

The Blessing of Contentment

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Psalm 1:1. Blessed is not an uncommon word in our culture. Especially our western Christian culture. It's the word at the center and launch point of our text this morning, and it's a word so often misunderstood and misused. Whether in the form of a hashtag on social media, or in conversation, we use the word in a way that might cause us to approach this psalm and many others, that might cause us to approach Jesus' words in sermon on the mount, with a totally misguided and misunderstood perspective.

For example, if you were to go on twitter right now, and search for #blessed, what do you think you'd find? Well I found exactly what I thought I would. Someone posting about getting their dream job. Another posting about signing an NFL contract. Another with a young twenty something, looking out over Manhattan from the new penthouse apartment they just purchased with a signing bonus. And even another posting a video of a college graduation ceremony where despite the current circumstances, they were able to walk and receive their degree.

There were hundreds more just like those ones. Every single one of them celebrates the achievement of a goal, the ownership of a coveted item, the status of a position. All of them celebrating their circumstances. And yet, many of those posts even acknowledged the source of their circumstantial #blessings as a gift from God.

But what can end up happening is that when we import that understanding of the word blessed, into our reading of God's word. We see the word and what it evokes are material and circumstantial prosperity. And that is not at all the kind of blessing that David is singing in this psalm this morning.

A better way to understand that word, is happy or content. And fortunately, God is going to give us a description of what it means to be blessed, of what it looks like to be content. And he isn't going to describe a penthouse apartment, a cush dream job, or a perfect relationship. He is going to describe the internal experience of a heart that delights in Jesus and the word of God.

I hope to feel two things this morning, first is encouragement. Encouragement that walking with God, obeying him, delighting in him, pursuing Jesus will bring contentment and satisfaction that the temporary joys we chase just cannot bring. Encouragement that delighting in Jesus and following the Lord leads to a greater satisfaction and contentment than anything else we could possibly give our lives to.

The second thing I want us to walk away with is the warning. The warning, that rejecting God, pursuing our own pleasures, joys and contentments, will ironically always leave us discontent.

Both of these ideas are really just two sides of one truth that David expresses here in Psalm 1. If I could sum all of that up for us as post cross Christians it'd be like this, **True contentment comes only from Jesus.** And along with that, we are going to see what that contentment means and looks like for the

Christian. In other words, we are going to see three characteristics of what it looks like in the believer that our happiness is not found in the counsel of culture, or way of the world, or the seat of scoffers, rather what it looks like to be blessed and in Jesus. **1) Delights in God's word 2) Grows in Faithfulness 3) Hopes in Eternity**

Delights in God's Word. Psalms 1:1-2. The first descriptor for the man of God is what he is not. "Who walk not in the counsel of the wicked", (...). Notice the comprehensive of the verbs. Walk. Stand. Sit. From our activity to our passivity, the first thing that describes the content Christian is not believing the empty promises of sin and culture. It is not the material and circumstantial prosperity that #blessed is selling.

One of the things the author does here in each section is compare and contrast to make his points clearer. So we can't fully understand what that first part means, unless we know the positive point that David is making in the song. So read **Psalm 1:2** with me again. Putting both of those parts together we get a better idea of what it is David is after in this song.

What we get is a picture of God's people being different. Being different in every area of life. The gospel should influence us in everything. Walking, standing and sitting, whether it's our active pursuits or our passive participation, the man of God is distinct. One of the things that people often find unpalatable about religion and faith is the self-righteousness that often accompanies religions and faiths that aim at being different. We don't like self-righteousness, we don't like the pride of it, we don't like the self-exaltation of it. .

This is a criticism of us as Christians, that we are self-righteous rule keepers with our noses in the air? For much of my life growing up, that was how I viewed the attitude of the church. That first verse sounds an awful lot like doing exactly that though. David looking at his neighbor, thinking that he is better, and patting himself on the back for it, even going so far as to call himself blessed.

But what he's after here isn't as much about what the blessed man is not, as much as it is about what the blessed man is. It's the offer of something better. Something better than our hearts have to offer.

The point being made here is that the content Christian delights in the instruction of God over and above the ways and instruction of the world. The source of joy and satisfaction for the man of God is the instruction of God and his word, not the dictates of culture, or even his own heart and feelings. What occupies his joy is delight in God, delight in his promises and delight in his instruction.

