



We Glorify God – Psalm 1

Our mission statement here at McLean Bible Church is: “We glorify God by making disciples and multiplying churches among all nations, beginning in Greater Washington, DC.”

Today I want us to think about what that first part means: “We glorify God...” Glorify is really a great word, when you think about it. It means to praise or worship something; to represent something as admirable or awesome. That is exactly what we want to do together as a church. We want to praise and worship God. That’s why we’ve gathered together this morning. It’s why we’ve come together on a Sunday morning. We’re singing, praying and opening God’s Word, because we want to worship Him, hear from Him and encounter God together.

We also want to represent Him as admirable and awesome to the world around us. Around this city, we want family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, people we meet on the street, as well as kids and families in Title I schools to know that God is awesome. We also want to go far from this city, to the ends of the earth. We want orphans in Ethiopia, trafficked girls in Nepal, and unreached people in Yemen to know that God’s power, love, healing and hope are indeed awesome.

I want to show you that happiness in life—true, deep, lasting happiness in life—is found in doing in glorifying God. Let me put it this way. If you have no desire to be happy and experience deep, true, lasting happiness in your life, then the rest of our time together this morning will really not be helpful for you. So if you would prefer to be miserable in your life, or if you like a happiness that kind of comes and goes based on your circumstances, then today will not be helpful for you. But if you desire happiness—a true, deep lasting, permanent happiness in your life—I want to show you how you can have it, based on what God says in Psalm 1.

Before we go there, I want to give three calls to us as a church family as we start this year together, three ways to glorify God, specifically here at the beginning of the year, over the first 40 days of 2020. So between now and February 9th—31 days in January and nine days in February—we’ll have 40 days of emphasis on these three calls.

1. Let’s seek God together through fasting.

For those of you who may be new to Christianity or new to this concept, fasting is the practice of periodically putting aside food as a physical expression of a spiritual reality. This is saying that more than our bodies are dependent on food, our souls are dependent on God.

Throughout God's Word, the Bible, God's people fasted together. Jesus expected His disciples to fast, setting aside food. Maybe it's one meal—breakfast, lunch or dinner. Maybe it's not eating for a day. Maybe it's longer—a few days or a week or more. When we do this, what we're saying is, "What's most important in my life is not physical nourishment. My spiritual nourishment is much more important. More than I need food, I need God." Fasting is a physical expression and a physical reminder of that.

So when you get hungry and think, "I could really use a sandwich right now," instead you realize, "No. More than I need or even want a sandwich, I need and want God. I want a closer relationship with Him in my life." I want to call everyone who calls MBC your church, over the next 40 days, between now and February 9, to fast in some way.

Last year we used an acrostic that I want to remind you of when you think of fasting. **"F" is for Focus on God.** The whole point of fasting is to honor God. It's not to look spiritual before others. Jesus warned against that in Matthew 6. That misses the point of fasting, which is to say, "More than anything I want in this world—even the basic necessity of food—I want God. I want to know, love, worship and walk with God."

Fasting is a fixed Focus on God in a unique way that involves **"A"—Abstaining from food.** We put aside food. The reason fasting and food go together throughout Scripture, if you think about it practically, is because food is like a God-given addiction. We are addicted to food. We get up in the morning, thinking, "I'd like something to eat." If we don't have breakfast at some point, a few hours later we'll be thinking, "I'd really like something to eat." If we miss a meal because we're really busy, we think, "I haven't eaten. I'm really getting hungry." God has wired us to want food. The reason why fasting is the picture the Bible gives us is because it's setting aside something we actually need in order to say we have a greater need.

Now, for some who might have physical conditions that make fasting from food impossible or dangerous in some ways, obviously we would not recommend that. So look for the closest substitute to a God-given addiction that you could set aside that would be a reminder to you that, "More than I need this, I need God."

So Abstain from food and instead of eating, we **"S"—Substitute that time with prayer and God's Word.** Instead of sitting down for breakfast with a meal of food, sit down for breakfast with extra time in prayer and the Word. Instead of taking that hour for lunch, take that time for prayer and the Word. This concentrated time instead of a meal—whether it's breakfast, lunch or dinner—then fuels continual prayer all day. It's not just around noon that you get hungry. It's again at 2:00 and 3:00 and 4:00 and 5:00. Those hunger pains just keep coming up. Every time they do, they are intended to drive you to say, "God, I'd really like some food, but more importantly, I want You. I need You in my life. I need Your mercy, guidance, help and Your strength." So fasting drives us to prayer all day long or it drives us to time in God's Word. In the process, you begin to experience a depth of communion with God that God desires for you to have.

