

Psalm 1&2 | The Blessed Life

Text: Psalm 1&2

Title: The Blessed Life

FCF: wickedness/rebellion

Shaft: The Psalmist shows we are to enter prayer through meditation and adoration.

Main Point: If we meditate and adore on God, we will become blessed.

Points: how?

1. How to meditate?
2. How to adore?
3. What blessedness looks like

INTRODUCTION

Psalms series

Last week Pastor Steve taught us from Psalm 84 about being in the presence of God. We see that idea again today, but in a new light at the beginning of the Psalms.

Poetry, Song, and Prayer

The Psalms are a different kind of genre than we are used to in a preaching series. We are most familiar with prose, and historical narrative in particular. This is our everyday language. However, the psalms are poetry. As Eugene Peterson has noted, "[Poetry is language used with personal intensity. ... Poetry grabs for the jugular. Far from being cosmetic language, it is intestinal.](#)" (pg.12). What you may have heard a thousand times, you hear again poetically, and it's like you hear it for the first time.

The Gates

Commentators agree that the Psalter is ordered such that Psalm 1 and 2 provide the way we must enter the Psalms if we will learn to pray rightly. They are, as some people have said, the Gates to the Psalms. Or gigantic pillars on either side of the entrance.

Main Point

Main Point: If we meditate and adore on God, we will become blessed.

Points: How to 1) Meditate, 2) Adorate, 3) what Blessedness looks like.

1. How to Meditate

Thankfully, this psalm teaches us how to meditate. There are different types of psalms. Psalm 1 is a Torah Psalm, or also called a garden psalm. The image to associate with it is a garden because it is a psalm that you would use for meditation, which would typically happen in a more serene and quiet place like a garden.

Read Psalm 1

1. Meditation slows us down

Psalm 1 calls us to slow-down. If you noticed, Psalm 1 speaks of two paths. The righteous and the wicked are contrasted with one another. The point is to reflect, meditate, muse on what sort of path you are on. This call to slow-down is intentional. Psalm 1 comes first because we are not ready for any other psalm. We are not ready for God's truth. We are not ready to pray. Why? Because we are busy. Our minds are steeped in worldly things and so we think like the world. How many of you are worn out by the constant barrage of messages you face? Most reports now show that the average person sees 10,000 advertisements a day (It was 5000 last time I preached on this passage 3 years ago. What do you think that does to your soul? It makes us busy. It makes us busy-minded people such that we become accustomed to skimming most kinds of information and retaining very little. But Psalm 1 calls us to slow-down and meditate, on what?

2. Meditation focuses us on the Word of God

Biblical Meditation is about setting our minds on God's Word. "*But can't I just do this meditation with other Eastern Religions?*" No. Buddhism also calls for a calming of the mind, in a sense. But there is a tremendous difference. All eastern meditation is a call to empty the mind. But the meditation that Psalm 1 is talking about is a call to fill the mind with God's words. The best way to do this is by memorizing.

"Torah" is the actual word for law that is used. It is the first five books of the Bible. But it also certainly means the entirety of the Psalms and the OT overall. In meditation we are called to mumble God's truths to ourselves all day and night. That's what the word for meditation means, "Hagah". And what is the result of such meditation? Rootedness. Life. Fruit. The word picture is that of a tree. The person who meditates on God's Law is someone who is evergreen, even in difficult times. And so, they will stand when God's judgment comes.

3. Meditation affords us poise

Do you know what this means? It means that when someone criticizes you, it doesn't decimate you. Why? Because you know what God says about you. You become difficult to knock down by the temptations and trials of life.

Do you know what ballasts are? They are put into the keel or hull of a boat to keep it from "keeling over." It's poise. Do you have people in your life like this? They suffer, they have trials, but they don't fall apart. In other words, they are rooted like a tree. Isn't that appealing?

