

MULTIPLIED JOYS IN THE YEAR 2000

Psalm 1

Intro: In choosing Psalm 1 for my text for today, I am aware that I have spoken on this Psalm several times before, and that most of the time, if not every time, it has been on the first Sunday of a new year. You are not going to hear a message that you have heard before although I will certainly be bringing out again the message that the Psalm has for all of us.

Each December, as one year ends, and another begins, we say many times, and others say to us, “Happy New Year.” For the Christmas season we say, “Merry Christmas,” and that also is a wish for a happy time at this time of the year when we remember the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth. Every year we all have a birthday, and we receive cards, or our friends and family members wish us a “happy birthday.” If someone is taking a trip, we wish them the Lord’s blessing, and say that we hope that they will have a pleasant and safe trip. But I don’t know that I have ever received a card, or heard a person express to me or to anyone else, that for a certain season, or on some special occasion, there might be *many happinesses* (plural) along the way.

But that is what we have here in Psalm 1, the introductory Psalm for the book of Psalms. We would be perfectly true to what the Psalmist wrote in this Psalm if we were to translate the opening words, “O the happinesses of the man . . .” Of course, when we wish someone “a happy new year,” we are not thinking in terms of a single blessing, but of many blessings throughout the new year. We want people to be happy, and we want to be happy ourselves.

If started to read your Bible again yesterday, you read the story of creation. And we have evidence that God in creating this universe, and in creating a man and a woman to live on the earth, intended for them to be happy. He planted a very beautiful garden where all of the physical needs of Adam and Eve would be met abundantly. He obviously wanted them to be happy. In all of the beautiful gardens and parks that there are throughout the whole world, there never has been a garden that could begin to compare with the Garden of Eden.

The Bible has a lot to say about happiness and joy. Heaven is a place where happiness will never end. King David wrote in Psalm 16, verse 11,
11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of

joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

When our Lord was with His disciples shortly before His arrest and death, one of the things that He said to them was this,

These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full (John 15:11).

And then later on in the same discourse the Lord gave this promise:

Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full (John 16:24).

In both of these verses it was not only joy that the Lord was concerned about, but *fulness of joy!*

As I speak of this I am sure that many of you can think of other verses in the Bible, either in the Old Testament, or in the New, where we read about joy here and now.

But we all know also that we have our trials and troubles and sorrows, and yet the truth of God stands. When we are trusting Him and doing His will, there can be joy and peace in spite of all of our difficulties. Paul told the Philippian church, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4).

However, and this is the point of Psalm 1, people seek happiness in different ways – actually in two ways, because as Gary told us on Friday night, there are just two kinds of people in this world. There are people who hear the Word of God, and do it. And then there are people who hear the Word of God, but don't do it. And in this latter class there are those who do not even take the time to hear the Word of God. They don't believe that the Bible has anything of importance to say to them. Nevertheless, they want to be happy, and so they seek it where they think that they will find it.

Lucille and I didn't spend a lot of time on Friday night listening to the celebrations that we going on all over the world, but we did hear what was telecast from different places here in Portland where people were celebrating. Most of what we saw showed people dancing and drinking and acting like people do when they get even a little intoxicated. And the announcers were pointing out what a wonderful time everybody was having.

From what the Scriptures say about those days before the flood, I couldn't help but feel that we were seeing history repeat itself. People feel so secure because our economy right now is thriving. I heard one financial

analyst say that the present prosperity is sure to last at least for the next twenty years! And yet he can't guarantee that anymore than he can assure us what the weather will be like tomorrow.

In our Psalm, the psalmist began by speaking of multiplied happinesses, but, as is often the case in Scripture, he said where we will *not* find happiness at all before he tells us where true happiness is to be found in multiplied fashion.