This leads to the **“T” —Taste and see that God is good.** This is a direct quote from Psalm 34:8: *“Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!”* I love verses nine and ten right after that which say, *“Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack! The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.”* God is glorified when we put aside food and say, “With You, I lack no good thing.”

So I want to call you, starting this week and for the next five weeks, to fast in some way. Maybe it’s a certain meal or meals each week. Maybe it’s a day a week. Maybe it’s three or five or seven days at some point. Obviously make wise decisions in light of what you and your doctors know about you. But I want to call us to spend these first five weeks of the year seeking God together in a concentrated way through fasting. You say, “What am I going to do with the time I’m not eating? Substituting time in prayer and the Word for an hour—what do you do?” Well, that leads to the second call.

Let’s seek God together through prayer.

During these first 40 days of the year, let’s seek God together through praying—individually and together. Over these first 40 days, I want to call us to spend extra time in prayer, more than we normally do. Obviously that will mean different things for different people, but just think “extra time.” That might mean extra time with your wife or husband or your kids in prayer.

Then we’re going to spend extra time together in prayer as a church. Specifically, Friday, January 17th, we are planning another all-night prayer gathering here at Tysons. We’ll come together from all our campuses and pray from 8:00 p.m. until about 6:00 a.m. You can come the whole time or part of the time. You can set your alarm for 2:00 in the morning and come in the middle of it if you want. We did this for the first time last January and I am 100% convinced that starting those prayer gatherings is why we saw over 1,500 people baptized last year and hundreds of people standing up to say, “I’m considering going to some of the hardest places in the world with the gospel.” There were so many other stories of changed lives, so we’re going to keep praying together.

Last year I gave you an acrostic for praying: PRAY. We’ve used this at many of our prayer gatherings, so let’s review it:

“P” stands for Praise! Worship God for Who He is. Thank God for what He’s done, is doing and will do. This is how Jesus teaches us to pray: “Our Father in heaven...” Prayer starts with fixing our eyes, hearts, attention and affection on God.

So whether it’s just your normal time in the morning or in the evening, or if you’re setting aside lunch to fast, start by praising God and thanking Him for all He has done. Start listing all the ways He has shown His grace in your life. “Thank You for this. Thank You for that.” You might even write it out. Maybe you pray sitting, or maybe you fall on your knees or your face, just worshipping God. Praise God for His different attributes. Maybe turn on some music and sing. Especially when you’re alone, you can sing loud and nobody else will hear. Don’t try it in your office cubicle, unless it would be a witness—but

that depends on how you sing. The whole point is just to spend time worshiping God for Who He is—a sweet time before God, exalting and adoring Him.

That leads to **“R” which stands for Repent**. So confess your sin to God. Acknowledge your need for Jesus. As you come before God, ask Him, “What in my life is not honoring to You right now?” If you ask Him, He will show you. Begin to examine your heart and confess thoughts, desires, actions or words that are not entirely pleasing to Him. Often I’ll write this out as well. “God, I see this or that in my life. Help me in this way or that way.”

You might be tempted to think, “Well, it’s kind of depressing dwelling on my sin and writing out specific ways I’ve sinned against God.” But this is not depressing when you have a Father God Who delights in forgiving your sins. This is beautiful!

For those of you who may be new to Christianity or even exploring Christianity—maybe you’re visiting with a friend or family member today—the heart of the Bible teaches that all of us have sinned against God, the One Who has created us, and we’ve all turned aside from His ways to our own ways. We’ve all disobeyed Him and said our ways are better than His ways. The Bible tells us that God is just and holy, and because of His justice and holiness we deserve judgment before Him for our sin. But the good news of the Bible is that God loves us and has made a way for us to be forgiven of all our sin. He has come to us in the person of Jesus Who lived the life we could not live—a life with no sin. Then even though He had no sin to die for, He chose to die on a cross to pay the price for our sin. After this He rose from the dead in victory over sin and the grave, so that anyone who repents—who turns from their sin and trusts in Jesus to forgive them of their sin—will be forgiven all their sin and be restored to a relationship with God. That’s the reality that can happen in your life today. You can put on one of these shirts that says, “Death to Life,” and you can say, “Yes, I believe that.”

