

Blessedness out of Righteousness

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[0 : 0 0] For this holiday, we are going through Psalm 1 to 3. I'll be doing Psalm 1 and 2. So Psalm 1 and 2 are the two foundational Psalms.

If you understand Psalm 1 and 2, we will be able to help us understand the rest of the Psalms and also the whole Bible story, the storyline of the Bible.

So this week, I will speak on Psalm 1. Psalm 1 tells us about blessedness and righteousness. Men seek blessedness.

God seeks righteousness. So the title of this sermon is therefore, Blessedness Out of Righteousness. It's out of righteousness, not outside of righteousness.

So next week, we will come to Psalm 2. Psalm 2 tells us about freedom and God's kingdom. Men want to establish their own freedom.

[0 : 5 9] God wants to establish his kingdom. So the title of this second sermon will be Freedom Out of Kingdom. Before we start, let's pray first.

Almighty God, we are so thankful that we could have your words, that we are not living in darkness, and that we have hope that we could look forward to as well.

May you guide us as we consider and meditate on your word this morning, that we, or that we think about, and all that we are going to do will be acceptable in your sight.

For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Because there's no children's talk today, there are not many children anyway. So for the school children, I suppose you are enjoying your school holiday.

I think for children, I mean, why is it so enjoyable about holiday? It would be because if you have parents who are caring for you, and you like to spend time at home, and that is the part that is enjoyable.

[2 : 1 6] And I would like to tell you about a little boy, whose name was Sihata. Sihata was born as a prince in Nepal.

He was born about 500 years before Jesus came. Because he lived as a prince, he lived quite a comfortable life. He didn't know anything about suffering.

He just thought that that's all about life. Until one day he grew old enough, and his parents allowed him to go outside of the palace. He went out and visited his people.

And during that visit, it gave him a shock. Because he saw people hungry, people begging, people sick, and even people dying.

And that upset him very much. And I suppose he's a special person. I mean, most people said this is life. But for him, he didn't think that life should be like this.

[3 : 2 5] He think that life should be like his time, like in his family. There's no suffering. So he was trying to figure out what's going on.

I mean, what is life? Why was there suffering? And how could people live without suffering? So it upset him so much that he couldn't let this go.

And one night, by that time he had already married, and he got even a small boy. But one night he just couldn't take it anymore. He left the palace.

He went out. And he gave up all his comfort. He went out and lived with the people. And he traveled around, thinking about life.

After many years, he came to a conclusion that, oh, why people suffer so much? It's because of cravings. Because people crave for things.

[4 : 24] He said, because you crave for things, you suffer. If you don't crave for anything, then you don't suffer. Like if we crave for love, then we can be cheated by someone who appears to offer you love, but actually trying to take advantage of you.

You crave for money, and then we can lose all our wealth by gambling. So you crave for respect, why people, if people don't respect you, you get very angry, and sometimes you even kill somebody.

And so we suffer for all those consequences. But what about people who are born in poverty, or born with effect? Then he said, that's because in your previous life, you did something bad.

You crave for something, and you did something bad. And you didn't get the consequence that time, but you will get it in your next life. And so, Sihata has come to this conclusion, which is not too bad, actually, in terms of how to explain life.

But he wants to end suffering, basically. He wants to, he sees people suffer. So he said that if you don't want to suffer, eventually you need to have no craving.

[5 : 45] And unless you, and this is, he called that this is a state of blessedness, when you can get there. But before you can, until you get there, you will keep reincarnating.

So you die, you get birth. And so, you go through the pain of death, even if your life is not that, you don't suffer so much, but on the deathbed, you still suffer.

Nobody likes to die. And so you keep dying, and dying, and dying, and dying, until, at some stage, you can get to the state, when you don't have any craving, then you don't die anymore.

And during each reincarnation, you may either be demoted to an existence of more suffering, or promoted to an existence of less suffering.

And to be promoted to a better state of existence, you need to accumulate or save sufficient good karma for your next life. So if you work hard enough, after thousands of reincarnations, you may be able to get to the state of blessedness, when you will be free from suffering.

[6 : 54] So Sihata started Buddhism, and his name became Gautama Buddha. So while Gautama Buddha's explanation of life makes some sense, his understanding is not complete, because he left God out of the picture.