But how are the wicked pictured who do not practice this meditation? They are like chaff. Chaff is the husk. It's that annoying part of the popcorn shell that gets stuck in your teeth. In agrarian societies, like the one this was written in, grain would be gathered and the chaff would be separated during harvest time. Something like a pitchfork would be used to toss the grain up into the air while the wind blew the chaff away, resulting only in grain. So, what is the Psalmist saying

about the wicked? The person who does not meditate on the Law of the LORD has no substance and will burn up in a flash.

We need to feel the point pressed on us by the psalmist here. If we do not meditate on God's word, then we may show we are really chaff and not a tree. Not only will you be unable to navigate the difficult times of life but you will also fall on judgment day.

APPLICATION

- Do you make room in your life for silence, solitude, and meditation?
- It can be uncomfortable to be in this kind of quiet; who can help you do this more often?

We must learn to go to the garden of meditation. It is necessary to become a person of substance. It is also foundational to understanding and participating in the entire Psalter. But that is only one side of the gate.

2. How to Adorate

The second side of the gate that we must pass through for blessedness, is adoration. Psalm 2 presents us with a royal Psalm. These are psalms that foreshadow Christ in the OT by speaking of the Messiah. The main image is that of a throne.

Read Psalm 2:1-5

1. Adoration Confesses

The feel of Psalm two is totally different than Psalm 1, isn't it? Psalm 1 is serene, calm, and reflective. Psalm 2 is shocking, chaotic, and violent. How does this relate to adoration? Adoration is the contrast that is needed, even expected, in this psalm. Once we have minds ready to meditate on God's truth, we see clearly the way things actually are in the world- rebellious.

The shocking truth is that everyone apart from God, is wicked. Look at the list. Nations, peoples, kings, rulers. This is a worldwide coalition of humanity that is opposed to God and his rule. One of the key ways this is communicated in Hebrew is in the word for "plot." It is actually the exact same word for **meditate** used in Psalm 1 but is translated differently because of the context. So, it could actually be read that the nations "**meditate**" in vain. That is to say that all of mankind is obsessed with trying to throw off God's rule, which is paralleled by his Word. They mumble about it all day to themselves.

This is the second psalm because it shows us that we must own and confess our sinfulness to God in prayer. In confession we agree with God about how evil we actually are. No one can plumb the depths of how wicked the human heart is. And so, we must confess our nature and actions to God if we are to learn to be blessed. We do not choose God, love God, or worship God as he deserves. We want life to be about us and consider everything better off if God didn't actually exist. Psalm 2 calls us to confess our rebellious heart to God.

2. Adoration Submits

But God doesn't permit our rebellion to last. No. God laughs. Isn't that incredible? All the powers of the earth can be arrayed against God and he simply laughs. It's like going to a fight and the other guy is dressed in a white suit. You know you are going to lose.

Read Psalm 2:6-12

How will God win? By his Son. By the Messiah. He will crush all of His enemies by enthroning his own Son over them. And then in subjugation the authorities of the world are warned to submit or be destroyed. In essence, the rebellious world is called to adore the Son, or be burned up like chaff. It's easy for us to look back and say, "Well of course this Psalm is talking about Jesus!" But for the original audience all they knew was that God sent rescuers, kings, who were set apart by having oil poured over their heads. That's what Messiah or anointed means. And so we see that there were earthly kings, but this psalm is also talking about an ultimate King.

There is a call to humility here. At the beginning of the Psalter the instruction is to enter in by humbling yourself before this King if you are going to live. Mercy is available, but not for those who reject it. Mercy is for those who accept his rule. If you do not adore this King, then you will perish.

3. Adoration affords us hope

If meditation affords us poise, then adoration affords us hope. Why? It's because we know how the story ends. Those who are behind this King have nothing to fear. He is more powerful than any president, any army, or all of them combined. Many of the psalmists cry for help. But the reason they cry to God is because he can (and will) do something about it.