However, once you have been restored to a relationship with God, you might still choose your own way over His way. You might still sometimes disobey Him—just like every once in a while my kids disobey me. That doesn’t mean they’re not my children. It does mean that when they do that, and they come to me and say, “Dad, I’m sorry,” that’s really good for our relationship with one another and the closeness we have. One way to grow in our relationship with God is to continual confession and repentance, experiencing His grace over and over and over again.

That then leads to **“A” which stands for Ask**. You can intercede for specific needs in your life and in others’ lives. Just think of all the things you can ask God for in other people’s lives—your family, work, friends, neighbors, even the world. There is so much time we could spend on this.

In your own life, what do you need? That’s the point of coming before God in prayer. It’s saying, “God, we need this. We need Your help in this way. Guide us in this way. Give us direction in that way.” Prayer is the laying down of your pride and saying, “God, I can’t do this on my own. Others can’t do this on their own. We need You.”

I've been reading the Psalms the last few days, realizing how faithful God is to hear the cries of His people and to answer the cries of His people.

So we Praise, Repent, Ask, which then leads to **“Y”—Yielding**. Surrender your life to following Jesus however and wherever He leads you. In prayer, what we're saying is what Jesus taught us to pray: “Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil. Lead me. Guide my life. Direct me.”

In the morning, I'll pray through the details of my day as best I know them. I include the meetings I'll have, the people I'll be around, even things I don't know are coming. “God, help me to adjust as needed. As I'm having lunch with this group, help me serve and encourage them. Help me at the gym to do whatever You want me to do. God, lead me all day long.”

Let's seek God together through His Word.

I want to call each one of us to spend extra time during these 40 days seeking God together through prayer and walking with God through prayer, which leads to the third challenge: let's seek God together through His Word. This is the last acrostic I'll remind you of. We talked about this one last year, so this will be review for many, but new for some. We used the word MAPS as a guide to get from reading the Bible to experiencing intimacy with God.

“M” stands for two words: Meditate and Memorize. The whole picture here in coming to the Bible is not just reading and saying, “Okay, check that box,” but meditating on it. We'll talk more about that in just a minute. We read the Bible slowly. We ponder what it's saying, soaking in what it means. We read the Bible differently than any other book. It's not like scrolling through the news on your phone or scrolling through Facebook, just seeing what's there. It's stopping and listening and pondering.

Ask questions like these. What is this passage saying? Who's writing it? Who are the first people who received this? What would they have thought about this? What's the whole point of this passage? What does this mean? What does this passage teach about Who God is, about who we are, about Who Jesus is and what it means to follow Him?

As we're meditating, pondering over and soaking in God's Word, we look for verses or even passages or chapters sometimes that we want to memorize. Memorization is one of the most practical ways of meditation, because when you memorize something, you say it over and over again. You cement it in your head. When we think about meditation, memorization is one of the best ways to do that, so it just becomes a part of you. Let me encourage you to set a goal for that. Maybe it's a verse a week or maybe more.

We Meditate and Memorize, then **“A”—Apply**. We ask, “How does what I just read transform my thoughts, my desires or my actions?” Think head, heart, hands. “How does what I read in God's Word change the way I think? How does this change what I desire, what I want in my life, what I want for my family, what I want in the world? What does this passage compel me to do? What does what I just read change about the way I act, the way I speak, the way I love and serve other people? What changes in my

life, my actions, my words as a result of what I've just read? James 1 says if we read the Word and then just walk away without thinking about how it applies to our lives, we have missed the whole point.

Asking these questions in application then leads to **"P" which stands for Pray**. In other words, do what we just said: Pray, Repent, Ask and Yield according to God's Word. So we pray according to what we read. We praise God according to what we read. When we read and learn about God in the Word, it just leads us to praise Him. When we see things in the Word that we are falling short in, that leads us to repent of sin in our hearts for not obeying God's Word. It leads us to ask for things, but what's key here is now we're asking for what God wants, not what we want.