So before God is a reference point, Gautama Buddha thought that boys and girls, men and women, can be righteous if they try hard enough. Like all men make religions, the assumption is that man's outward performance of righteousness is sufficient to be considered making the passing mark for righteousness.

And Jesus gave us a surprising answer about this. In Matthew 5.20, Jesus said, For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

The scribes and Pharisees were the most righteous men ever lived. They were zealous for the law. They only wanted to do what God wanted them to do.

But Jesus said, that is not enough. Why is that not enough? Just because they were doing it for themselves, and not for God. And those righteousness are outward righteousness.

[8 : 18] We will come back to that. And secondly, without God as the source point, Gautama Buddha thought that blessedness is the absence of suffering. He did not know God, so he didn't have the concept of God.

He could only see things through his woe-ly eyes. He had no idea what God has prepared for those who loved him. So he left out an important part of life because he left God out of the picture.

If Gautama Buddha had read Psalms 1 and 2 and understood them, he would not have needed to waste his time trying to invent the will. In these two Psalms, God has revealed the reasons for our suffering and the way to blessedness and freedom.

So Psalm 1 starts with, blessed is the man. Gautama Buddha was correct in thinking that the state of blessedness is the longing of humans.

So even though he said that we shouldn't crave for anything, but he actually craved for blessedness. That is a paradox in itself. If a Buddhist somehow managed to achieve Buddhahood, then at least that he will not reincarnate again.

[9 : 30] He has achieved the enlightenment enlightenment to the state of having no more cravings and no more conscious of self. To a Buddhist, the state of blessedness is when he becomes nothing.

Someone tells us that blessedness is about our relationship with God. It's not becoming nothing, but being filled with the greatness and goodness of God. Because of the blessed man's relationship with God, his cravings have also become holy.

It does not crave for things like sinners do. Sinners are people who disregard God and live for themselves and do whatever is right in their eyes.

Verse 1 tells us that the blessed man does not associate with the way of the sinners. Verse 1 tells us in what ways the blessed man does not associate with the sinners.

So, there are the three ways I would like to think about. First, in his deeds, in his actions. Wicked men are those who walk according to their own will.

[10 : 33] They disregard God's will. They do what? Pleases them. And the most wicked action in the world would be for the Jews to put Jesus Christ on the cross, to put a righteous man on the cross.

So, in his actions, in his thoughts, sinners naturally put themselves as their own kings. They think that they are entitled to admiration and comfort.

They think that they deserve a better life, a comfort in life, and they think they can stand tall in any occasion. So, when Jesus challenged the Pharisees, they could not stand Jesus because they want to be in charge.

And they, and so they have this thought of killing Jesus and Jesus has been challenging them. Why do you want to kill me? They just didn't think about these sinful thoughts in their minds.

And so that is in actions and in thoughts and thirdly in his words. scoffers sit there. So, sitting there, a righteous man does not sit with the scoffers because the scoffers are those who sit there doing nothing and just give all the complaints, criticisms, comments about things.

[12 : 05] So, it's easy to scoff just like people who scoff at Jesus that you can save, you said you are the son of God, why don't you save yourself? come down from the cross and this is the scoffer.

And so, the scoffer has the ability to tear down but they don't know how to build people up. So, I put a table there. So, Psalm 11 is the way of the sinners that the righteous person will not associate with them in the way they think, they speak and they do things but the blessed man delights in the law of the Lord.

In what way does he meditate on the law, God's law, all the time? And in what way does he meditate on the law of God?

So, in column 2 in the table, Psalm 1-2, the law, so, the righteous person is delight and meditate on the law.

So, in his thoughts, thoughts is the commandment 1-2, that there's only one God, there's the only God, and also he would make no image about this God.

[13 : 32] He understands that God is above all creatures and he does not displace God with other things. And in his words, he speaks to honour God in all his words, that's commandment 3, he does not take God's name in vain, and his deeds, he sets aside time in regular interval to enjoy God's presence, that is commandment number 4.

