

Friday Communion Service

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[0 : 00] I'd like you to turn now, please, to the book of Psalms, and to Psalms 1 and 2. Book of Psalms, this is on page 543.

And I want to look at, obviously, just some of the teaching of Psalms 1 and 2. If I can read at the beginning of Psalm 1 and the end of Psalm 2, it's very important to see a connection there.

Psalm 1 begins, Blessed is the man. And Psalm 2 ends, Blessed are all.

I want to think, then, this evening about what it means to be truly blessed. To be blessed in the sense of these Beatitudes of Psalms 1 and 2.

I find it hard to think of a better word for this than blessed. There are all kinds of other translations and options that have been tried over the years to explain what this word means and what this should look like and feel like.

[1 : 25] I suppose the most popular is the word happy. And that's true. But sometimes we don't feel happy and yet we are blessed.

Another one I saw recently was Lucky. But I'm not sure that that quite does the business for most of us. Another way of looking at it, just to take one other expression, is the idea of being privileged.

And I like that, though it's not a very snappy word. But if we are blessed in the sense of these Psalms, we are privileged people.

We are in a privileged situation. In that sense, we are in a happy situation. Because we are blessed by God.

I'm going to say, in summary, that the blessed people are firstly, those who live by the book.

[2 : 34] And secondly, those who trust in the King. I believe that Psalm 1 is stressing that theme of the book.

And Psalm 2 is stressing the theme of the King. So there you are. It's as simple as that. The book and the King.

We are blessed. If our lives are lived out of this book. And if our faith is in the King, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So let's look at the two Psalms in turn. And as I say, it's just part of the teaching. In St. Andrew, we've just started a series recently on Sunday evenings, taking representative Psalms.

So this kicked off the series a couple of weeks ago. So it's, I hope, fairly fresh in my mind. Psalm 1 then, as we look at this blessed man or blessed woman.

[3 : 39] They're blessed, I think, with three things. First of all, blessed with spiritual wisdom. If you look at verses 1 and 2.

Spiritual wisdom. I think the question that's being addressed in these first two verses is, who do we listen to?

Whose advice and counsel and wisdom do we take? Is it, to put it this way, the word or the world? That's the contrast here. Or in terms of verses 1 and 2, and the words at the end of each verse, are we mockers?

Or are we meditating? The choice is just between these two, according to this Psalm. You're either in one group or the other.

[4 : 45] The Psalmist here, I think, is presenting wisdom. An outlook on life that centres on listening to God for our wisdom.

Now, you don't find the word wisdom here, but you can see throughout the Psalm the same thing that you see in some of the wisdom books of the Bible, like the book of Proverbs.

A choice between two ways. One way that leads to death and another way that leads to life.

And so here is the wise person who is listening to God and who is studying God's word and who is walking God's way and refusing to walk in the advice of the wicked or stand and listen to sinners'

opinions and take them and eventually sit in the seat of mockers and join in people laughing at God. But you can see in verse 2 that this man or woman's delight, it says, is in the law of God. And that doesn't just mean law as we might think of it, but maybe a better word for it is the instruction of the Lord.

[6 : 15] Here is somebody who reads God's word as a book for living. Who reads it as direction, as instruction, as wisdom for daily life.

So it's somebody whose mind is just full of God's word. Because you see, he meditates on it day and night. Now, we might think that that picture is saying that this person carries the Bible around. But of course, these people couldn't do that. The Bible was in various scrolls. And you weren't going to carry all these scrolls around. So how does this person meditate on God's word wherever they go?

Because it's in their mind. It's in their heart. They've been listening to it. They've been reading it. They've been talking about it to people. And so, as they go, they carry the book in themselves. And they think about it as they face temptation and challenge and decision. And if people ask their opinion, and as they apply God's word to different situations, it's there in their mind and heart and they're applying God's wisdom to daily living in the real world.

[7 : 40] So that's the first thing about this blessed person. Characterized by spiritual wisdom from God's word. Secondly, they're marked by spiritual fruit in verses 3 and 4.

Now, I think that verses 3 and 4 are addressing another question. Let me put it like this. What are we achieving spiritually in life?

What do we have to show? Or, in the imagery of these verses, are we like the tree or are we like the chaff?

Here's this imagery here. Natural imagery. Imagery that was very vivid in that culture. I suppose the image of a strong, healthy tree planted by a stream is vivid in any culture.

But especially there in a very dry and arid part of the world for much of the years. And the language here of the tree in verse 3 could actually be translated that this tree has been transplanted.

[9 : 02] And it could also be that the streams of water are meant to be deliberately dug irrigation channels. So it's not simply that this tree has grown up randomly and it's there by a river that's always been there.

It's a picture of a young tree perhaps being transplanted and being placed very deliberately by a channel that is going to give water to its roots.