God promises in John 15:7, *"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."* If we ask this way, we're asking according to what He knows is best for us. If we pray according to God's Word and ask according to God's Word, then obviously we also yield according to God's Word. "God, help me live this out."

This finally leads to **"S" which is Share**. Write down your reflections, then talk about them with others. I use a running journal on my iPad, just a Word file. It's really simple—it just has reflections on the Word each day. Different people do different things, because obviously there's not a Bible verse I can take you to that says, "You need to write out this or that." I find this really, really helpful, both in my prayer time to keep my mind from wandering everywhere, and then as I'm reading the Word to spend time writing out what I'm learning in it.

I write these things out, not just for my own sake, but because I want to share what I've learned with other people around me. This is what we say to each other every week when we leave worship: *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you"* (Matthew 28:18-20). So as He speaks to us, then we are supposed to pass that on to others. Listen to these verses from Deuteronomy 6:6-9:

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Did you hear that? God says, "Talk about My Word when you're sitting in your house, when you're walking by the way, when you're lying down and when you're rising." That pretty much covers all the time. Is God's Word like that in your life? Is it all over your conversations at home, all over your conversations with other followers of Jesus? Maybe it's in person, via text or online in some way. Then are you also looking for opportunities to share God's Word with other people who don't know Jesus?

Here's what I want to call us to do practically here. Last year we read through the Story of Scripture together and I heard so much feedback from those of you who did that and grew in Christ

through that series. We want to continue this year with the Bible Reading Plan, as a church, for anybody who wants to do it. If you have something else you're doing, that's fine. That's not sin. Just read the Bible—that's what matters. But if you want to walk alongside us as a church, this is going to be a little different than last year. During these first 40 days, we're simply reading a Psalm a day. Then at the end of these 40 days, starting February 9, we're going to add something else to it, but I won't get into that now. I'm just going to keep it simple. So I want to encourage you during these first 40 days to read one Psalm a day.

Now as a side note, we mentioned this at the end of last year, but some of you may have been traveling and it's really going to stress you out that we're already at January 5th, which means we're already on Psalm 5. But I promise you, if you are just starting, it is okay. You can catch up if you want or you can start today with Psalm 5. God will still be pleased. Or start tomorrow with Psalm 6. The point is I want to encourage you to take a Psalm a day and do MAPS with it—Meditate and Memorize, Apply, Pray and Share it.

What I want to do in the last part of our time together this morning is model MAPS for you, doing this together. It's written in your notes, but I want you to make your own notes, circle or underline different things, as we think about what meditation, application, praying and sharing look like in a simple Psalm. You might look at this and think, "This is so short—six verses, five sentences. It would take, like, 30 seconds to read." Some of you hard-core church members are thinking, "One chapter—is that all? Really? One chapter?" Well, yes, our goal in Bible reading is not speed reading. What we do with the Bible is read it, meditate on it and ponder it. We think about what it's saying, what it means, why it matters, doing all this in communion with God. So let's do this together.

Let's pray.

God, we praise You for Your Word. We praise You for Your Holy Spirit Whom You have given us to enlighten and illuminate our eyes and hearts, so that we can engage in a truly supernatural activity right now. We praise you that Your Spirit is speaking to our hearts, helping us see what we could not see on our own. Help us know You and in the process enjoy You more, being drawn into a closer relationship with You.

God, I pray especially in this setting that You would draw some people in the next few minutes into relationship with You altogether. I pray that You would draw us all into a depth of understanding in Your Word that glorifies You and is good for us in ways that only Your Holy Spirit can bring about. Speak to us now through Your Word, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

All right, let's read Psalm 1 together. We're not speed reading here; we'll read it kind of slowly so we can soak it in:

*¹ Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;*

² *but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.*
³ *He is like a tree
planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.*
⁴ *The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.*
⁵ *Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;*
⁶ *for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.*

Okay, let's ponder and reflect on what this means. "*Blessed is the man...*" Blessed seems like a pretty key word from the very beginning. It's somewhat of an unfortunate translation. If you're not a Christian, you may think, "What does blessed mean? That sounds like a really Christian word, but I'm not sure what it means." What it really means is happy.