I. WHERE HAPPINESSES ARE NOT TO BE FOUND (Psa. 1:1).

Although the Psalmist used three words to describe those we should not follow, they all describe people in one class: "the ungodly." Notice this word again in verses 4, 5, and 6. The word "sinners" is used a second time in verse 5. These, along with "scorners," are in the class of people who have no place for God in their lives, and no concern for what is pleasing to Him, or displeasing to Him.

Let me define these words for you.

First, "the ungodly." He is a man who has no concern for God, and who is guilty before God, guilty of violating God's Word. And he is very generous with his advice, his counsel. His disregard for God and for the Word of God is the way he lives – "walketh." He thinks he can find happiness in doing what he is doing, leaving God out of his life.

Second, "sinners." This is the person who has become very open in his sin. He often boasts about it. Paul called it glorying in their own shame. And "standeth in the way of sinners" means to be unmovable by any appeals from others to change.

Third, "the scornful." As the word suggests he "makes that which is divine, holy, and true a subject of frivolous jesting" (Delitzsch, *The Psalms, Vol. I*, p 84). He sits. He feels that he has found the way to happiness, and he cannot be convinced of any other way.

People think that they know what will make them happy, but their own hearts deceive them. They have chosen that which brings them a form of pleasure, but it is only, as Hebrews 11:25 tells us, "for a season." Moses turned his back upon the riches of Egypt to suffer affliction and reproach with the people of God. The world would have called him a fool, but he left behind the superficial and temporary pleasure of sin and of the world,

to walk with the Lord. And where do the pleasures of the world lead? Solomon told us in the book of Proverbs, 14:12 and 16:25 – “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”

II. WHERE TRUE HAPPINESSES ARE TO BE FOUND (Psa. 1:2).

This would make no sense to ungodly sinner scorners. Find happiness in a book, “the law of the Lord”? But the key word is “delight.” And, when this Psalm was written, the most they had of the Word of God was “the law.” Today we can say the same thing, and make the same application to all of God’s Word.

What does it mean to delight in the Word of God?

Well, the first point that needs to be made is that no one is going to delight in the Word of God who does not know the God of the Word.. This is established by what Jeremiah said about the word in Jer. 15:16:

Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

The Word was the joy and rejoicing of Jeremiah’s heart because he was called by the Name of the Lord God of hosts! This meant that he had been saved. His heart had been changed. He knew the Lord, and He loved the Lord, and so he delighted in the Word of the Lord.

In Psa. 119:97 we read that the Psalmist said there, “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day long.” And that is what we read here in Psa. 1:2. To delight ourselves in the Word is to meditate on it “day and night,” that is, continually.

If we are going to meditate on it, we must read it. And if we are to meditate on it, we must think about it. And those passages which we give special thought to, are passages which soon are stamped upon our memories. So that reading and meditating and memorizing are all bound together in delighting in the Word of God.

It is so easy to read a chapter or two, and then to put our Bibles down and never give a thought to them again. A good test for all of us who read the Word is to tell someone what we read in the Scriptures this morning, if we read at all. Surely a person who does not read the Bible, or who reads it just once in a while, will never know what it means to delight himself, or

herself, in the Word of God. If you and I want to experience true happiness, we need to start with the Word of God. The Word tells us what is wrong with us. It tells us how much we need God. It tells us what God has done to save us from our sins, and so we learn about Christ. The Bible is the key to those happinesses which the Psalmist wrote about here in Psalm 1.

What are some of those happinesses?

At the top of the list would be that we know God through Christ. A second is knowing that our sins are forgiven, and that they will not be remembered against us by God forever! It is happiness to know that Christ is our Life, that the Holy Spirit dwells in us and teaches us the precious Word of God. It is happiness to know that our hearts have been changed. It is happiness to know not only that we are on our way to heaven, but that there we will not only be "with the Lord," but that "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." And, oh, the happiness it brings as we get better acquainted with God our heavenly Father, God the Son our Savior, and God the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us to guide us into the truth of the Word..

If the Word is our delight, we will not be able to leave it alone. No other reading that we do will satisfy us like reading the Word.