The world is appealing, culture is appealing. Our hearts and our desires are compelling. If sinning and rejecting God weren't fun, or even rewarding in some way, there wouldn't be temptation. There wouldn't be temptation if there wasn't a promise of something at the end of that temptation. You look around your life, I'm certain you can identify dozens of tempting promises made by your own heart or culture.

The hedonism and oversexualization of media and entertainment promise pleasure at the end of relationships and dating culture. The greed and envy of a better job promises better pay, a bigger

house, more comfort and security. The lure of autonomy and rejecting the authority of God promises a life lived on your terms, how you want, where you want, all for your needs and wants.

And It's all tempting and appealing because our hearts have bought the same lie (not promise) that Adam and Eve did when they thought they could find on their own what they were only meant to find in God. We chase all these things looking for contentment, when the reality of it all is a fleeting moment of something we try to convince ourselves is in the neighborhood of contentment. True contentment begins with God's word. And not just God's word, but delight in God's word and meditating on it, filling your mind with it.

For David and the Israelites singing this song, the phrase they sing is "his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night." So the law they are delighting in, isn't what we probably think of when we read that line. Even as we make our first point this morning, of delighting in the *Word of God*. What they would have had in mind as law of God would have been the writings of Moses, the first five books of our Bible, the covenant promises of God to Adam, Abraham and Moses. And even more specifically the covenant promises of God's people to keep the law God gave to Moses.

They would have delighted in their distinctiveness before God amongst the world. That God would give them a way to live that they might be his people and find favor with him, where the rest of the world around them sought life on their own terms. Delight that God chose them, despite their sin and rebellion. That in their sin and rebellion they might be restored to God through their covenants and the law.

So what does it mean for a post-cross Christian to delight in the law of the Lord? What does the law mean to us today? Let's look at what the apostle Paul says about the law in **Romans 7:7**. The law of God first reveals and diagnoses our hearts rebellion against God. The ordinances and instruction of God flow out of the character of God. To conform to the law that God has revealed in his word, is to conform to the character of God and become more like him in his holiness. But the inevitability of our fallen hearts is our failure to do so. So first Paul says that the law reveals our rebellious condition, but he goes on in **Romans 8:1-4**, and pairing that with Jesus' words in **Matthew 5:17**.

You and I can rejoice in the law and instruction of the Lord, because what the law reveals about our hearts as rebels, Jesus fulfills for us as redeemer and savior. We delight in the law because we delight in Jesus who fulfilled it. In other words...we delight in the gospel of Jesus.

Everything the law was meant to do for the Israelites, in setting them apart, giving them a righteousness to stand on before God, that they might be reconciled to him, Jesus fulfilled it all. **2 Cor 5:21**. As Jesus went to the cross and died, he took with him the condemnation of the law. And as he rose from death, and now gives the Christian new life, he gives to us the righteousness of a perfect life, and the inheritance of that life to us. So that in Jesus, the diagnosis of our sin condition no longer defines us, his righteousness does.

We have the entirety of God's word, all of which either points forward to Jesus, and we delight in the beauty of a God that would send his son, we delight in a Jesus that would give his life, we delight in a

life more satisfying because of it, we delight in an eternity more promising. The blessed and content Christian delights in the word of God because we delight in the gospel of Jesus.

The simple and yet challenging application of this, is a content Christian hungers to know Jesus through his word. There is an awkward experience here for many of us. We don't actually hunger to wake up early, open our Bibles, and commune with Jesus through prayer and reading for an hour. We are lazy, we want to sleep in, we'd rather spend our time on something more practical, we don't see the immediate fruit of it, and we put it off.

The awkwardness, and an experience I'm sure many of us can identify with, is that while we don't always want to read and consume God's word, we want to want to consume God in his Word. We want to want to. Kind of describing Paul's words in Romans, I do what I do not want to do, and don't do what I want to. But I think, this is one of the things that draws the line between blessing and not. Contentment and discontentment.

Charles Spurgeon says this about verse 2 of Psalm 1, **"Man must have some delight, some supreme pleasure. His heart was never meant to be a vacuum. If not filled with the best things, it will be filled with the unworthy and disappointing."** If we are not delighting in that which is worthy of our delight, we are delighting in something else. To grow in our delight of God's word is to grow in our contentment as people of God. I think it's really that simple. The reality of the Christian experience is growing out of our sin and into the image of Jesus and that includes our delight in his revealed word.