Now, at this point you'll hear Christians say, "Actually, the world has happiness, but we have joy." That sounds like happiness is some flighty, fleeting emotion and joy is some deep reality devoid of feeling. The problem is that just doesn't square with the Bible. The Bible actually uses both joy and happiness, oftentimes interchangeably. Both are emotional; both are deep and wide-ranging.

So this Psalm is a description of a happy person. Part of the way we know that is because when it gives the description of this person in verse two, it uses the word "delight." So there's a delight here. There's a happiness here. So next to "blessed," in the margin of your Bible or in your notes, write out "full, lasting happiness." That's what this Psalm is talking about—full and lasting happiness. That's why I said at the very beginning of our time together that I want to show you how you can experience deep, true, full, lasting happiness in your life. My assumption is that every person here desires that kind of happiness.

There are all kinds of ways the world says we can get that. If you think about the sentence, "Blessed is the man, the woman, who..." the world would finish that sentence in all kinds of different ways. Let's think about some of the ways the world would finish that sentence. "Blessed is the one who is looking forward to college." I know seniors are trying to think through where you're going to school. So to get in a certain college would make you happy.

For others, maybe it's being in a certain relationship. "If I have this girlfriend or this boyfriend, this husband or this wife, that would make me happy." Maybe it's marriage. You think you'll be happy in marriage. Or maybe you'll be happy if you have kids. Maybe you'll be happy if you have a certain job. Or maybe you'll be happy if you have a certain amount of money or if you are comfortable in this life. Maybe it's retirement. We could keep going on and on. The world might say, "Blessed is the one who has

this.” Oftentimes we even would say around the church, “Yes, all those things are what blessing is about.” But is that where God says happiness is found?

Because God made us and knows us better than we know ourselves, and He’s saying, “Blessed is the one who...,” I think we want to listen to what He says. As this sentence unfolds, we see first something the happy person does not do. It doesn’t start positive; it actually starts negative. It states what the happy person does not do. It’s not until we get to verse two that we see the word “but” to draw a contrast. So we’re about to see two different types of people. In fact, if you look, there are two other times that word “but” is used to draw a contrast—one down in verse four and then at the end in verse six. So clearly this Psalm is giving us two pictures and we’re going to come back to this at various points.

We’ve got two pictures here of someone who is happy and someone who is not; someone who has full, lasting happiness and someone who doesn’t. The whole Psalm starts with the person who doesn’t. *“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers.”*

Look at the three verbs there: walks, stands, sits. When you think about those verbs and ponder them, they seem like a progression, don’t they? Okay, you’re walking in a certain direction and listening to the counsel of the wicked as you walk, the counsel of a world set against God’s Word. Then you stop and stand in the company of sinners—those who are disobeying God’s Word. Then finally you sit in the seat of those who are scoffing at those who obey God’s Word. So you’re not only participating in godlessness, now you’re sneering at those who obey God. Do you see the progression here? It’s like a trap. It’s like the loss of happiness begins subtly with walking in and listening to the counsel of the wicked, then standing in the company of sinners and finally sitting, which is the point at which you are now scoffing at those who obey God.

Don’t miss where it all starts. It all starts with the counsel of the wicked. It’s the counsel you turn your ear toward. In other words, what you turn your ear toward, the messages you surround yourself with, will affect the direction of your life. It will either lead to happiness, or it won’t. Think about it. Why didn’t the psalmist just say, “Don’t be wicked, don’t sin and don’t scoff”? Why did he draw our attention to the wicked, the other sinners, and those who scoff? The picture is of the presence of influence. The unhappy man listens to the counsel of the wicked, then flowing from that he’s led to stop and have a seat among them. He listens to the counsel of the wicked, he is shaped by the counsel of the wicked, he’s affected by and surrounds himself with the counsel of the wicked.

The key here is who you listen to and what messages you surround yourself with. That will be critical to happiness in your life. Let me say that again. Who you listen to and the messages you surround yourself with will be critical to happiness in your life. If you want happiness, it’s not found in listening to the counsel of the wicked. How do we know this is the point? Look at the next verse.