And we're meant to think of the blessed spiritual person as somebody whose roots go down deep and whose life is irrigated by God.

As the Holy Spirit ministers through God's word we are refreshed, we are strengthened, we are in that sense irrigated by God's source of life-giving water in the power of the Spirit.

And that's a wonderful picture to think and you can develop the image of the tree I think beyond just what you might immediately think of as irrigation water and all the rest of it.

[10 : 33] You're meant to think I believe also of this tree as being strong as growing up straight. It speaks here of its leafing green and of it bearing fruit and of it being able perhaps to withstand the storms because its roots go down deep and so the picture can develop in your minds.

It's a picture of a strong life firmly rooted and so able to stand the storm and bear fruit that is appropriate.

And so the spiritual person bears the fruit that is appropriate to God's people. Now the contrast crucially is with chaff in verse 4.

The chaff you know the picture of the farmer scooping up the grain and letting it fall to the ground and the wind blows away the husks and the chaff and the rest of it.

It's so almost weightless it blows away so easily in the wind. And that's what God is saying through the psalmist the life without Jesus and without the spirit is like spiritually.

[12 : 03] It's rootless, it's weightless, it does not have any value spiritually and its destiny as we'll see in the last section is very different from the destiny of the righteous.

So again the contrast there is absolute and what a wonderful thing it is to be part of the blessed community who are like the tree rather than the other community who are like the chaff.

So that we bear fruit, the fruit of the spirit, the fruit that shows that we are like Jesus as we study his word, as we live his word, as we are irrigated by his spirit and bear the kind of fruit in our lives that shows that we are the people of Jesus.

And then thirdly there is spiritual hope. in verses 5 and 6. Now I think this is another sort of question, this is addressing the destination question, where are we going?

And it's saying that there are two destinations. It's saying that the wicked won't be able to stand in the judgment, they won't have a leg to stand on.

[13:31] But the righteous, are walking a way that God watches over, according to verse 6. And so they are going to be safe in the judgment, and safe through the judgment.

And the implication of the psalm is that we walk a way in this world that doesn't end in this world. Walking the way of God takes us through the judgment and into the next world.

It is the everlasting way. And of course, in New Testament terms, this is the way that is Jesus himself. I am the way and the truth and the life.

And knowing Jesus and walking his way means that we are taken safely through death and safely through the final judgment and we find ourselves in the presence of Jesus Christ forever.

So there is the blessed man or woman of Psalm 1. Spiritually thoughtful, living a life based on God's word, spiritually fruitful, able to bear fruit in the power of the spirit and spiritually hopeful because they're walking God's way and that's a way that never ends.

[15:06] And all of this, you see, is because of God's word working in their lives. I think that's the key thing in Psalm 1, that this person's delight is in the word, the instruction, the teaching of the Lord and that is a life that is worth living and a life that leads to the life everlasting.

But let me turn now to Psalm 2 because I want quickly to work through Psalm 2 and then to link them both together. Psalm 2 is focusing on the king.

It's one of these royal psalms that speaks of the king and that points to Jesus. It may be that this psalm, when it was first written, was speaking of an earthly king in the name, perhaps in extravagant language.

And at last that language is only fully fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ. So, I think that most of the psalm could have been understood of an earthly king, but I think there are points in the psalm where it must have been pointing beyond that.

Anybody who had ears to hear what was really going on must have thought, this can't be an earthly king. This is someone extraordinary.

[16:46] many. And as time went on, of course, people saw in these psalms the hope of the Messiah, the king who would come, who would be the ideal king, the greatest king who had ever been, and who would be the savior of the people.

So, let's look at Psalm 2 now, and it divides into four scenes, and if you have the NIV, it has it divided up there, 1 to 3, 4 to 6, 7 to 9, and 10 to 12.

Four scenes picturing different things about the king. Now, I want to stress, as we begin to look at Psalm 2, that, and I should have said this at the very beginning, these psalms are obviously an introduction to the whole book of psalms.

Psalm 1 and 2 together, I believe, form the introduction to the book, and they are saying this is how to read the book.

You read it, according to Psalm 1, as a book of instruction from God. All the psalms are meant to teach us how to live. And you read it also as a book that's looking to the king, and that's what Psalm 2 is focusing on.

[18:18] And at the very beginning, remember that we saw that Psalm 1 begins with the idea of blessed, and Psalm 2 ends with the idea of blessed.

So that is tying and bracketing these psalms together. And I want also to try and show you, as we have time, that in the wonderful providence of God, there are all kinds of other links between Psalms 1 and 2 that made sense for them to be put at the beginning of the collection.

