

True blessedness

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[0:00] That's going to be really helpful for you. A question to start with. How do you think you can find true, solid happiness?

! Headspace is one of them, potentially the leading app in the meditation app world. It's possible some of us have come across it, maybe even used it. Here's some statistics for you. It's been used in over 200 countries. It has touched over 100 million lives. And it has been downloaded over 70 million times. And one of its founders, Andy Pudokin, says that to find happiness, to seek happiness, is a natural thing for us as human beings. But to look for it outside of ourselves, as though it's dependent on something in the future, is one sure way never to find it.

[1:20] And so he says, use Headspace to help you find true happiness within you. That's what they say.

But this morning we're turning to Psalm 1. And we're going to see what the truly blessed life, that where blessed could mean truly, solidly happy, what that truly, solidly happy life looks like. It's laid out for us very clearly in this psalm. And it also gives us an alternative to the truly blessed life.

In fact, there's only two ways to live, according to this psalm, as we'll see as we go through. So I've got three twos for you.

Firstly, two voices. Two voices. So worldly wisdom from Headspace or other sources, friends, social media, books, they may tell us to look inside ourselves to find that true blessedness.

[2:38] I think the psalm tells us to look away from ourselves to find it. And there's two voices that you could listen to outside of yourself. One is the voice of the wicked.

The voice of the wicked. Have a look there in verse 1. Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked, or stand in the way that sinners take, or sit in the company of mockers.

Whose voice will you listen to? Whose voice will you listen to? Will you listen to the voice of the wicked? And notice in this verse, there's a bit of a downward trajectory, isn't there?

It goes from walking with the wicked. Then it goes to standing in the way that sinners take. That's not standing the way of people who are about to sin.

That's standing and saying, no, I'm going to join them in their sin. That's what it means. And then sitting is the final step.

[3:48] So are you sitting comfortably this morning, this psalm might tell us? Are you sitting comfortably this morning, listening to the voices of the wicked?

The voices of the world around us? The voices that tell you it's okay to do this and that. And yet the voice of the Lord may say something different to us.

Perhaps we wouldn't describe them as wicked voices. Actually, they're the voices of human beings. Human beings who are precious in God's sight. They're made in the image of God. And there will be some good things that they say to us. And you might think, no, no, those meditation naps, Daniel, they're harmless.

They're okay. It's good that I follow this social media influencer alongside following the Bible. But the wicked and sinful and mockers are people that, this psalm says, have no regard for the Lord.

[5:02] In fact, those who are sitting comfortably, the mockers or scoffers, perhaps would be a better translation. They're really scoffing the maker of the world.

They're saying, no, God, I don't want to listen to you. I don't want to live the way that you tell me to live. I want to live my way. The mockers are people who brag about their evil, about their sin. They go from like Dr. Jekyll, a respected scientist, to Mr. Hyde, Dr. Jekyll's evil nature coming out and growing and living in that identity.

That's what this verse is like. Who's the other voice? The other voice is the voice of the Lord.

Verse 2. Actually, the blessed one, they delight in listening to God's words.

[6:26] That word, law, it literally means Torah. That's the Jewish scriptures, the scriptures that they had at that point. The whole scriptures, not just the commands of the Lord.

The blessed one, they read those words and they delight in them. They see that they are good words. They are life-giving words. As Psalm 1, you may know, is a bit of an introduction to the whole book of the Psalms, 150 of them.

Over this summer period, as Mark's said, we're going to be looking at a few of them together. And the book starts off saying to us, are we going to be people who are going to delight to listen to the words of this book?

And in the Psalms, in other Psalms, it speaks of the word of the Lord in places. Psalm 19 is a psalm we'll look at in a few weeks' time.

And in that psalm, it says that God's words are more precious than golds, than much pure golds, and they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.

[7:40] So here's some honey. Most wonderful, sweetest bit of honey you could imagine. God's word is sweeter. It's tastier than that.

And here's gold. Can you imagine many things more valuable than this? God's word is the most valuable, treasured thing that you could have.