We might expect the second verse to parallel the first one, saying something like, “Blessed is the one who walks in the counsel of the righteous, or stands in the way of the obedient, or sits in the seat of

the worshipful.” But instead we only have one description: *“His delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.”*

So why is there just one thing? Out of all the things verse two could have said about the happy, blessed life, why is this the description? Think about what we just saw. What you listen to and what messages you surround yourself with is critical to the direction of your life, how your life is led and where your life leads to. The key, according to God, to blessing and full, lasting happiness in your life is listening to and surrounding yourself with meditating on God’s Word—the law of the Lord—and finding delight in it. That is the key.

So to keep that contrast going, you’ve got the counsel of the wicked that might affect you or you have the law of the Lord that might affect you. That’s the contrast. One of those influences will lead one way; the other influence will lead another way. If you think about it, it’s like two competing sources of pleasure. Either you will find your delight in the counsel of the wicked (the world) or you will find your delight in the counsel of the law of God. The one who is happy will find his or her pleasure and delight in the law of the Lord, such that you will find yourself meditating on it day and night, all the time, in a way that leads you away from the counsel of the wicked and toward the law of God.

When that is a reality in your life, verse three says you will be *“like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.”* We see three pictures of happiness here. The first one is that he is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields fruit. Happiness is being fruitful. Think about it this way. You’ve got two trees. You’ve got a barren tree that is dead and a tree that is alive and bearing fruit. If those are your two options, which one do you want to be? Which one do you want to depict your life?

The whole picture here is God saying, “I want you to be full of life, not just for yourself, but in a way that is nourishing to others around you.” Don’t you want a life that’s refreshing, nourishing and encouraging to the people around you? Don’t you want to be fruitful as opposed to being dried up and dead? So the first picture is one of being fruitful.

The next picture is that the tree’s leaf does not wither. Let’s call that durable. It stays green. This is why we know this happiness is not just a flighty and fleeting emotion. This is a deep, enduring, full and lasting reality amidst changing winds, blowing storms and falling temperature. You say, “How is it possible for a leaf not to wither? How is it possible to have enduring happiness in a changing world with all kinds of changing circumstances?” The answer is that your source of happiness is in what lasts forever. Look at Isaiah 40:8: *“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.”* If you meditate on the Word of God, you will find a source of enduring happiness.

A happy man or woman is fruitful, durable, and then, *“In all that he does, he prospers.”* In other words, he’s successful. Fruitful, durable and successful. Here’s another word that the world and God define in different ways. When we hear the word “prosperity,” many of us think the way the world thinks,

in all the ways we mentioned earlier. Getting into the right school, having the right spouse, perfect kids, job, money, comfort, retirement—prosperity.

But is that how God defines success? That's what leads us to the last part of this Psalm, where the contrast comes up again. *"The wicked are not so..."* (verse four). So here we've got the contrast. We're about to read the opposite of fruitful, the opposite of durable and the opposite of successful. The wicked are not those things. What are the wicked like? *"The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away."* Chaff is like a light straw that the farmer tosses up and blows away. The good stuff, which is heavier falls to the ground. The wicked are not durable. Those who reject God's Word, who don't delight in His Word but listen to and live according to the world, don't have a lasting happiness. Their happiness is fleeting. It comes and goes; just like chaff, it's blown away.

This then leads to verse five where things go to a whole other level. *"Therefore..."* Whenever we see the word "therefore," we know what's about to come is based on everything that's just been said. So now we know we're coming to the conclusion of this Psalm, seeing where it's all headed—the climax. We know everything we're about to read is based on everything we've just seen. *"Therefore,"* in light of what we've just seen, *"the wicked will not stand in the judgment..."*

Here's the picture. Not only are they like chaff that the wind drives away, the wicked will not stand in the judgment. So ultimately all the things those in the world have sought for and looked to for their happiness—all these things we talked about at the top—will ultimately prove in the end to be futile and empty. They won't help them stand in the judgment. *"The wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous."*

Now we're talking about a day of judgment that's coming. On that day, we see two groups of people. One group is the wicked and sinners. *"The wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous..."* So here's the group. *"...For the Lord knows the way of the righteous."* We have the wicked sinners, those who have listened to and gone after things of this world, and here we have the righteous, those who have looked to God and meditated on His Word.