So these things will become clearer, hope, as we work through them. Maybe you don't think at the moment that there's much connection between Psalm 1 and Psalm 2.

they look totally different, but there are all kinds of links. So, scheme number 1 in Psalm 2, in verses 1 to 3, we have the nations rebelling against the king.

You can imagine these verses being appropriate when a new king is being installed, especially if it was a situation where there were other subject rulers present at the coronation of the great king in Jerusalem.

[19:46] And some of these subject princes are perhaps being heard here, conspiring against God's king, God's anointed one.

Why do the nations conspire? The people's plot in vain. The kings take their stand. The rulers gather against the Lord and against his anointed one. Let us break their chains and throw off their fetters.

It's a picture in our terms of the sort of smoke-filled rooms as people plot and want in some way to take over, to get rid of the king, the anointed one, and to take power to themselves.

So here they are conspiring. And we know of course that this is fulfilled in the New Testament, in people conspiring against Jesus and still being fulfilled in our own day as the leaders of the nations and the nations of the world do not want to have Jesus as king over them.

let me show you here a link between Psalms 1 and 2 and it's a thing that encourages us to contrast different people in these two Psalms.

[21 : 14] Remember in Psalm 1 in verse 2 that the blessed man who focuses on God's word meditates on that word day and night.

in Psalm 2 and in verse 1 you see how the peoples plot in vain. The same language is used in each Psalm.

Perhaps the most literal way to translate the word is by murmur. You know how in that culture people would often read out loud or when they were reflecting on words they would say them out loud and say them quietly to themselves.

So meditating was murmuring and you would hear somebody maybe you couldn't make out what they were saying but you would hear them murmuring and they were meditating on God's words saying it over to themselves.

The same word is used in Psalm 2 of the leaders of the nations murmuring against the king. They're murmuring to one another. They're plotting they're conspiring they're gossiping and they're wanting to take over and to have this king thrown off of the throne.

[22 : 41] And two very different kinds of murmuring aren't they? One person murmuring God's word and just wanting to know God's will and do it.

And the others the leaders murmuring against God grumbling and conspiring to throw off this king. Again we're meant to see two completely contrasting groups and to say how blessed we are if we find ourselves in the right one doing the right kind of murmuring over God's word and not the wrong kind of murmuring against God and this king.

Well in the second scene of Psalm 2 in verses 4 to 6 the picture shifts to heaven and to the throne in heaven where the Lord sits and laughs.

But some people find this difficult the Lord's reaction to this murmuring and plotting against his king.

[23 : 54] But God laughs and then the laughter turns to fury and wrath. And then God says I haven't solved my king on Zion.

He's the king and he will stay as the king and nobody will ever overturn my decision to have this king permanently ruling here.

The picture of Jesus of course permanently ruling as king. Again you see there's a link with Psalm 1.

Do you remember at the end of verse 1 the sitting in the seat? Well the same language is being used in verse 4 of God sitting on the throne as we were in heaven.

And also though it's not the same word remember at the end of verse 1 of Psalm 1 those who sit in the seat are mockers. Then in Psalm 2 the one who sits on the feet in heaven mock them.

[25 : 10] he scoffs at them he laughs at them. And again you're meant to contrast these two things. One group pitiful on earth are sitting in their seats and mocking God and his king.

But God in heaven sits on his seat and he laughs at their attempts to overthrow his king.

I can't but think of the picture of you want this illustrated and sometimes how it's not saying that God is laughing at sin but it's saying that there's a sense in which the Lord finds it ridiculous that people plot against him.

if you imagine as I seeing a little child not very happy with dad or not happy with some grown up and this two or three year old having a tantrum and saying that they are going to beat up this grown up.

And so the grown up takes them sort of by the clothes by the front and lifts them up and I've seen this done and the little kid is punching and kicking and flailing away and not getting any vernier and there's something comical about it.

[26 : 50] This little kid is determined to beat up the six foot three guy who's holding him up in the air but he's just beating the air. He is never going to take this person off.

And I was thinking of that picture recently when students were saying to me in St. Andrew's how they were solemnly discussing in various seminars whether or not God existed and whether or not the Bible was true and whether or not Jesus had risen from the dead.

And I thought there must be a sense in which God finds this tragic but also pitifully laughable. You imagine Jesus, the risen, exalted Jesus in heaven, listening in to a seminar of St. Andrew's where people are asking did Jesus rise from the dead?

And they conclude he didn't rise from the dead. And they're happy with themselves. They're so clever. It comes to this decision. And how the Lord in heaven must think that they are pathetic. And that this is really ridiculous. This is laughable. And so God scoffs at that. And then as people refuse to see the truth and refuse to listen to him and refuse to repent, we find him terrifying them in his wrath, verse 6, and saying, I have installed my king and he will be king forever.

