

Psalms 1-2

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[0:00] Psalm 1 and 2 is where we're going to be tonight, and we're going to be looking at this thing called the blessed life, the happy life. This is what Psalms is all about. This is how we're introduced to it. Happy is the one. Happy is the one.

We're going to be looking at how we can try and find where we can find what it looks like to find true and lasting happiness. I used to, as a child, as a boy, my family used to go up to a camp in the mountain lakes of New York.

So you have New York City. It's at the southern tip of New York. But then you have these beautiful mountains, the Adirondack Mountains, one of the prettiest places in New York, if not the United States.

Nothing like Scotland, though. But you have these mountain lakes. We used to go there, and one of my favorite things to do there, my absolute favorite thing to do, was to go out around the lake.

It was a pretty big lake, but to go out around the lake and to go hunting to catch frogs. I know. To go catch frogs.

[1:17] That was my favorite thing to do. It was the absolute epitome of everything I wanted from camp. If I could get a jar full of frogs alive, with holes in the top, that would be absolutely wonderful.

And at night, we would sit there by the campfire, and you would hear, echoing across the lake, these absolutely enormous frogs.

That the problem at night, sitting there around the campfire, the problem with an echo, the echo of something rolling over the lake, the problem with an echo is you can't grasp an echo.

You can't catch an echo. You can't hold on to the echo. If you want to catch the echo, you have to get up, get going, get out there, and get the frog.

You have to get the source of the echo. I've been thinking a lot about this this week, and even with Katrine's passing, and our experience of happiness in life is so fleeting.

[2:34] In a lot of ways, it's like an echo. Even that holiday away in the mountain lakes of New York was like an echo. It was there for a moment, but pretty soon you had to go back to school.

Pretty soon you had to return to life, the mediocrity of life. Whatever your favorite thing is, whatever it is, the kids will know this, that you have a friend come over for a sleepover.

The next day, they've got to go back home. It's an echo. It doesn't last. You can't grasp it. You can't hold on to it. If you want happiness that lasts, it's not going to be found in the echo.

I think you could do two things with that. You can say to yourself, well, forget it. Forget it. It's not worth it. If I can't hold on to the echo, I'm not going to do it at all.

I'm not going to go after it. It means nothing to me now. If I can't be happy forever, I'm not going to be happy at all. You can do that. I don't think that's the right thing to do. I think a better way, a better thing that you can do is you can get up, you can get going, and you can go out, and you can try and find the source.

[3:50] You can try and get the source of happiness. Catch the substance. And any experience you have, kids, adults, any experience you have in this world that you would point to and say, that was when I was blessed.

That's when the favor of God was on me. That's when I experienced true happiness, and it's gone. Any experience like that should drive you to get up and get going.

And to go get the source. And tonight, hopefully, looking at Psalm 1 and 2, we're going to find the source. Where do we go? What does it look like? How do we get it and hold on to it?

We're going to look at Psalms 1 and 2. And I just, before we do that, I want to share a poem from, this is a poem from the States, a very famous poem.

And you may have heard it. It's by a guy named Robert Frost. And this is how it goes. He says, Two roads diverged in a wood, and sorry I could not travel both, and be one traveler long I stood, and looked down one as far as I could to where it bent in the undergrowth.

[5 : 17] Then took the other as just as fair. And having perhaps the better claim, because it was grassy and wanted wear. Though as for that, the passing there had warned them really about the same.

Both that morning equally lay in leaves. No step had trodden black. Oh, I kept the first for another day.

Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I should ever come back. I shall be telling this with a sigh. Somewhere ages and ages hence. Two roads diverged in a wood.

And I, I took the one less traveled by. And that has made all the difference. Our hope for tonight is we're looking for a way, a road, that leads to true happiness.

A road, a fork, that we must decide which way we will go. And we have two to choose from.

[6 : 25] Two roads, two ways diverged in a wood. And we're going to look at Psalm 1 and 2 to decide which do we take.

The way well worn or the way less traveled. Psalms 1 and 2 in hopes of making this decision that it would make all the difference in our life.

That we might find at its end. And one of these two ways. Particularly the way set forth in the law of the Lord. And of taking refuge in his anointed one.