Now we have these two groups and here's how they are distinguished. *"For the Lord knows the way of the righteous."* As soon as we read "knows," we realize he also knows about the way of the wicked. It's not like the Lord is ignorant about the way of the wicked; He just made it clear that He knows how wickedness works. So the picture here is more than just knowing about the righteous; this is knowing with approval and commendation. The Lord recognizes the righteous who have delighted in His law, who have meditated on His law day and night.

Another way to put this is that the Lord knows those who know Him, know His Word and have delighted in His law. They will stand, *"but the way of the wicked will..."*—here's how the whole Psalm ends—*"...perish."* They will end in destruction. Maybe to keep the contrast going from the first word to the last word, let's call this "everlasting hopelessness." Not happiness, not full and lasting happiness, but everlasting hopelessness.

So that's the contrast between these two realities. Don't miss the point. You have two types of people according to this Psalm. What that means is in this room right now there are two types of people. Which one are you? There is a type of person who is not listening to the truth of God's Word, but is listening to the counsel of the world, is walking in that counsel, is standing in the way of that counsel and living according to that counsel. Maybe this person is even sitting in the seat of scoffers, to the point that he is scoffing at those who would obey God's Word, who would trust in God's Word as the foundation of their lives.

Wherever you are on that progression, the reality is you are like chaff that the wind drives away. Fleeting happiness comes and goes, but in the end—when it ultimately matters—the Bible is saying you will not stand in the judgment. Your life will one day lead to perishing. That's one type of person here.

Then there's another type of person whose delight is in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night. Here you find happiness. That's your source of joy. And because of this, you are fruitful and have a happiness that is durable. You are ultimately successful. You say, "What do you mean, successful?" You will stand in the day of judgment, for the Lord knows your way.

So my question is, which type of person are you? If you're not "the righteous", you are "the sinner." There's not a third type here. And if that's the case for you today, I want to invite you to become "righteous" which is the invitation that God has brought you here to receive today. By faith, you can become "righteous."

Then for all who would say, "Okay, I'm in the righteous group," I'm calling you to do MAPS with God's Word—to do this with a Psalm a day for the next 40 days. Then every Sunday when we gather together, we'll open God's Word and meditate on it. Don't miss the importance of this. Don't let gathering around God's Word be an option in your life. When you delight in God's Word, you desire to gather together around His Word, with His people, listening to what He is saying. Make that a non-negotiable in your life—day and night on your own, week by week as a church. As we do this, we will experience, based on the promises of God's Word, full and lasting happiness and fruitful, durable successful lives according to God's design.

Let me ask you to bow your heads and close your eyes. I want to ask you that question again about "the righteous" and "the sinner." We just read in Psalm 1 about these two groups of people. The righteous are not those who are perfect. The righteous are those who have entered into relationship with God through Jesus, who have been forgiven of their sin and restored to relationship with Him; those who now find themselves with desires for Him and His Word.

So I ask is that you? Can you honestly say that is you? If you were to die today and appear before God, would you be able to stand? Will He welcome you in? If the answer to that question is not a resounding yes in your heart, then I want to invite you to pray to God right now. Just say to Him, right where you're sitting, "Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I'm walking in a way that is contrary to Your Word. I'm not delighting in Your Word. I am turning from Your Word. But today I am trusting that Jesus

died on a cross for my sins. Today I am placing my faith in Him as my Savior and my Lord. I want to live in the way of the righteous. I want to walk with You. I want to delight in You and in Your Word, today, tomorrow and for all eternity.”

If you just prayed that to God, then I want to invite you to do something. With every head bowed and every eye closed, if you just said to God, “Yes, I want to experience full and lasting happiness in God through Jesus today,” I invite you to raise your hand right where you are. Praise God!

Let me close in prayer.

God, I praise You for people You have brought today to find true and lasting happiness through faith in Jesus. I pray that You would give them courage to confess that publicly today, along with others who have not been baptized yet.

God, I pray for each of us, that You would make us like this one who delights in Your law and meditates on it day and night. May that be true of our lives. And because that’s true in our lives, may we experience full, lasting, durable happiness; enduring happiness that is ultimately better than prosperity in this world because it is a right relationship with You. May it be so today and even more so in these first 40 days of the year, we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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