

Before we hop into the text this morning
I want to share from my heart
And express my heartache and sadness over the shooting
That happened last week at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando

The shooting happened late Saturday night
And I didn't even catch wind of the news
Until I got home from church on Sunday

This is still a developing story and we don't have all the information
But what we do know is that a young man
Entered the nightclub and opened fire on the men and women inside
And he did this as an act of tribute to the so-called Islamic State
Who has committed horrendous attacks like this all around the world
We also believe he targeted this club b/c it was popular
Among people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer

In the end, at least 49 people were killed
And dozens of others remain in critical condition
These were sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives
Real people with real stories who leave behind real families
Whose lives are forever changed because of one man's actions
We hate this. We don't condone this.
We grieve and we believe God grieves at the condition of the world he loves

In moments like these, the response of the church
Should resemble the response of Jesus to Mary and Martha
When he learned about the death of their brother Lazarus
He went to them, he embraced them and he wept with them
He offered to them the ministry of presence
And that's just what we need to do—to be present and to pray.

This week, the Tulsa World posted pictures of a vigil that took place
At a nightclub in town in honor of the persons who were killed at Pulse
It broke my heart that the vigil—attended by many LGBTQ people—
Took place at a nightclub instead of a church

But the sobering reality is that nightclubs and bars
Are often more of a sanctuary for people who identify as LGBTQ than church

And so this attack on the nightclub in Orlando is making many people
Who already feel culturally or socially estranged
Feel like they have fewer safe places to go

My prayer and hope

Would be that the church would be the safest place in world for all people
A community of broken people, freely admitting our need of God's grace
A community where there is real belonging and real transformation
As together we are healed & shaped & renewed by the work of God's Spirit

We still believe that God designed sex to be shared
Between one man & one woman in lifelong covenant w/God & each another
We haven't shifted our views at all on this.
But we also believe that all people are of sacred worth
And Christ died for all people, not just for some.

And so we remember the words of Scripture:

“Rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn.”

I know that there are individuals in our church who identify as LGBTQ
And I want you to know that you belong in Christ's church
May this community always be for you a safe sanctuary. Let's pray.

Psalm 1 (p. 843) We continue in our series called Mixtape
Looking at this eclectic collection of songs and poems in the OT
That run the gamut of emotional experiences
We see anger and impatience and desperation in places like Psalm 5
And expressions of quiet confidence in the middle of struggle in Psalm 23

Our Psalm for this morning fits into a different category altogether
In fact, it reads more like a Proverb than a typical psalm
For that reason, it falls under the category of “wisdom psalms”
And it serves as a kind of introduction to the book of Psalms as a whole

The Psalm is a meditation on what constitutes a good or blessed life
The idea of being “blessed”—in the worldview of the author
Does not mean God raining down \$65 million jets or Escalades with 24” rims

The idea of being blessed is LESS like doing a business transaction with God
And MORE like a description of a way of life
That aligns with God’s design for how life is supposed to work
In other words, a person is blessed who lives life as God intended it

For example: person who understands the laws of gravity are part of God’s world
And consequently avoids doing things like jumping off cliffs
Is “blessed” in that they don’t get smushed to pieces

And the farmer who understands that plants need both water & sunlight to grow
And then ensures their proper intake of both
Is “blessed” in that they will get to enjoy the fruits of their labor

And the person in your office or family who understands that not every email
Necessitates a “reply all”
Is “blessed” in that they avoid making everyone else roll their eyes at them

So, being “blessed” is *less* God doing you favors & *more* reaping the benefits of living life as God designed

So, the psalmist is answering the Q: What is the secret to living a blessed life?
How does a person align w/God’s design for an abundant life?
We’re spending the whole sermon marching thru text (keep Bible open)

Psalm 1 (p. 843)

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.

The Psalm begins “Blessed is the man...” or “Blessed is the one...”

The Psalmist is about to make a claim about reality

A person is truly blessed WHO....

And then he launches in with a two-part description

First, he describes the person in *negative* terms

A person is blessed who:

Does not walk in counsel of the wicked

Does not stand in the way of sinners

Does not sit in the seat of mockers

Now, in Hebrew poetry this is called parallelism

The 3 lines all basically mean the same thing

But in our English Bibles the *movement* across the 3 verses really stands out

We go from walking to standing to sitting

And this really fits with our experience of dealing w/temptation

Something catches your eye—perhaps by accident

Or a thought flashes across your mind

You can choose to look at something else or to redirect your mind elsewhere

But then we start to rationalize or bargain

“Well, I’m just going to entertain it for a minute—just to see what it’s like”

And before we know it we’re no longer just flirting w/the image or the idea

We’ve planted. We’re committed. We’re really exploring it.

This is almost always the way that sin takes root in our lives

No one goes from fully committed to marriage to having an affair overnight

It’s happens bit by bit. It’s the power of drift.