That we would find at its end the happiness our souls long for. And the blessing that we were made for. Two ways.

The first of these two roads, these two ways, is by far the road less traveled. It is the way of the righteous. Not often taken by travelers in this world.

[7 : 23] The psalmist opens this magnificent book with the answer to our question. How might I find lasting happiness? That I've only ever experienced echoes of.

He says, blessed is the one. Happy is the one. Who walks not in the counsel of the wicked. Who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked.

Or stand in the way of sinners. Or sit in the seat of scoffers. He starts right off from the beginning with three signs. You want to stay on the way that leads to happiness.

Three signs that you do not follow. Three signs. The first sign.

The first sign post is to avoid the counsel of the wicked. Do not walk in the counsel of the wicked. Some would say, do not walk in step with the wicked.

[8 : 25] The psalmist says, if you want to find happiness that lasts, don't you go and get advice on how to be happy. Don't you follow. Not their example. And not the advice they give of those who have already proven that they don't know anything of such happiness to begin with.

Do not walk with the wicked. The question is, who's the wicked? When I first read this, I was thinking, this is a picture that came to my mind. I was thinking, the wicked witches of the West. I don't know if your West, I've heard wonderful things of your West. I'm sure there's no witches out there. We have witches in America, apparently. They're out there. They're green. They're gnarled fingers.

They want your red ruby slippers. And they want your dogs. Toto. So don't. It says, don't. Go. Don't take the advice of the counsel of the wicked.

The problem is, that's not what he's saying. He's not saying the wicked witches of the West. You see, the wicked are simply anyone who's in their past disregarded God's way and instead went their own way.

[9 : 37] It's not an extremely narrow category only for the Hitlers and the Pol Pot among us. The guilt of the wicked is not painted in terms of these heinous crimes.

It's not. It's anyone. He goes pretty close to saying, don't take the advice of anyone. Anyone. Not the guy down the street.

Not your neighbor across the fence. Not the guy in the pulpit. Don't take the advice of anyone. The only exception to that being if the person who's talking to you isn't speaking out of their own perspective, but is relaying to you the perspective of God.

Do not walk according to the counsel of the wicked. That's the first signpost. Anybody who wants you to go or would say, come this way, I think this is good.

Don't follow. Proceed with caution. First signpost. There's a second signpost, though, is standing in the way of sinners.

[10:57] Sinners more than the wicked are those who have chosen to ignore God's ways, who have consciously made a choice to travel in the opposite direction. And they know that their way leads to nowhere, and yet they continue on it because they'll do anything to maintain autonomy from God.

Do not stand in the way of sinners. It would be a bit like following Jonah as he's running away from God.

Jonah, if anybody doesn't know the story of Jonah, Jonah would have been a prophet of God. He's God's man. He's supposed to be doing what God says.

That's his job description. And what's he do when God says, go and preach repentance to Nineveh? Well, he flees in the opposite direction to Nineveh.

We have this little storybook that we read to Emma and Aletheia, and the way it describes the story of Jonah is, and Jonah had a very silly plan, a very silly plan indeed, trying to get away from God.

[12:07] Isn't that a silly plan? Don't stand in the way of sinners. It's not good. It does not lead to happiness.

Happiness, the picture of happiness, is not you in the belly of a whale with your pal Jonah. It's not. Just believe me, it's not.

That's the second signpost. There's a third signpost. If you want to stay on the way of the righteous, the way that leads to true and lasting happiness, do not, it says, sit in the seat of mockers.

Do not sit in the seat of mockers. These are the ones who are not only, they haven't just subconsciously gone their own way like all of us.

They're not the ones who have just said, well, I know it's wrong, but I'm going for it anyway. These are the ones who spend their entire lives beckoning others to join them in their rebellion against God.

[13:18] I don't know if you have this here in the UK. I assume you have some form of it because these things tend to follow you wherever you go.

We have, in America, we have political lobbyists. Yeah? Do you have political lobbyists here? Did anybody ever want to be a political lobbyist when they grow up?

Yeah? I'm sure there's a good political lobbyist out there, such a thing as a good political lobbyist. But for the rest of them, these are those people who live life with a single agenda.