And we have the privilege of having it in our hands this morning and opening it and reading from it. Perhaps, like me, you still get excited by sweets.

Or perhaps that's just for the children amongst us. I don't know. I love it when I get a bag of Paribou or, at the moment, Roundtree's random sweets.

They're amazing. They're wonderful. It's wonderful to dig in and taste them, how sweet they are. But if you love sweets, know that God's word is even sweeter.

[8:49] It's even better. So do we delight to turn to the life-giving words of the Lord? Do we treasure scripture like you would treasure a bar of gold?

Or are we turning too quickly to listen to the words of the wicked? The words of sinners, those who mock God? You say, we don't need God.

We have no place for him in our lives. It's so easy, isn't it, to wake up in the morning and grab our phone or turn on the radio and hear the voice of the world instantly.

This has helped me to think, maybe I need to be less quick to do that. Find other ways to hear God's word.

And it's so easy now with technology. Maybe you can find someone online reading God's words to you as you wake up in the morning. A chapter of God's word. Wouldn't that be good?

[9:56] Or a podcast I've listened to a little bit recently, Things Unseen by Sinclair Ferguson. Five minutes or so. There's someone reading and explaining God's word to you as you start the day.

What a great way that would be to begin the day. Rather than turning straight to the voices of the world around us. Voice of the Lord.

The blessed one here finds such delight in them. More delight than there is in winning the lottery or eating the finest desserts. But it's not just to fill up our minds with a whole load of knowledge.

Knowledge, learning it is good. But as someone was describing to us at our prayer meeting on Wednesday, if our minds fill up with too much knowledge, we'll just flop over, wouldn't we?

These words of the Lord, they need to sink right down deep into us and be changing our hearts, our characters. And that's what this blessed person finds in the law of the Lord.

[11:07] Not just delight. It goes on and says, And who meditates on his law day and night. I've been reading a book recently, and there's a chapter in it on what is biblical meditation.

And here's how the author defines it. It's taking God's word to heart. Chewing it. Pondering it. Working through its implications for every facet of life.

The knowledge is good, but we need to read it and then think through it and think about the words that we've read. How does that work in my life?

How does that work in my life? How does that work in my life? Don't do as I guess we're often tempted to do and think, I must have my quiet time.

I must have those few minutes with the Lord. And then rush on and live as if we've never read those words. Perhaps that means some of us need to read less of the Bible.

[12:19] Wouldn't have thought I'd say that this morning, would you? But perhaps you're trying to read through chapters and chapters, trying to read through the Bible in a year and impress people and say, For the last five years, I've read the whole Bible.

That's great. I'm not saying it's not great. But if we're just reading it through at such a pace that we're not even thinking about, How does this work in my life?

If it's not changing us, then actually that's not good. Perhaps for some of us it means we need to write down a verse that we've read in the morning and take it with us on our phone or a little note or something and look at it through the day to help us to chew over it, to help it work from our heads down to our hearts.

Of course we need to pray and we need to ask God that he would be teaching us through those words. But perhaps you'll hear this morning, Oh, actually to bring that off, I've got a quote on the screen.

That's why the PowerPoint's helpful. Reading brings me meat, this person said. But meditation brings sweetness. It's a full meal, meat and dessert.

[13:35] Reading brings the coals to the woods. Meditation makes the flame. Reading brings me the sword of the word. Meditation sharpens.

Reading and meditation go together. Don't split them apart. But perhaps you're hearing this this morning and you're hearing a saying, Listen to the words of the Lord.

But you're thinking, Why would I listen to the words of the Lord? They're old. They're ancient.

They've got nothing to do with me today. Or why can't I listen to both the voice of the Lord and the voice of the wicked?

Or maybe you're just thinking, The voice of the Lord is just so restrictive and oppressive.

It's harmful even. It's a list of do's and don'ts. The world around me says, I can be free. I can be whoever I want to be.

[14:39] I can love whoever I want to love. I can do whatever I feel like doing.

And yet we see in the next couple of verses that actually the Lord's ways are so good that they lead to wonderful life.