It’s when walking turns to standing and standing turns to sitting

And before we know it, something we would have previously

Called objectionable, unthinkable, impossible for us to do

Becomes the very thing we have done

And we are left to deal with the consequences

The Psalmist says: A person is blessed who avoids this movement altogether
Who rejects the decelerating forces of sin
And who—when they encounter temptation—keeps trucking along.
That person is blessed—b/c they have spared themselves tremendous harm

And then the Psalmist goes on to describe the blessed life in positive terms
Rather than listening to the advice
Of people who aren't living in alignment w/life as God intended it

A person is blessed who: *Delights* in the law of the Lord
Isn't that such a good word? To DELIGHT

To “delight” is to have a deep and abiding pleasure and gratitude for something
Some of best parenting advice I've gotten came from someone on our staff
Who told me how important it is to “delight” in your children
For them to know that their very existence fills you with joy

The Psalmist says that a person is blessed
Who has developed such an appetite for God's Law, God's Word
That it has become for them a source of true delight
Something they love so much
That they crave it—meditating on it night and day.

God's Law, in the Psalm, is the means by which
A person can know how to live life as God intended it
And so, for a person to be blessed
To live in alignment with God's reality
They must know God's Word
And in order to know and internalize God's law,
They meditate on it constantly

And then, in v. 3, the Psalmist describes the life of a person who has come to
delight in God's Law

First, they are like a tree planted by streams of water

Notice: It does not say by A stream of water

They are planted by *streams* of water

In the event that one of the streams would dry up

The person who delights in God's law has additional streams of nourishment

That they can draw upon

In contrast to the scarcity and fear w/which many face life

The person who delights in God's Law is amply resourced

For all that life may require

Next, the person who delights in God's Law is like a tree that yields fruit in season

Charles Spurgeon, commenting on this verse said:

“The man who delights in God's Word, being taught by it, brings forth patience in the time of suffering, faith in the day of trial and holy joy in the hour of prosperity.” – Charles Spurgeon

A person who is nourished on the truth of God's Word

Finds that God naturally produces within them

The kind of virtue and strength and character

That life requires

And different seasons require different virtues and strengths

Paul referred to these in Galatians 5 as the “fruits of the Spirit”

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness & S.C

Note that he didn't call them the *disciplines* of the Spirit

He didn't say a spiritually mature person would conjure up these qualities

He suggested they'd be the natural fruit of life in the Spirit

Nourished on the Word

Note that God's blessing, the fruit of this kind of life

Is not primarily external

It's not about financial gain or impeccable physical health

Not a promise that God will keep us from experiencing hardship

It's none of these things

No, God's blessing has two primary dynamics: nourishment and continuity

Nourishment—God will equip them w/what's needed to face life challenges

In addition to challenges, God equips them to handle life's joys

One of the things several older mentors of mine have in common

Is an easy laugh and a great sense of humor

God nourishes us so we can be patient and courageous

But also light-hearted and joyful

God's blessing gives us nourishment to do all these things

The second dynamic of God's blessing is continuity

The fruit and impact of their life will be long-lasting

Like a tree that is well-nourished and planted securely

The legacy/impact of one who loves God Law will be long-lasting & secure

And then the text transitions:

“Not so, the wicked.”

In other words, what can be said of the one who loves God's law

Cannot be said of the wicked

Unlike the righteous, who are like trees planted by streams of water

In the grand view of history, the wicked will prove to be

Chaff, lightweights, tumbleweeds, blown by the wind

With no direction, no foundation, no security, no longevity

And the outcome of the wicked—here in the Psalm—is not God's punishment

It's the natural consequence of living outside God's design for abundant life

It's like having a dead plant is the natural consequence

Of keeping it in the dark and refusing to water it.

God didn't make the plant die... you did!

And then the Psalm concludes: God watches over the way of the righteous

But the way of the wicked will perish

Again, this is not about God doing favors for some people & not for others
No, it's saying that God has set up the world to work in particular ways

You're blessed if you pay attention to gravity
You're blessed if you water your plants & give them sunlight
You're blessed if you delight in and meditate upon God's Word
And allow God to reorder your life around it

Oh, church—
The harm we cause ourselves when don't pay attn to the msg of this Psalm
When we deprive ourselves of the nourishment of God's Word
And delight ourselves in the counsel of fools

Oh, church
The blessing we deny ourselves by charting our own course
Insisting on our own way
Instead of following the ancient way carved out for us

The truth is that no matter how badly we *want* to follow God's Law
And keep from acting upon impulses and desires
We know are ultimately harmful for us
We find again and again that it's like we can't help ourselves
Because we are dead in our sin; we're powerless on our own.

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our sins. It is by grace you have been saved.”

The punishment we deserve for our sin was laid on Christ
And the blessing that was his was shared with all of us
He saved us, forgave us, empowered us by his Spirit
To know what it means to be truly alive, truly abundant, truly blessed

And it's through faith in Christ and by drawing deeply
On the resource he's given us in his Holy Spirit
That we are liberated to choose blessing, to choose wisdom
To choose to live life as God intended. Let's pray.