

The Thirteenth Sunday After Pentecost
August 30, 2009
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

Psalm 1

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. (NIV)

What would you say makes a person blessed? How would you describe a happy and rewarding life? If you look at all the people in this world where would you draw the line to say these people are blessed and these people are not blessed? How can we tell?

Today, we will look at what makes a person blessed from God's perspective. God says that the sun will shine and the rain will fall on the righteous and the unrighteous so that is not what makes a person blessed. The believer Asaph observed that the wicked so often prospered and had carefree lives while God's people suffered. So prosperity and health won't help us determine who is truly blessed. Just a couple weeks ago we heard Jesus warn us about chasing after earthly things by telling us not to work for food that spoils so a blessed person is not the one with the most earthly things either. So what truly makes a person blessed? As we listen to God's Word from Psalm 1 this morning, I pray we find the answer to this question: **What makes a person blessed in God's eyes?**

If you spend any amount of time studying the Psalms you quickly learn that arrangement is important. Within individual psalms and in the way all of the psalms were put together we see a great deal of careful planning and order. Of all the 150 psalms to choose from this one was placed first - a good place for emphasis. Psalm 1 goes well with the Psalm 2. Psalm 1 deals with a person's relationship and attitude toward God's Word and Psalm 2 talks about a person's relationship and attitude toward God's Son, the Messiah. Certainly, these two things go hand and hand and tip us off right away to what makes a person blessed in God's eyes.

There are only two groups of people in this world - the righteous and the wicked - those who live by faith in Jesus and those who live in unbelief - those who are blessed and those who are not. God says: "*Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.*"

God's believers are blessed because they do not follow the attitudes and actions and thinking of this wicked world. Happy are the people that avoid the sinful ways of this world. Did you note the progression of how it can go from bad to worse? The danger is when you start to walk in the counsel of the wicked and then before long you may find yourself standing in the way of sinners. When their influence is strong enough, the worst thing could happen. We could find ourselves sitting in the seat of mockers. If we spend all our time with those who rebel against God & ignore His Word, we might be

lead into worldly attitudes and begin to ignore God's Word. We could get caught up in the unbelief of this world, start to scoff at God's ways and end up sitting among those who mock God.

God's people are blessed because the Lord has given them a much different attitude toward His Word. ***"But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night."*** The Hebrew word here for law is the word *Torah* which literally means *instruction* or *teaching*. This word includes not just the law but also the gospel - the good news of what Jesus has done for us. Happy is the person who delights in all God's Words. We are blessed when God's Word guides us in all we do. His Word shows our sin. It shows our Savior. It leads us in thankful lives. A person who makes God's Word a priority is described this way: ***"He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers."***

This is the way of the righteous. Everything works out for the good of those who remain connected to Jesus who is the vine. Connected to Jesus by faith we have a relationship that means everything - a relationship with God. Connected to Jesus by faith we produce fruits of love. Connected to Jesus by faith we are blessed. And the way we stay connected to Jesus by faith is through God's Word. ***"Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the Word of Christ"*** (Romans 10).

So my question this morning is: what is our attitude toward this Word? Is it the same as our attitude for food for our bodies? Our souls need the food and drink of God's Word as much as our bodies need food and drink to survive. How blessed are we if we think one hour on Sunday morning with God's Word is enough and then forget about the Word for the 167 other hours in the week? Happy is the person who *mediates* on this Word around the clock. Blessed is the person planted by the stream of God's Word.

I pray we ask God to forgive us for all the times we haven't made God's Word a priority. I pray moved by God's forgiveness, given to us fully and freely in Christ, God's Word is where we want to dwell - day and night. I pray God's Word is our delight. I pray God's Word guides us each day. That's a person who is blessed in God's eyes.

On the other hand, the person who wants nothing to do with God's Word is not so blessed. ***"Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous."*** The unbelievers attitude toward God's Word is far different than the believer's and the way God describes them is also far different. While a believer is like a tree growing and flourishing, an unbeliever is chaff in God's eyes. Chaff is the husks that surround kernels of grain. In ancient times, after the workers threshed the grain, it still needed to be separated from the chaff. So farmers would throw chaff and grain together in the air and while the heavier grain would fall to the floor to be gathered the useless chaff would be carried away. Perhaps a picture today could be of left over sawdust that you just simple blow and it all goes away. That is the wicked, the person not connected to Christ by faith, the person who rejects and rebels against God's Word. On the great and wonderful day when all the righteous are assembled, they will not remain but will fall in the day of judgment. They may have health and wealth, prosperity and fame, but blessed they are not - not in God's eyes. They are like chaff.

Again there are only two paths - those who love God's Word and are led by the Word to produce fruits of faith, and those who ignore God's Word and will perish.

Which ones are blessed? Jesus says: "***Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it***" (Luke 11).

Why is someone who listens to God's Word so blessed? For these are the Scriptures that make wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3) These are the words that reveal the love of God for sinners. God would not have the sinner die. So Jesus came and took on our human flesh and blood and never once walked in the counsel of the wicked or stood in the way of sinners or sat in the seat of mockers. God's Word was the delight of Jesus' life as our perfect Substitute mediated on it day and night. Then the Lord our Righteousness stepped in and took the punishment we deserve - for all the times we have followed the way of the wicked - for our apathetic attitudes and actions toward God's Word. On the cross Jesus was thrown out of the assembly of the righteous for our sinfulness and died for our rebellion. But the Holy One did not see decay. Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day so that we might never perish or be blown away like chaff. Because Christ was raised we too will be raised on the Last Day. How can we not love this Word of God!

"For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish." This sums up this whole first psalm. The Lord watches over His own. The Hebrew word has much more than just the idea of watching. The Lord knows us and cares for us and is concerned about us in every way. He is there to guide and protect us. What more could a believer ask for than to have an all powerful, loving Lord watching over you and taking care of you every second of every day! That person is blessed. But not so much the unbeliever. They are missing out on the relationship that means everything. They will perish.

How can you tell those in this world who are blessed from those who are not? How would you describe a happy and rewarding life? What a difference it makes when we look at what makes a person blessed through God's eyes! Just the other day I had a vivid reminder of this. My good friend I grew up with in Wisconsin called and left a message for me on my phone. We had a prayer for his dad last Sunday as he underwent surgery. His message said that when they opened his dad up they found out the cancer has spread to his liver and pancreas and other areas. He said they are going to try some more chemotherapy to see if they can perhaps extend his life a year or two. Yet, after thanking me for prayers and asking for them to continue this is the message my friend left: "*We are blessed and know the good Lord will take care of him. He knows he is going to a better place anyway.*" ***Blessed is the man... (whose) delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.***" Amen.