

PSALMS

Chapter 134

Come, Bless the LORD

A Song of Ascents.

Come, bless the LORD, all you servants of the LORD, who stand by night in the house of the LORD! 2 Lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the LORD! 3 May the LORD bless you from Zion, he who made heaven and earth!

Ps 134 A liturgy of praise—a brief exchange between the worshipers, as they are about to leave the temple after the evening service, and the Levites, who kept the temple watch through the night. In the Psalter it concludes the “songs of ascent,” as Ps 117 concludes a collection of Hallelujah psalms (Ps 111–117). Its date is probably postexilic. (CSB)

Last and shortest of the Psalms of Ascents.

Format: Vv 1–2, possibly recited as a call at the changing of the night watch in the temple; v 3, response. (TLSB)

The 134th psalm is a psalm of instruction. It teaches and admonishes the priest and spiritual one of their office. They should worship God faithfully and diligently, day and night praising God, preaching, and occupying themselves with his Word. As St Paul also says to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:2f), they should continue faithfully in their office. They should not concern themselves that people despise the Word and turn from it to fables. For where one discards God’s Word, there both spiritual and worldly offices will fall as well – at the last, fall into error and abandoned by God, fall into the devil’s power.

However, where preaching continues, there he who made heaven and earth is always present to bless. For the sake of the Word, he helps and gives all blessings even to the unworthy and the unthankful. Let this psalm be sung by you pastors, preachers, bishops, and whoever sits in a spiritual office. (Reading the Psalms with Luther)

134:1–2 The departing worshipers call on the Levites to continue the praise of the Lord through the night (see 1Ch 9:33). – Zion, the place of God’s presence, is the source of all blessing. Since the Lord is the maker of heaven and earth, he can provide every blessing for his people. (PBC)

134:1 *servants*. General reference to God’s “servants” is made specific in the parallel line, referring to the priests and Levites who guard the temple during the night. (TLSB)

stand by night. The night watch, during which time the priests on duty, carrying torches, would make things ready for the ministry of the coming day. (TLSB)

134:2 *Lift up your hands*. Gesture of prayer and supplication. (TLSB)

holy place. The first chamber of the tabernacle or temple, where the altar of incense and the table for the bread of the Presence were kept. The gesture of the worshipers directs their praise toward God, enthroned in His temple. (TLSB)

134:3 One of the Levites responds with a benediction on the worshipers. (CSB)

bless you from Zion. “You” is singular. Liturgical blessing. (TLSB)

Ps 134 The priests on duty at the temple during the night are urged to bless the Lord, and yet the Lord blesses us. The night is an emblem of darkness and sorrow. Yet Christ is present in the darkness. He gives His blessing from the sacrificial mountain in Jerusalem by the continual ministry of the Church through Word and Sacrament. • We bless You, Lord, even in the darkness. And You bless us through Your Son, who went into the darkness of death to bring us into His light. Amen. (TLSB)