This leads us to our second point this morning, the content Christian is always **Growing in Faithfulness. Psalm 1:3-4.** He is always growing upward in his convictions, remaining steadfast and faithful. Consider the imagery the psalmist uses. A Tree. A tree planted in the ground, by a stream. A constant supply of nutrients and water. Constantly being fed what is necessary to grow into maturity. A tree that produces fruit that might feed others and lead them to joy and worship. A tree that is unwavering in the intensity of a storm, that endures the harshness of the winter. A tree whose leaves do not wither.

This is how David describes the blessed one, who delights and meditates on the law of the Lord. Content is the Christian that is so deeply rooted in the nourishing life of God's word, that he cannot help but grow in maturity, and produce the fruit of obedience and righteousness. This is a word picture to mark the content Christian as one who is constantly growing in their affections for Jesus, growing in their fidelity to his instruction, growing in their rejection of the sin, and growing in steadfast conviction on the promise of something greater.

Another way to put this is as Paul does in 2 Corinthians 3:18. Growing to be more like Jesus, the word the Bible often uses is sanctification. Blessed is the man who is rooted in the streams of life, growing in faithfulness to become more like Jesus. Part of being content in Christ, means not being content in your sin.

Notice the contrast in the next verse that makes this clearer for us: **Psalm 1:4.** The wicked are like "chaff that the wind drives away." Chaff is the dry husks of seeds that protect seeds. The casing on

seeds that protect them from weathering. When you would harvest and thresh, say wheat, to get the actual grain from it, the leftover husks and dry bits would be the chaff. The discarded parts.

Those that trust in the world's definition of satisfaction and joy are like chaff. Those that delight in the empty promises of their own hearts or the empty promises of culture over and above the promises of God are blown from one place to the next. Constantly searching for meaning. Never finding the lasting satisfaction they were promised. There would be moments of rest. Moments of joy. Moments of satisfaction. But as soon as the winds of culture change, as soon as trial arrives at your doorstep, as soon as your emotions blow a different direction they must seek elsewhere for that meaning. Never able to set down roots. Never able to stand on a timeless conviction of truth or justice or goodness. A never ending search for purpose, a never ending search for contentment.

Notice there is no in-between. There is no lukewarm. There is either a tree producing fruit, or chaff blowing in the wind. Being content in Jesus, doesn't mean being content in the sin of your life, living in the in-between, saying "O well." Jesus covers my sin, only to ignore this constant festering wound on your faithfulness to God.

For the Christian in here, if you have sin in your life that you hide when you come to church, sin in your life that exists in the blind spots, sin in your life that you pretend isn't there, you are robbing yourself of the blessing and contentment that God has promised to you.

As hard, as challenging, as uncomfortable, as embarrassing as it might be to stop ignoring, God has promised you greater joy and blessing when replaced by obedience, faithfulness and sanctification. What a beautiful God we have, that would promise us greater satisfaction in obeying his instruction, rather than continuing to hold on to the empty promises of our sin.

There is contentment in our growth, because at the end of our growth is the hope of renewal. The Christian is always growing upward, toward Jesus, becoming more like him, until the day we are conformed to his image, and receive the inheritance he earned for us.

That hope is the final mark of the content Christian, **Hopes in Eternity. Psalm 1:5-6.** The Lord 'knows' the way of the righteous. So there is some kind of relationship here. But what's the context of it? As with the rest of the Psalm, we get a better understanding of what this means by the contrast that David makes. **Psalm 1:5-6.**

The implication here, is the difference in God's relationship to the wicked and God's relationship to the righteous, at the gates to eternity. One will be known by God and the other won't. One will receive the gift of life in eternity, and other will not. One will receive the blessing of eternal rest and the other won't.

And lest we turn this into some kind of reward system for obedience, because it's easy to do. We do tend to think of much of life in the context of earning through effort and work. It's not too far a stretch to read this through our cultural context and think being a good person, being a righteous person, earns me a place with God in the end. Fortunately, our work earlier in the Psalm reminds us who actually earned that righteousness. That's Jesus.

What this stanza of the psalter is doing is reminding the christian where their hope is. Where their eternity is. And that looking anywhere but the Lord and his promises for our hope and eternity, would lead only to destruction and ruin. The third mark of contentment in Jesus is a hope in eternity.

There are dozens, hundreds, thousands of ways we can place our hope, in some outcome or circumstance above that of eternity. Right now, we can think about covid-19. We can consume ourselves with the now, and convince ourselves that once there is a vaccine, once we reach herd immunity, once we flatten the curve, everything will be fine. Financially, emotionally, relationally, once this is over, I can find a place of contentment.