And also, in his relationship with people, in his thoughts, he honour his parents and respect other people, he does not cover their properties, that's commandment 5 and 10, and in his words, he does not deceive, depreciate, or despise others in his words, commandment number 9, and in his actions, his deeds, he does not damage, seduce, or defraud other people, that is commandment 6, 7, 8.

So, just a summary for the Ten Commandments, but obviously there's more detailed explanation of the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament, but come to the New Testament, Jesus sums this up, he says that the righteous person loves the Lord, his God, before his heart, his being, and loves his labour as himself, and so the blessed man delights in loving God and loving his neighbours.

others. So that's verse 1 and 2. In verse 3, it says that the blessed man is like a tree planted by the streams of water and yields its fruit in its season.

The sinner can only grab everything for their own comfort and survival. The blessed man produces fruit of life for the blessing of other people. Adam and Eve could have eaten the fruit from the tree of life.

[15 : 27] If they have done so, they will become trees of life to give life to their descendants. They choose to disobey God and eat from the tree of knowledge, the tree with the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil.

Their disobedience did help them to know what is good and evil. So after they disobey God, they know that to obey God is good.

to disobey God is evil. So disobedience led to God's judgment. They were cast out of God's garden. Their life became difficult as the land was cursed.

Men suffer to find a living. Women suffer to produce offspring. Men and women suffer more in trying to fulfill their cravings. They know that they do, they need to put in a lot of effort to get very little return.

But even in his judgment, God was merciful to us. The hardship in life is there to help us to seek God. The blessed man is already seeking God all the time. He does not need hardship to help him to seek God.

[16 : 39] In all that he does, he prospers. Prosperity here does not mean an easy life, but a fulfilling life. Jesus Christ came to do God's will.

In all that he did, he prospered until he fulfilled his mission. verse 4, the wicked are not so. Despite all their efforts, they cannot achieve anything of substance.

When they look back the years they have lived, they cannot find anything to cling on to. Their life is like calf, that the wind drives away. It's quite scary, isn't it?

We can spend our whole life doing something, many things, and then at the end, it actually meant nothing. I hope that these words would strike us that we need to really be wise in terms of how we live and why we live for.

So that in verse 5, in the day of judgment, we can stand before the judgment seats. In the day of judgment, those who stand in the way of sinners will not be able to stand before the judgment seat.

[17 : 56] They have nothing of glory and honor. Everything they have lived for has been borne away. Sinners cannot stand in the congregation of the righteous.

They will not lie. Even if God opens the door and says, come in, but if you are not a righteous person, you won't find yourself at home in the congregation the righteous.

You are just totally out of place. You don't know what they were talking about. But for those righteous who find themselves out of place among sinners in the world, they will find themselves at home at last.

Verse 6, God knows the way of the righteous. He will make sure that these righteous would come home. So he knows their way like he knows the way to his children.

He watches over them and leads them home. The way of the wicked is not so. The wicked runs away from God and runs towards destruction. Guatemala Buddha thought he could get to a state of blessedness by his own righteousness.

[19 : 07] We can define righteousness in whatever way you like. You can see that if different religions define righteousness in their own way. We can define righteousness in their own way.

But if everybody defines righteousness in their own way, there's no righteousness. Just like if I define the length of one meter this way, the other one is that way, the other one is that way, then there's no standard and there's no righteousness.

So there's only one real righteousness that would need to be defined by the creator. And also there's only one real blessing and that's only coming from God as well.

So we need to be right with God to know what blessedness is. Righteousness is being right with God primarily. Being right with people is only the full-on effect of being right with God.

The Ten Commandments start with the requirements to be right with God the first four. So in Luke, chapter 18 verse 18, a rich young ruler asked Jesus how he could get to the state of blessedness.

[20 : 17] Jesus asked if he had obeyed the last six commandments. Yet he was right with man in all that he did. The ruler said he had. Then Jesus asked if he would give up his wealth and follow him.

The ruler went away sad because he loved his wealth more than he loved God. He actually covered his wealth as well. He believed that Jesus came from God and that was why he asked Jesus this question and he kneeled before him.

Jesus revealed to him that all his good works were done for his own glory. He was not living for God, he was living for himself. Buddhism is the way to become Buddha.