[28 : 29] let's glance at the third scene in verses 7 to 9, because now we find the king himself speaking. We don't have time to look at it, but the king simply says that the Lord has made his decree and now the king repeats the decree that he is the exalted son, that he has been exalted by the father.

That's how I think this verse is understood in the New Testament, in the book of Acts in terms of the resurrection, and we read in Hebrews 1 in terms of the exaltation of Jesus to heaven, that he is the exalted king, he is the exalted son, and in that exaltation, verse 8, the nations are going to become his inheritance, and verse 9, he will rule them with an iron scepter.

So here is the exalted king declaring that he has been exalted according to God's decree, and he has been promised the whole earth as his possession.

And then the fourth and final scene of Psalm 2 is, I think, now the psalmist himself addressing the kings and the leaders and the nations of the world, and saying to them, be wise, be ward.

He's saying to them, to serve the Lord, and to kiss the son. And of course this is the language of coming to trust the king.

[30 : 12] It's the language, kiss the son, of homage and respect to the king. To say to him, you are now my king.

I owe you allegiance and trust and commitment. I know I deserve nothing but judgment, but you are willing to let me kiss you and make you my king and acknowledge your lordship in my life.

And David goes on to say, if people don't do that, they will be destroyed in the way. but if they do do that, they will be blessed and secure forever.

That's how the psalm ends. If you do kiss the son, then you do it as somebody who is taking refuge in the son, who's trusting him and sheltering under his sovereign, saving, wise, loving leadership, and you are safe and secure forever.

let me conclude by taking just a minute or two to link these two psalms together in one other way.

[31 : 40] I tried to show you that psalm 1 is speaking about life lived according to the book, and that's a blessed way to live. And psalm 2 in various themes is picturing the king who's fulfilled in Jesus, and saying that we can only be safe and secure if we have made the exalted Jesus our savior and our refuge in this life and for always.

But you remember earlier that we read in Deuteronomy 17, and that's a very important passage in the Old Testament about the king.

And if I remind you about what Deuteronomy 17 said about the king, verse 18 and following, when this king takes the throne, he is to write on a scroll a copy of the law, the law is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to revere the Lord and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees.

You see, when the compilers of the book, or the books of Psalms, there are five books in the book of Psalms, when they decided to put these Psalms together in a particular way, and when they put Psalms 1 and 2 at the beginning of the collection, they were saying something about the king that they were looking for.

They weren't just saying that Psalm 1 is about the ordinary blessed person, which it is. They were also saying that Psalm 1 was about the king.

[33 : 49] Because Deuteronomy 17 had said that the king is meant to obey God's laws. The king is meant to delight in God's word and to follow all God's decrees.

And they saw one king after another fail to live as they should. And they never found the ideal king. And as time went on, they had this great hope that developed for a Messiah who would come one day, who would be the great king.

And one of the marks of that Messiah was that he would fulfill Psalm 1, that his delight would be in God's law, and he would live out God's instructions in a way that no king ever had before.

And of course, when the Lord Jesus Christ came, he fulfilled Psalm 1. And that's how we can take refuge in him.

Because he's not an ordinary man. He's not a weak king. He is the one who sinlessly, perfectly obeyed and fulfilled the law of God.

[35 : 12] He delighted in God's word. His food was to fulfill his father's will. And he never failed in any part of his obedience.

He perfectly fulfilled the whole law of God. And so we can take refuge in that king because he has done what we could never do.

He has obeyed God's law perfectly. And then he also died for our sins on the cross to take the punishment we deserve for having broken God's law.

So as you go to the Lord's table this weekend, you're of course remembering that Jesus died for your sins.

But you're remembering that as part of his comprehensive obedience, obedience to death, that meant that in every part of his life, every day that he ever lived, he was obeying the law, he was living the book, he was being the perfect king, the model believer, the model obeying, who did everything perfectly for us and for our salvation.

[36 : 36] he lived the life that we could never live and he died the death that we deserve to die. So tonight, if you are a believer, you are blessed.

You are blessed above all because you have taken refuge in the king who has fulfilled God's law absolutely perfectly and whose obedience has been accepted by God.

You are justified in Jesus as all of his perfect righteousness has been credited to your account. You are clothed with the righteousness of Jesus and you stand safe and secure and clean and righteous in him.

He is your perfect king and there is no flaw in him and all your safety and security is in him and you go to the Lord's table having taken refuge in the king.

So celebrate the fact that you are blessed and remember tonight and always that you are called to follow the book and to trust in the king.

[37 : 52] It's a very simple message from these two signs but I think it's basically the Christian message for all of Christian living. it comes down to that whether we are reading and living out the book and whether we are looking to Jesus and always trusting the king.

May it be true of all of us here that we know the blessedness of living this book and trusting this king tonight and always. Amen.