Work and career, school and education, finances and security, relationships and marriage, children and parenting, retirement and rest. We could go on and on and on considering the nuance of where each one of us find ourselves misplacing hopes, inserting contentment and blessing somewhere that will inevitably fail us.

But I want to talk about one specific issue in the context of hope. We stand at the precipice of another election cycle. Every four years the political rhetoric grows in volume, and the divisiveness seems to intensify every election. Wherever we find ourselves on the spectrum of political thought and ideology, many of us find ourselves hoping in the outcome of an election most certainly every 4 years, and some of us every 2.

We hope in the restoration of what was once an ideal, we hope in the reconciliation of conflict and war, we hope in the equality and equity of people of all races and socio-economic status, we hope in justice for the oppressed and marginalized, we hope in the prosperity of our friends and family and neighbors, we hope in the security and comfort of our futures and the futures of our children.

All of which can really tempt us to look to the levers of political power for answers and Hope. Those ideals aren't bad, there can be good and glorious work done in all of it, but that isn't the point of our text. The point of our text is an encouragement of what is ultimate. Politics may be worthy of our effort, but it is most certainly not worthy of our hope.

Because on the other side of that hope, is always despair. Despair if the other side wins the election, or despair when the other side eventually wins one. The problem with hoping in politics, even if your side wins, is that we are relying on a broken people to restore a broken world that only a perfect God can. And there will always be something to fix, because we will always need fixing.

The beauty of that truth though, is that God promises he will restore it all. The content Christian's hope is certain. Because the restoration of Jesus is certain. When the winds of political sensibilities change, or wherever else you've placed hope in fails you, the blessing of contentment remains steady like the tree, because no matter the shift in circumstances the hope of the gospel and eternity remains.

To finish up our look at Psalm 1 this morning, I want to look at the other side of blessing. We've spent so much of our time here talking about the blessing and contentment and joy God's people receive as fruit of the gospel. But how are we to read and process this psalm, when contentment and joy aren't our experiences?

I imagine many of us in here, have read and listened to this, and found ourselves weary. Because contentment wouldn't be the word we use to describe our experience lately. Happiness and joy aren't normative and constant in our lives right now. That the ideals expressed in here sound great, but seem so unattainable and far away. You are weary and frustrated that delight isn't your experience, you feel more like chaff than the steadfast and rooted tree, and most certainly find yourself hoping that something would change.

If you noticed in the song, the author actually gives more words to warning, than he does to the promises and encouragement. That's because no matter how many times we read the promises of God, the reality of our flesh and the temptation around us, we find ourselves walking, standing, or sitting on the empty promises of sin. As if we need to experience it for ourselves.

All of that to say: if you find yourself discontent, discouraged, or frustrated, it's probably because you aren't delighting, growing or hoping in the word of God and the gospel of Jesus. Somewhere, you are capitulating to culture, giving in to temptation, ignoring your sin, or hoping in something frail and broken. You've bought into a lie of contentment from culture, and not the promise of blessing from God.

Maybe it's not Jesus you're after? Maybe it's not God's glory that is moving you? Like Tyler mentioned the other week, it can be the good things that God offers, even blessing and contentment, that we chase, not Jesus himself. Where the gospel and faith become a means to our own desires, rather than the gospel being our life.

Fortunately for everyone, Christian and not, Jesus stands holding out with open arms the offer of life, satisfaction, joy, contentment. Offering the blessings of God. He's offering you himself. He's offering you his life. What he earned. If you are a Christian in here, and are frustrated with your lack of growth and delight in the Lord, return to the only endless well of contentment and blessing, the gospel of Jesus. If you aren't a Christian in here, and have been searching your whole life for something to last, something to bring you rest from the chasing and chasing of joy and happiness. Turn to the endless well of contentment and blessing, the gospel of Jesus.

That is why every single week up here, someone will give you the gospel. For anyone, the most important truths we can know and be reminded of, are the eternity shaping truths of Jesus and his gospel. **Philippians 4:11-13; 1:20-21.**

In poverty or in plenty, there is contentment. In persecution or prosperity, you can be content. Whether in seasons of drought or seasons of rain, there is contentment. So whether in the context of suffering, like 2 Peter, or in the warning and encouragement of Psalm 1. Any weakness or lacking, any hardship or suffering, any circumstance, there is always peace, there is always blessing, there is always contentment in the arms of Jesus.