See, there's two voices. There's two outcomes to listening to those voices. The first outcome, if you're listening to the voice of the Lord, is that you can be like this flourishing tree.

Verse 3, That person, that blessed person, is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.

Those who delight in the Lord and in his words are like this vibrant tree full of life.

[15:39] This tree is planted by streams of water. Water is life-giving. And the tree is an evergreen tree.

It doesn't lose its leaf. It is full of life all year round. And it bears fruit. It's a fruitful tree. This is a wonderful picture, isn't it?

And the alternative outcome, though, if we're listening to the voices of the wicked, is there in verse 4, Not so the wicked. They are like the chaff that the wind blows away.

Rather than standing strong and tall like a flourishing tree, the alternative isn't being a dead tree. It's just being blown away. See, the wicked, in verse 1, think that they stand.

I think that they're sitting comfortably as they're mocking the Lord and his ways. But verse 4 says that they're not going to stand. They're going to be blown away.

[16:48] They're like chaff. A chaff is worthless rubbish. The part of the wheat, apparently called the husk, which is no good to be eaten, except maybe by animals.

That's not saying, that's a picture, that's not saying that human beings are worthless rubbish. As I said, we're created in the image of God, aren't we? But we are fallen human beings. We've sinned against the Lord. We've said no to God's ways. And that's a great offense before our great creator, God, who is his holy.

And so when it comes to his judgment, we won't have a leg to stand on. So the psalm, the psalm exposes the emptiness of the ways of the wicked life.

And yet this morning, you might be here thinking, this is all very well saying this, but I look at my friends that aren't here at church, that they're not following the Lord's, and they seem to be flourishing, and I seem to not be flourishing.

[18:04] They seem to be prospering, and I don't feel like I'm prospering. This is just the beginning of the book of Psalms.

In other psalms, it addresses that. I think particularly of Psalm 73, worth just turning there briefly, just to see a few things.

Because the author of this psalm, he looks at the world around him, at those who aren't following the Lord, and thinks, hang on a minute, they're doing so well.

Why am I not? So Psalm 73, verse 2, says, but as for me, my feet had almost slipped.

I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles.

[19:08] Their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from common human burdens. They are not plagued by human ills. I don't know if this writer had read Psalm 1, but maybe he did, and thought, well, hang on a minute.

No, those wicked, they're like the flourishing tree. I feel like I'm being blown away by life's troubles. But have a look at verse 12.

As he concludes his thoughts on the wicked at that point. This is what the wicked are like. They're always free of care. They go on amassing wealth.

And if the psalm ended there, we'd have a lot of questions. But praise God, it doesn't end there.

And actually, he's reminded of their eternal destiny.

And he's reminded of what he has in the Lord. And so he says in verse 25, whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.

[20:18] My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart. And my portion forever. Those who are far from you will perish.

You destroy all who are unfaithful to you. He sees what the wicked are heading for. And yet he knows that as he knows the Lord, who's been so good to his people, he takes confidence in the fact that even if my flesh and my heart may fail, even if it feels like I am not prospering, the Lord is still mine.

And in him I have a great eternity to look forward to. See, we may suffer.

Our physical bodies may suffer. People can take things from us. Maybe they might take everything from us. Our homes, our families, our friends, our reputations.

But when all is stripped away, we can still say the Lord is my portion. The Lord is mine. And I have eternal life in him.

[21:34] We prosper because we know the Lord's now. And we know our eternal destiny is secure.

A life living, listening and meditating and obeying God and his words of really what all of us have been made for.

The blessed life in Psalm 1, it should remind us a little bit of another part of the Bible, the beginning. Genesis 1 and 2, where we see that the first man and the first woman are living a life full of blessing.

Life in a beautiful garden. Life with access to a tree, the tree of life. Life where they could walk with the Lord in the call of the day.

Where they could hear him and his voice speaking to them clearly with no wicked voices calling out to them. Until that fateful day when a voice did come that wasn't the voice of the Lord, it was the voice of the serpents who caused them to doubt God's goodness, to doubt God's voice.

[23:02] And listening to the serpent caused them to stand in the way of sin and take the fruit from that tree, that one tree that God said, do

not take from.