And the mockers are those whose single agenda is to call people away from God's way. And they don't really care.

These particular lobbyists, they don't really care if you go their way as long as you're going your way and not God's way. And again, it's a way that does not lead to happiness.

[14:28] This is the voice of tolerance in our day, who they will fight that everybody can have their own opinion. But as soon as you start saying that my opinion is actually I'm going God's way, they'll reel you in and just ream you out because they don't want anybody, no matter what, saying that there is one single way that everybody should be going.

And it seems today, in our day and age, what we need more than the voice of tolerance among us is we need somebody to stand up and to tell us what way will lead to happiness.

We need somebody to break into our world and point us in the right direction. So more than three signposts that we are not to follow, this is what God gives us.

Look in verse 2. It says, But his delight, this one who is to be blessed, this one, his delight is in the law of the Lord.

And on his law, he meditates day and night. Our only hope is if God breaks in, shatters the darkness, and shows us the way.

[15:52] And he's done so in the law of the Lord. So the question becomes to us, how do we find God's law?

Where do we look? Where do we go to find God's law? There's good answers out there. Moses. Moses is a good answer.

Moses is the law guy, right? He's the guy. Delight in Moses. Is this what the psalmist is saying? Blessed is the one who delights in the law of Moses.

I don't think so. I don't think so. And here's why. Even from last week, we saw that those who hold on to the law of Moses don't always get happiness.

Those who try to follow it, some they don't follow it, but some do. They don't always find happiness. What might the psalmist be saying?

[16:59] And let me just draw your attention to two things. First, this word, law, is Torah. We know this word. Many of us would know this. It's not simply law.

It's more general. It's the instruction of the Lord. It's not so intense, is it, as the law of the Lord. Delight yourself in God's instruction.

But there's another thing I want you to see. Look, and I alluded to this before, but look above Psalm 1 in your Bibles. What do you see? Above Psalm 1, it has the designation Psalms 1 to 41, but above that is the larger title.

It says, Book 1. And there's a reason for this. Somebody put this together. Somebody in God's great providence put this book together and was trying to say something through this.

How many books are in the Psalms? There's five. You want the law. Go to Moses.

[18:03] The five books of Moses. That's easy enough. Go to Moses. Moses. The psalmist is saying something more. He's saying something. He says, I say law, you think Moses.

I say law, I mean much more. It's not just Moses. He's saying Moses had his five books, right and true. Those are part of the story, but not the end.

I have five as well that are to be read right alongside of those. And we know this from Matthew as well. When Matthew goes to write his gospel, Matthew will write.

And we know the Sermon on the Mount, God's great speech. But how many speeches are in Matthew? It does a very similar thing. There's five.

What's Matthew saying? The law is now being given again, refreshed, refined, restated by the Son of God.

[19:07] A new for you to know deeper and better and more significantly than any of those in the past. Long ago, by many ways, God made himself known by the prophets, Moses, to the end.

But now, he has made himself known in his Son. So the psalmist says, you want blessing?

You want happiness that will last significant, long, true? Delight yourself in God's instruction. God's instruction. Go to the book.

And I would imagine most of us, if you're anything like me, we don't go to the book.

We'd spend much more time getting angry with God that our happiness is fleeting than finding where our happiness will not fail.

[20:14] If you're anything like me, God says, you want to be blessed? You want to be happy? Go to the book.

And here's the picture of what a man, a woman, who does that. He is like a tree planted by streams of water. And they're not just streams. They're not just wild streams.

This is, even the words here, this is God's irrigation system. This is designed by God for this purpose.

that you might be nourished by it. That his perspective on history would become yours and not just, like David was saying, for the past, but everything, resurrection included, is for our past, present, and future.

Delight yourself in the law of the Lord, the instruction of the law, and you will yield your fruit in season and whose, your leaf will not wither. The seasons change and the wind howls through your branches.

[21:30] Drought comes. Tragedy strikes. Will not wither. Whatever you do will prosper. That's our first way, the way of the righteous.

Three signposts to say, don't go this way, and one to say, stay here, grounded in the word.

That's the first way. The second way is the way of the wicked. wicked. It is not like the first. It is the well-worn path of the world.

