell, a sort of manurey, methane scent.
- 👤 There was, seasonally, Garlic Smell, from the seed plant as you'd drive along the 198 entering or leaving town. I love the smell of garlic in the morning.
- 👤 The aerial defoliant sprayed by the crop dusters has that distinctly sickly-sweet aroma of death.
- 👤 The tap water smelled like rotten eggs. So did you after showering.

The holy anointing oil had a more aromatic scent. As it was poured upon the high priest, the fragrance would diffuse into the surrounding air.

Psa 133:2 *It is* like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments.

Did they really pour so much oil on Aaron's head that it ran down through his beard and onto his garments? Seems so. Another reason I'm glad we aren't under the Law.

Aaron had a beard. On the CDC chart, I'm guessing it was a Bandholz - a beard "attached at the mustache and allowed to grow freely." Think David Letterman, if you've seen him recently.

There were lots of bearded Bible characters: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses. In fact, it's hard to find ones without beards.

- 👤 David sported a beard. We know that because in one episode he feigned madness, "and let his spittle fall down his beard."

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- 👤 Ezekiel wore a beard, as we see in this passage where God has him to shave part of his hair and beard, as a symbolic gesture showing the shame that would soon come upon Jerusalem.
- 👤 Jesus was bearded. Describing the sufferings of the Savior, Isaiah wrote, "I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting" (50:6).

Jewish men could be shamed simply by cutting their beards:

"So Hanun took David's servants and shaved off half the beard of each and cut off their garments in the middle, at their hips, and sent them away. When it was told David, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, "Remain at Jericho **until your beards have grown** and then return" (2 Samuel 10:4-5).

Should Christian men sport beards? Our answer in this New Testament Church Age of grace is that it isn't **mandatory**.

A.W. Tozer talked about the anointing oil in a devotional. I quote him:

Going back into the Levitical priesthood, we discover a ritual of an anointing with a specially prepared holy oil. Certain pungent herbs were beaten into the oil, making it fragrant and aromatic. It was unique; Israel might not use that formula for any other oil. When a priest was set apart and anointed, the oil was a vivid type of the New Testament anointing of the Holy Spirit. The holy anointing oil could only be used for the anointing of men with special ministries - priests and kings and prophets. If someone went near an Old Testament priest, he could say immediately, "I smell an anointed man. I smell the holy oil!" The aroma, the pungency, the fragrance were there. Such an anointing could not be kept a secret.

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The passage of Scripture that brings this to us in the Church Age is found in Second Corinthians 2:14-16: "Now thanks be to God who...through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death to death, and to the other the aroma of life to life."

Bob Hoekstra said,

This spiritual aroma of Christ impacts every person we meet. For those who are enjoying life in Christ, Christ's fragrance in us draws them to seek abundant measures of that life which they have already entered. This spiritual scent also influences those who do not yet know our Lord. They are dead in their sins, and this aroma makes them more aware of their deadness, more aware of their need for Christ. When this fragrance is emanating from our lives, we are not the cause. God is the active agent, working in and through us to bring forth this heavenly scent.

Jesus uses us as His diffusers, to give off a heavenly scent that is "smelled" by believers and nonbelievers.

Fragrances are achieved by carefully mixing together certain substances. The priestly anointing oil was made from myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, cassia, and olive oil. They weren't to add or subtract from the recipe.

The fragrance we give off isn't something you can smell; it's spiritual. I wonder, however, if the things we add to, or subtract from, our lives changes the fragrance of Jesus?

Christians sometimes add things that they consider to be spiritual, but which are nothing more than the flesh seeking to do the work of the spirit:

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- 👤 Take a whiff of legalism. It is a term Christians use to describe emphasizing a system of rules and regulations for achieving both salvation and spiritual growth. It's a deadly odor, a stench.
- 👤 Take a whiff of license. In the Bible, liberty is the freedom to do right. License is the freedom to do wrong. Our salvation is not a license to sin. It is a deliverance from sin. When liberty turns to license, it first gives off an intoxicating aroma that numbs our senses. Then it turns to the stench of our flesh.

Likewise, we can subtract things from our walk with the Lord. Talking to God, reading His Word, gathering with his people, sharing the good news, are all things that we can overlook.

Psa 133:3 *It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing - Life forevermore.*

9,232 feet above sea level. It's the star of the Hermon mountain range. We noted earlier it is famous for its 'heavy' dew.

What does dew, *do*? According to one source, "Though the Mediterranean climate of Palestine had no rainfall from May or June to September, it had dew. Dew was important in the summer and a supplement to rain. Zion was therefore a place of fertility which even in the rainless season has an abundance of dew, like that of mighty Hermon to the north."

Verses two and three are what scholars call parallelism. They make the same point in two different ways. Oil runs down... Dew runs down. Both indicate abundant blessing from 'above,' in this case, from Heaven.

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It also communicates how potent the anointing oil was. It may only be a few ounces running down on Aaron, but spiritually it is more like all the heavy dew running down from Hermon.

“For there the LORD commanded the blessing - Life forevermore.”

“There” is Zion, and Jerusalem in particular. It was and it is His city. In Psalm 132:13-14 we read,

Psa 132:13 For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired *it* for His dwelling place:

Psa 132:14 "This *is* My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.

God “commanded the blessing” encompasses the whole Old Testament revelation of God’s redemption of lost humanity. To save mankind, God instituted substitutionary sacrifice. A slain lamb could temporarily take your place. Over time, God chose Abraham to father a new nation. Then He gave that nation a detailed system of substitutionary sacrifice. It was housed in Jerusalem, in the Temple. Then He sent Jesus, God-in-human-flesh, to be the final lamb Who takes away the sin of the world.

Salvation - “life forevermore” - emanated from the Temple in Jerusalem to the rest of the world. If you wanted to know God, you traveled to His Temple, to see His chosen people.

In the future, after the resurrection and rapture of the church, and after the seven year Great Tribulation, Jesus will return in His Second Coming to... Jerusalem. He will rule the earth sitting on David’s throne. Salvation will emanate from there. the prophet Zechariah wrote, “And it shall come to pass *that* everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall

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go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" (14:16).

Any decent beard expert will tell you beardcare involves washing your face and applying beard oil.

From the moment we are saved, Jesus is at work making us "holy, cleansing [us] by the **washing** with water through the word" (Ephesians 5:26).

He gifts us with the Holy Spirit - our anointing oil.

- 👤 When someone comes near me (or to you), do they get a whiff of something spiritual?
- 👤 Or do we smell more like food rotting on our unkept beards?

I quoted Tozer earlier, saying, "If someone went near an Old Testament priest, he could say immediately, "I smell an anointed man. I smell the holy oil!"

Let's put our names in there, with these changes: "If someone went near Gene, he could say immediately, "I smell _____."

Fill-in the blank.

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