But there is a third point here in our Psalm.

III. THE EVIDENCE THAT WE DELIGHT IN GOD'S WORD

(Psa. 1:3).

C.F. JER. 17:5-8

What we need in the church today are more people who are like trees.

Contrast this with what Paul said about what we need to avoid as the people of God:

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ (Eph. 4:14-15).

Do you remember what Isaiah said about people who don't know the Lord?

20 But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

21 There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked (Isa. 57:20-21).

— In the Bible we get the true picture of man. If you are looking for stability, what a difference there is between a “troubled sea” as compared with “a tree planted.” And trees planted by rivers of water are trees that really grow. The rivers of water are a picture of the Word of God. A tree planted by rivers of water is continually drinking up that water. That is what we need to be doing with the water of life, the Word of God.

True fruitfulness of character comes from daily feeding on the Word, meditating on the truth of God’s Word. And that is when our leaves do not wither. A tree with withering leaves is a sick tree. What a tragedy if as people get to know us, they learn that our leaves are in a withering condition.

The last three verses, with the exception of the first part of verse 6, have to do with the ungodly.

IV. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE UNGODLY (Psa. 1:4-6).

— “The ungodly are not so.” This means that there isn’t a statement that the Psalmist made in verses 2 and 3 that you can say about those who have no place for God in their lives, but who delight in those things which are so displeasing to God.

Instead of being like fruit-bearing trees with healthy leaves, they are like the chaff which is blown away by the wind. What could picture greater worthlessness? How tragic it is when one comes to the end of his days only to find out that he has been delighting in the wrong things, and the wrong people.

— The ungodly may stand in their sinful ways, but they will learn when it is too late that they cannot “stand in the judgment.” Nor will sinners be “in the congregation of the righteous.” John Trapp once said that “Irish air will sooner brook a toad, or a snake, than heaven a sinner” (quoted in Spurgeon’s *Treasury of David, Vol. I, p. 8*). “Brook” means to tolerate or to endure. The only way you and I can survive the judgment of God is by being in Christ. Sinners do not enjoy the congregation of the righteous on earth, and neither would they in eternity. But it will be too late to change then. Hypocrites may have consoled themselves that occasionally they have gone to church, and met with the people of God. But the Lord knows

who are righteous, and who are not. Only eternal judgment awaits those who have chosen ungodliness instead of God, who have chosen sin instead of salvation, and who have chosen to scorn the Savior that to seek His salvation.

Concl: As you listened to the news on New Year's Day about how relieved people are that the potential of trouble through Y2K was past, and that it amounted to nothing, did the thought occur to you that they feel safe now, but are giving no thought to the judgment that is ahead which they cannot escape if they continue on as they are now? Do they know that God knows the difference between those who belong to Him, and those who do not? And do they know that unless they have repented of their sins, and have trusted Christ for salvation, that there is not the slightest possibility that they can survive the judgment of God, that "the way of the ungodly shall perish"?

What fools we can be to think that the way ahead is all clear because we have gotten beyond Y2K! As people are prone to say, "Religion is something which you can take or leave." That may be true of religion, but that is not true of Christ. Reject Christ, or even neglect Him, and the consequences will be terrible beyond anything that man can imagine. How thankful we should be today if we know that Christ is the way to God, and that we are on that way. But how disturbed you ought to be if you are satisfied with your sin, and are content to stay as you are.

We have gotten through the problems we could have experienced if thousands of people spending millions of dollars had not been working on the problem, and solved the difficulties. In the same way, you and I can only be delivered from the penalty of our sins because God sent His Son to take care of the problem. You and I can't do it. The penalty is too great. But Jesus Christ died to save sinners, and there is no other way that anyone can get to heaven except by faith in Him.

If you want a truly happy new year, and joy unspeakable for all eternity, it comes to those who find their delight in the precious Word of God. That is evidence that you belong to the Lord.