Not so the wicked. They are not like trees. They are like chaff. Chaff is the kernel around the seed. This is the peanut shells of this world.

This is on a sunflower seed where you suck the salt off of it. You spit the chaff out. They are not rooted and grounded. There is no fruit.

[22:34] It's not worth planting. It is only worth burning up and getting rid of. They are not like trees. They are like chaff that the wind blows away and can blow away.

Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. They will not be there at the end of time when God calls his people home.

They will not last for the Lord watches over. He cares providentially for the way of the righteous but the way of the wicked will perish.

Some say the way of the wicked leads to their destruction. There is no happiness at the end of it.

This is the picture of our world.

We know this. psalm 2 tells us more particularly. It pans out. It says the way of the wicked leads to nothing but destruction. And it pans out in psalm 2 to show us that the way of the wicked is the way of the world.

[23 : 46] We step back and we see why do the nations conspire or the people's plot in vain. The word plot here is the same word from Psalm 1 where the righteous are meditating on the law of the Lord.

The wicked meditate on how they might break free. And remember the wicked is where we all begin.

It's where we all go our own way at the start. Why do the nations conspire and the people's plot in vain? The kings of the earth, they take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his anointed one.

They say, let us break their chains, they say, and throw off their fetters. Just a quick aside. If you meet anybody in this life who wants God, but not Jesus, be very wary.

Look how intricately they are connected. It is their bonds and their fetters. You cannot separate the Lord from his anointed. And beware of anyone who wants Jesus, all the lovey, fuzzy, warm Jesus, without any of the God behind it.

[25 : 20] You cannot bifurcate the two. The wicked don't care about either. Let us break their chains and throw off their fetters.

The one enthroned, though, in the heavens laughs. If this is the picture of our world, where is the hope? If this is what our world is going to, where is the hope?

The nations rage. Do we see that, though? Do we see that as leading to nothing? I feel like it looks to me an awful lot like they're not raging in vain, but they're actually getting what they want.

They're raging very much productively. Where do you look in a time like that? To whom will you look?

The psalmist says, the one enthroned in heaven laughs. He says, don't look to me. Don't look to me. I'm one of you. But look to the one in heaven.

[26 : 34] He laughs. You want to write perspective on all that the world is doing, the licentiousness, the drugs, the alcohol, the drowning our sorrows away, and trying to find happiness in everything that doesn't fulfill.

He says, look to the Lord. There's a picture in Tolkien's books, The Lord of the Rings, of a city, the white city of Gondor, Minas theareth.

And there's a point where we're introduced to this city, and the city is there, it's built into the side of this mountain, grandiose, amazing, but we're introduced to it under attack.

It's a testament to the times, the ages of kings, but the kings are no longer here. Now it's under attack, and it's ruled by a steward.

And many of us, I don't think it's hard to imagine the difference between a king and a steward.

When it's under attack, the steward, he's lost his son, he has no hope in the city.

[27 : 52] It's not his city. So what does he do? He calls all of the men, off your post, run away, retreat. There is no hope left, and it's not until Gandalf, one appears with perspective, who says, no, back to your post, return.

And they defeat, they're able to withhold and defeat the enemies of their city. We look, we can't look to each other, we can't look to each other in this world. Who will we look to?

We look to God, he's enthroned in the heavens, and he laughs. We need one with perspective. The Lord scoffs at them, then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, I have installed my king on Zion, my holy hill.

I will proclaim the decree of the Lord. He said to me, you are my son. Who's he talking to? He says, you are my son. Today I have become your father, you anointed one.

Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. you will rule them with an iron scepter, you will dash them to pieces like pottery.

[29 : 12] It's not a great beginning to a series on how we might better reach the world around us. He will rule them with an iron scepter and dash them to pieces like pottery.

And yet, does the anointed ask for his inheritance? If he did, hope would be lost with it. If the anointed of the Lord asks for his inheritance to dash the nations to pieces, if that was the way the story read, we would have no hope either because we would die on the path of the wicked with everyone else, in the way that does not lead to happiness and is far, far from God. Thank God the story doesn't end like that. For some reason, the anointed one does not ask for his inheritance. Instead, it goes on, it says, therefore, you kings, be wise, be warned, you rulers of the earth.

Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment.

[30 : 38] Blessed are all who take refuge in him. He does not ask for his inheritance. Instead, there is a break, there is a time of grace, where the nations have the opportunity to turn back to God, where though they are on the path of the wicked, they can now take up the path of the righteous, they are called, be wise, be warned, serve the Lord.

The word there is worship the Lord. And for any of us here, I think if we've tasted lasting happiness at all, it's been there.

It's because we've seen the opportunity and we are no longer on the path of the wicked. We find ourselves on the path of the righteous because we've taken refuge in the Lord's anointed. But who is he? For years, this would have been the king of Israel. For years, it would have been the anointed.

He was anointed on his coronation as king of Israel. But you would think if the king of Israel, if we are to have refuge in the king, he must in some sense lead us in the way of happiness.

[32 : 02] He must in some sense make the path of righteousness more well worn than we might see, at least by example, where we might go. But the kings of that nation did not do that.

They did not lead. They did not offer refuge. refuge. The question was where? Where might we take refuge?

Until one day someone came. God's son came to fulfill kingship and righteousness in one to win back the way that we might trust in him.

This is our story. Do you see that? I hope this is your story. This is our story that God has broken in and put in front of us something, a sign to point us in the direction of righteousness and to show us not just by his word but to show us by his eternal word how we might and that we can follow in that way to taste for the first time the only glimpse we are given that we might have a lasting happiness, a happiness that does not fade.

This is what all echoes point toward. You want an echo. You're experiencing something, some faint taste of happiness.

[33 : 35] This is the answer. This is the source. This is where you go. Find God here in his word. Find God here in his son.

This is our story. It is the only story. If it's not your story, it ought to be your story.

A true and lasting happiness that comes in the word of God and the eternal word of God. Blessed is the one who delights in the law of the Lord.

Blessed are those who find refuge in the anointed one. It is the way less traveled.

It is the source of any experience we've ever had of happiness. And it's the reason why God will not let any experience in life be grasped besides him.

[34 : 56] It's not an answer to everything, but you ask why tragedy strikes. It doesn't answer it at every level, but in a very significant way.

Tragedy strikes so that we do not lose focus. So that we do not think for a moment that our happiness is secured here in our relationship with the world.

But that we understand that our happiness is secure in our relationship with his son. known by his word.

At the end of each week, looking at the shape of the Psalms, what I want to do is bring it back to our original question. How does our worship of God serve the Lord?

The word there is worship. We've answered that call. Serve the Lord. Worship him. How our worship of God drives us to join God in his work of redemption in this world.

[36 : 09] Now the answer here is in the break. The son has not asked for his inheritance. If he does, the game is over.

But he hasn't. It's painted in different pictures and different parts of the Bible. In some you read, it's his patience that he has not returned to claim his inheritance.

And while there is yet time, we are not to just grasp true and lasting happiness for ourselves, but turn and serve the Lord.

And this is how I want to do this. I want you to identify tonight with the psalmist. The psalmist paints a picture of the way of the wicked that is so broad, it encompasses even the psalmist himself.

At one point, he was there going his own way. Anybody, consciously or subconsciously, going in the opposite direction of God is on the way of the wicked that does not lead to true and lasting happiness.

[37 : 23] The psalmist paints the picture so broad, it encompasses him. And he only, by grace, is now the psalmist crying out and calling the nations to be wise, be warned.

It is only because God has grabbed a hold of his life, because the word of God has become his delight, and the word of God, the anointed, who he looks forward to, has become his refuge, that he takes on the identity of the psalmist.

And tonight, you leave here tonight, and your objective in life, the frame that you look at, what you're doing here in the world, is your objective is to become a psalmist in the world.

Your objective is to declare the two ways of God that one leads to true and lasting happiness that no one in this world will find without it.

And there's another way that everyone is on that goes absolutely in the other direction. You become a psalmist because the word of God has come and hit you in your life and impacted you, and you've come face to face with it, and you've come face to face with Jesus.

[38 : 54] You become the psalmist calling people to delight in the word and to delight in the son. And one practical way to do this, I've shared this with some of you, if we did this as a church, if we did this, and I'm not saying it's the easiest thing, but if we did this, it would transform who we are, it would transform our city, and I think it's right to say it would touch the four corners of the globe before it was done.