I'm sure that this psalm is rough for many of us due to its violent nature. But isn't it comforting to know that there is a God who will judge all injustices? If God is the judge, then I don't have to be. Doesn't that free you to forgive?

APPLICATION

- Have you ever confessed (agreed) to God about your rebellious nature?
- Do find hope in the truth that Jesus will hold everyone accountable?

The King of the universe will be worshiped. He will be adored. In his mercy, he gives you the chance to adore him rightly by recognizing his rule through confession and submission. To reject his mercy is to accept destruction. So, what do we do? Look back at blessedness.

3. What Blessedness Looks Like

But what does blessedness look like? I haven't really defined the term yet. These psalms help define it for us.

Probably the biggest reason that most commentators agree that Psalms 1 and 2 should be taken as one unit is because of the word "blessed." Psalm 1 begins with "Blessed is the man" and Psalm 2 ends with "All who take refuge to him are blessed." If we compare Psalm 1 and Psalm 2, we can summarize things this way.

Psalm 1

Who is the righteous?
Who is wicked?
We should meditate on the Word of God
God will judge the wicked
Blessed are the righteous

Psalm 2

God's Son is righteous
We are all wicked
We meditate on rebellion against God
God's Son will judge the wicked
Blessed are those who hide in the Son

1. Blessedness Defined ' ašrê

Psalm 1 and 2 come together to show us that meditation and adoration lead to blessedness. This is a very rich term in the Bible. It's far more substantial than a pleasant life. It can be translated "happy." But happy to us can mean something superficial. This is anything but superficial. It is wellness in every aspect of a person. Gospels scholar Dr. Jonathan Pennington says this about the word **blessed**, "**esher**" (' ašrê).

...continuing in the ' ašrê wisdom tradition, Jesus begins his public ministry by painting a picture of what the state of true God-centered human flourishing looks like. He is making an appeal and casting an inspiring vision, even as the Psalms, Proverbs, and Isaiah do, for what true well-being looks like in God's coming kingdom.... As Scot McKnight notes in his discussion of the Beatitudes, "the entire history of the philosophy of the 'good life' and the late modern theory of 'happiness' is at work when one says, 'Blessed are...'"¹

This is the good life. Wellness in every aspect of a person. But as Jesus uses the same word he uses it in a strange way. They are people we wouldn't think of as blessed in merely a worldly way.

Matthew 5:3-10

³"Blessed are the poor in spirit.... ⁴Blessed are those who mourn.... ⁵ Blessed are the humble.... ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger.... ⁷ Blessed are the merciful.... ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart.... ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers.... ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted....

¹ Pennington, Jonathan T.. The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing (p. 47). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

What is Jesus doing? He is teaching his **meditations** on the Law of the LORD. He uses the Greek equivalent of the same Hebrew word the psalmist does. But then, Jesus turns from meditation to **adoration** in the next chapter.

Matthew 6:7-10

⁷When you pray, don't babble like the Gentiles, since they imagine they'll be heard for their many words. ⁸Don't be like them, because your Father knows the things you need before you ask him.

⁹"Therefore, you should pray like this:

Our Father in heaven,
your name be honored as holy.

¹⁰Your kingdom come.

Your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.

That's the throne. Jesus is talking about living rightly in relation to his Kingship. Jesus models meditation and adoration for us.

2. Meditate and Adorate on Jesus

What was Jesus doing on the cross? **Meditation.** "My God my God, why have you forsaken me" (Psalm 22:1). What were his last words? "Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

Adoration. Jesus is the blessed One who makes us blessed through himself.

APPLICATION

- How does Jesus's definition of blessedness challenge yours?

We become the blessed, the most happy people in all the world when we believe in Jesus.

CONCLUSION

The image that should come to mind here is the combination of the first two. Here we see Jesus's **throne in a garden**. This is significant because that's how the story ends! King Jesus, ruling in a new heavens and new earth with his people.

Revelation 22:1-5

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.