And so they ended up being thrown out of that life of blessing in the garden. Undoing the life of flourishing and blessing that God had made them for.

And that's what happens to us if we choose to listen to other voices. If we choose not to follow the Lord.

the wicked, the voice of Satan, it may say to us, come over to my ways and you're going to be blessed.

But human history says, would actually say to us, no. Because of the sin of the first two who listened to that voice, all of us are now infected with sin, aren't we?

[24:12] All of us naturally stand in the way of sinners. We sit in the seat of mockers. And so all of us before God don't have a leg to stand on.

We should all be blown away like the chaff. And verse 5 tells us that sinners will not stand in the assembly of the righteous. And so how can we have any hope of this blessed life?

This psalm tells us that there is a blessed one. There is a truly blessed one.

One who has never ever walked in the steps of the wicked. Or ever sinned against God. Or ever sat and mocked him.

And there is only one that fits that description. His name's probably come to your mind. It's the Lord Jesus Christ. No sin in him was ever found.

[25:17] And wonderfully and graciously he came to this world and he said to us I am the gates. Whoever enters through me will be saved.

They will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life to the full.

That they may have life and have it to the full. So if we trust in the Lord Jesus Christ that truly blessed one we can find life to the full.

We can find that we will flourish and prosper like the tree of someone. Because of the wonderful grace in him to us wicked, fallen, sinful human beings.

It's by grace that we're saved but we must of course continue to live in the way of this psalm.

Actively be seeking to walk then in the ways of the truly blessed one the Lord Jesus Christ.

[26:37] Be actively finding delight in his words and meditating upon it so that that will continue to be changed by him and into his likeness.

Jesus said those words there on the screen in John. He said other words about another plant that felt like my preaching would be a whole lot better if I was into gardening. He talked about the vine in John 15.

Jesus is the vine we're the branches connected to him the life source and we looked at that passage just a few months ago together.

We need to be connected to him and to his words so that we can bear fruit so we can be like that tree in someone. Life in Jesus means we can find true blessing and finally two destinies verse 6.

We've spoken of them a little bit but it's made very clear in the conclusion to this psalm. Have a look at it with me. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

[27:56] The wicked following the voice of the wicked the voice of evil the many voices of the world around us that are mocking God those ways lead to destruction.

They might be sitting comfortably now but they lead to destruction. But the Lord watches over the righteous and we will dwell with him forever in the assembly of the righteous.

this world is but we're not there yet. This world we currently find ourselves in is so broken isn't it?

But this whole book of psalms that we're being introduced to in Psalm 1 is very real and very honest about how it is living the blessed life in this current world.

it acknowledges that sometimes we will feel like we're in the pit of despair. In fact if you read Psalm 88 it ends with the chilling words darkness is my closest friend.

[29:09] But praise God the book of psalms doesn't end there. The book of psalms ends in Psalm 150 with a rousing hallelujah chorus.

I've not been to a performance of Handel's Messiah but I can imagine I'd love to that if I was there and heard that rousing hallelujah chorus it'd be amazing.

It'd be like feel like being in heaven maybe. And that's Psalm 150 that's where the blessed life leads to an eternal chorus of magnificent praise to our great creator gods.

That's the final destiny of those who find their life in the Lord Jesus Christ who find the blessed life.

And so the question is to us this morning which way will you choose?

Will you listen to his voice? Will you trust in the words of the Lord Jesus who says I have come that you may have life to the full? And will you say yes Lord Jesus I want that.

[30:23] Please forgive me my sin. Please help me to follow you. The warning is very clear if we don't.

Verse six the Lord watches over the ways of the righteous but the way of the wicked leads to destruction. Two ways to live.

Two ways to respond. Which way will we go? Let's pray.

Heavenly Father we thank you for your words, your life giving words, your words that are sweeter than the sweetest honey. Words to be treasured more than the finest golds.

Thank you that we've been able to open them and hear from them this morning. Please help us as we respond to them we ask in Jesus name.

[31:34] Amen. Well to help us to respond we've got a couple of songs to sing.