The practical way of living this out, calling people to delight in the word, delight in the son, and what I've been calling this with others a neighborhood fellowship and a youth fellowship is what you do is you pray for three.

It's kind of catchy, there's two numbers in it, pray for three, but the last number is identifying three people. So pray for three people in your life. Pray for one person who's walking next to you or walking ahead of you on the way of righteousness.

Pray that they would come and then approach them as you pray for them and ask them to bind themselves to you. It doesn't have to be forever, but at least for six months, a year, that they would walk with you and challenge you and speak into you and keep you accountable.

Pray for one who's either ahead of you or beside you that will challenge you to be one who calls others to delight in the word, who calls yourself to delight in the word, and to delight in Jesus.

[40 : 30] Pray for another one who's coming up behind you. If you're in a neighborhood fellowship, that would be a great place to start looking for these. Pray for somebody who's coming up the pike, who's following you on the way of righteousness, and attach yourself to them.

Commit yourself to them. Six months, a year, whatever it is, commit yourself to them. Walk with them. Strive with them. Open up the Bible with them.

Talk about the gospel or Galatians or whatever. Read God's word. Delight in it together. And take refuge together in his son.

son. And then the third person to pray with is pray for someone who's not on that way. Who's not on the way of the righteous.

Pray for one person in your life. One person. Not to say that our lives should only be about one person. Pray for one person though that you are going to be God's mouthpiece.

[41 : 38] That you are going to become their psalmist. whatever they're going through, whatever trial they're facing, wherever they're looking for happiness, one person that you will speak the word of God into.

Whether it's through letters of encouragement, having them over for coffee, barbecuing with your family, one person. If you commit to one person for a year and to say by the end of this year that person will have encountered Jesus in me all the time, you will have been more effective I would imagine in this next year than you have been in your past life of walking on the way of

righteousness.

I would be more effective if I had one person who I committed to say Jesus changed them through me. Pray for three people.

One person ahead or beside one person coming up behind you and one person who is on a completely different way. If you do that we can change our church in good ways.

Not to say the church is bad. Change it in good ways. We become more in line with Jesus. We change our city.

[43 : 00] We change the communities where you live. And I guarantee I would stake myself on this because the way the world is as a global city will touch the four corners of the earth.

Three people delighting in the word of the Lord taking refuge in the word of God. His son Jesus. It's practical.

So we're going to close by singing these two parts of Psalms 1 and 2 that talk about delighting in the word of God and taking refuge in his son.

And we get to do this because in the traditional versions they're both in the same meter so we can sing on page 200 I think it is.

We can sing in the traditional Psalm 1 and 2. I think it's 200. We can sing verses 1 to 3 of Psalm 1 and then sing verses 10 to 12 of Psalm 2.

[44 : 20] It's on page 200 and 201. Psalm 1 verses 1 to 3 and Psalm 2 verses 10 to 12.

Would you stand as we sing? does it sing as to greater and earth in The Lord is not afraid, in counsel of the godly men, nor stands in sinners' way.

Nor siteth in the smartest chair, but placeth his divine, upon God's law and meditations, on his law day and night.

He shall be like a tree that grows, near planted by our river, which in his season yields his truth, and his he fadeth never.

Now therefore, kings, be wise, be taught, ye judges of the earth.

[46 : 18] Circle in fear, and see that ye join trembling with pure myrrh.

Is he the Son, lest in his arm he perish from the way?

If once his wrath begins to burn, lest all that are his sake.

So in the weeks ahead, we'll turn to the rest of the Psalms. To see more of what this blessed life looks like, and how it affects our living out.

The Word, and the Son, our relationship with him in this world. At the end of this, just a heads up, on the, I believe it's the 30th of June, we'll have a congregational fellowship that just gives us time to talk over how we might do this better as a congregation.

[47 : 41] The pieces that we're talking in these weeks. But until then, may every experience of happiness that you taste, drive you to seek, to get up, to go, and to get the source of happiness.

In the Word of God, and in his anointed, Jesus Christ. In his name, may we be blessed. Amen.