All the genuine Buddhists worked very hard to accumulate enough karma to achieve the state of blessedness through Buddhahood. It is like a game of slates and ladders.

There is no certainty that you can get there. More importantly, even if you get to Buddhahood, would the absence of craving himself really be the same as a state of blessedness?

[21 : 28] Christianity is not the way to become Christ. There is only one Christ, Jesus Christ. there is only one righteous man, that is Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the only man who gains favor from God because of his righteousness. The rest of us can only gain favor from God because of God's mercy through the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Someone gives us a picture of the blessed man. He loves God and delights in God's words. Because his delight is in God, the world cannot tempt him away from God.

Woe pleasure, fame, and comfort have no effect on him. God watches over his way. The Holy Spirit, like streams of water, sustains him.

He produces fruit of life so that others may be blessed as well. A blessed man is not one who has no cravings or feelings. He is one whose cravings have been filled to overflow by God's greatness.

[22 : 34] And he is one whose feelings have been overwhelmed by God's goodness. Psalm 14 tells us that all men have turned away from God. There was none who does good, not even one.

The descendants of Adam were hopeless until Jesus Christ appeared. From childhood, Jesus grew in favor with God and man, as in Luke 2, verse 52.

Why did Jesus need to grow in favor with God? Isn't he the son of God? Yes, he's the son of God, but he's also come as the son of man. He lived out a life of obedience to God as a righteous man supposed to.

In Hebrews 5, verses 8 and 10, it says that although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered and being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

We thank God that Jesus lived out a righteous life in his suffering. Because he's the righteous man, we can now also become righteous men and women in Jesus.

[23 : 49] Because he had gained God's favor, we become acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. He became the source of eternal blessedness to all who obey him.

How do we obey him? He said, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. Whoever believes in me shall never thirst. In John 6, 36.

If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. John 7, 37, 38.

I am the light of the world. whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light, the light of life. John 8, 12. To come to Jesus, we must first know that we are deficient, defective, and deceitful.

We must admit that we live in darkness. We must be hungry and thirsty for righteousness and light. when we can let go of our self-importance, then we can hear his call and come to him.

[25 : 04] Guatemala Buddha was correct in thinking that becoming nothing was the way to blessedness. He was halfway there, but he could not see beyond nothingness. Being nothing is not the end of our incarnation of earthly life, but being nothing is the beginning of a new life.

When God blesses us, he will first empty us. He will empty us of our boasting and pride. He will empty us of ourselves. But he does not leave us there.

He will fill us with himself. God's blessing satisfies our deepest longings. We do not need to follow the ways of the sinners to try to gain satisfaction.

In fact, we can be so filled by God's blessing that we want to be a blessing to others. Matthew 5, 11. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

The change brought about by Jesus' redemptive work on the cross is so drastic that our own comfort is no longer the focus of our life. The love of God constrains us not to avoid the wicked, the sinner, the scoffers, but to live among them and serve them.

[26 : 22] The grace of God sustenance that we do not fear suffering anymore, but we become willing to suffer for righteousness' sake. God seeks righteousness and we seek blessedness.

There is no blessedness without righteousness. We do not have righteousness. All we have is rebellious nature that deserves God's judgment. God has placed the cross in between what he seeks and what we seek.

On the cross, Jesus has become our righteousness. In Christ, we can now become the righteous man who enjoys God's blessing freely and joyfully.

And this is the only beginning. Guatemala Buddha had no idea what God has prepared for those who loved him because Guatemala Buddha did not know God.

If you know God, you will also have no idea what God has prepared for those who love him because God's grace and glory is so rich that every day of our life, only in the beginning, we can never know the extent of blessedness that we have in Christ.

[27 : 38] And I hope that the love of Christ will constrain us to love God more each day. And enjoy his presence and his work in our life. Okay, let us pray.

Father, we used to think that being righteous is such a painful life that we need to sacrifice many things.

We need to avoid all the joy in life. And we thank you for your mercy that you have called us and showed us the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ that we might now know that what a joy that we have not experienced because we were afraid to be righteous.

Lord, we want to get closer to you and to enjoy your presence with us and to see life as you see and to even more so to wait for the day when we shall see you face to face.

Thank you, Lord. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.