

# Psalms of Ascent - Psalm 128

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Preacher: Eric Morse

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, thank you for that prayer, David. This is a timely, timely psalm in that we, as David just shared, there's a couple that's been attending our church that just had their first grandchild.

They have seen their children's children. What a blessing children are. We're going to be in Psalm 128, and I wanted to encourage us this morning as we dive in to this great text.

That we would consider what it means to have a happy home. For the two key words that unlock the message of the psalm are found right in verse 1.

Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord. We're going to unpack that. But I want to just bring our attention to the fact that the great Charles Spurgeon called this psalm, Psalm 128, a family hymn, and suggested that it would have been recited on special events in the life of the family, birth, marriage, etc.

That the intention of this psalm, the original purpose for which it was written, was, yes, to give a song for Israel to sing together as they would travel up to Jerusalem for the feasts, which is the point of the psalm of ascents, a collection of songs as they would sing as pilgrims.

[ 1 : 26 ] But not just that. More specifically, this psalm was given to Israel for family worship. That as moms and dads and husbands and wives gather together in their homes with their children, they would recite this together and be mutually edified by the blessing of a happy home that the Lord gives.

So we have a lot to unpack here this morning, and I pray that our families, and even for those who say, I don't have a family yet, you would still recognize that you do have a family, and that we get great things to look forward to with what the Lord does through family.

So we're going to jump right into verse 1 here. And again, we're going to break down this first sentence. Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways.

Blessed is the Lord. Two key words. First, I'm going to focus on blessed. You're going to see the word blessed repeated four times throughout the psalm. And the word here is best translated as happy.

To be considered fortunate unto happiness. Blessed. But the second term I want us to focus on here is fear. Fears the Lord.

[ 2 : 50 ] This is a concept that runs throughout all of Scripture. It's especially common in the Old Testament. There's even New Testament themes of what it means to fear the Lord. I want to talk quickly about what it means to fear the Lord as we preface this entire idea.

That the happy home is what God wants for us. Now, as being a youth pastor for nine years, fearing the Lord is probably in the top three all-time questions that I've received.

What in the world does it mean to fear the Lord? Eric, when I read this, I get scared. But maybe my relationship with God isn't quite where it needs to be because I'm not scared of Him.

Do I need to be scared of Him? Is that what this is saying? I receive this question time and time and time again. I mean, for all of us, fearing the Lord is probably a concept that takes a little thought to process.

What I want to offer to us is this, that fearing the Lord is a holy reverence. Maybe another way of saying that is that fear of the Lord is taking God for who He is.

[ 3 : 54 ] Seriously. Fearing the Lord throughout all of Scripture has a connotation of soberness of mind and of spirit. Proverbs 1.7 says, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.

And that idea is traced throughout the entirety of the Proverbs and beyond. That fearing God is how we enter into a godly knowledge.

So what does that mean? I'm going to offer to us here that I think the context in which this is used in Psalm 128 and even elsewhere in Scripture, fearing the Lord for the common believer means this.

That we recognize truth for what it is. That God is infinitely holy and man is utterly sinful. That God has infinite power and that any power that man thinks he has is actually just a mirage.

But instead, fearing God is seeing Him in all of who He is. His holiness, His might, His power, His majesty. And being struck into the heart with reverence.

[ 5 : 06 ] That is who my God is. But I also want to offer to us this morning that fearing God is so much more than just recognizing His power and His might to do all that He pleases.

It also entails believing that God, I believe, that believing that God is benevolent. That He's good. That all He says and all He commands is actually the way to be blessed in this life.

To obey the one who is good and has all power and authority. Which is why if you look at verse 1, blessed is the one who fears the Lord. And we have almost a definition of fearing the Lord.

What is it? Who walks in His ways. So again, fearing the Lord. Holy reverence that leads to loving obedience.

That God is King over all. He's supreme and He has all power in His hands. But also, all that He says is good and I believe that. That I would set aside my own self and my own pride and my own way and I would follow the path that God lays out for me.

[ 6 : 10 ] This is the definition of fearing the Lord. And this psalm is all about the manifold blessings on those who fear the Lord. We see in both verse 1 and verse 4 the idea that those who fear God will be blessed by God.

Proverbs 22, 4 says this, the reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches and honor and life. And by Jesus Himself in the Beatitudes in Matthew 5, what does Jesus say repeatedly?

Blessed are, blessed are. Holy living happiness are those who do these things.

So there is a definite tie that we're going to have to wrestle with this morning between doing that which God commands, obeying Him, responding to His holiness, and Him giving us happiness.

We're going to work through that. There's a lot of things there. But here's what I want us to ultimately see is the context and the backdrop for experiencing blessedness from God through fearing Him.

[ 7 : 23 ] It is the home. And that's where we're going to camp the rest of our time today. So let's read verses 2 through 4 together. You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands and you shall be blessed and it will be well with you.

Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house. Your children will be like olive shoots around your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord. The home becomes the focus now.

As the God-fearing persons work diligently unto the Lord, we see in verse 2 that food will be on the table. But here's the context of 2 to 4. Picture a home in which people live, in which relationships are had, in which experiences are shared, meals taken together, love expressed, fun experienced, the home.

The place that we all came from this morning, the place we will all return to this afternoon. The home, the place where we find rest and relaxation, restoration.

The place where we invite others in to experience community and fellowship. The place where we rest at night. The home for all of us is a place that we spend much time.

[ 8 : 43 ] And therefore, this psalm has a lot to teach us. About how we should think about our homes, what we should be valuing when it comes to leading a home, and on and on.

So 2 to 4. We start with the dining room. Look with me at verse 2. You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands.

You shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you. And again, the picture, the overarching picture here is that the Lord makes happy those who fear Him. But specifically, in this context, we see the one that labors and experiences the fruit from their labors.

So I want you to imagine maybe there's a farmer in ancient day Israel and they go out to do their work. They work in the field all day and they come home and they sit down at the table for dinner. And what is on the table? A delicious meal. Prepared by someone in the home. Made in the home itself. And laid out in the home on the table.

[ 9 : 52 ] That's the picture of verse 2. And here's what the Lord says that the one who labors will eat the fruit of their labor. On their table, in their home, with their family.

And this is a great picture. Because what it does is it conveys to us the importance of meal. And we all know the importance of meal.

And in a fast food culture, sometimes I think we can water that down. Nothing wrong with fast food. I like fast food like the rest of us. But I can so easily gravitate to convenience when it comes to meals that I can lose out on connection and the opportunity that meals provide us.

There's a reason why in the gospel accounts, Jesus, it's almost like Jesus, every city he goes, every place he looks, he's looking in the back of his mind for a place to recline and sit that he may enjoy a meal.

And is it because Jesus really loves food and that's only the thing on his mind? No, he loves food, no question. No question. Food is a way that we get to enjoy God.

[11:00] But what is it that really was at the heart of Jesus? To have fellowship with people. Which is why you will find some of his greatest teachings, some of the most intense, compassionate moments of our Savior is reclining at a meal.

And here's something that we all have in our homes. Well, I would assume we all have in our homes. We have a dining room table. We're going to talk about other parts of the home here in a second, but I want us to consider again the dining room table.

For me, growing up in a family of nine with seven kids, my parents invested in the ultra-long, extra-expandable dining room table that had about seven leaves that we'd all have to put out every time we had a big meal together.

But when we would have meals together, which we had a very busy life. My parents were always taking us to do things. Again, caught up in that urgency. Immediate needs of the now. When we would finally stop and my mom would say, we're doing dinner tonight.

I'm making a meal. We're all having it together. We would sit at this giant table and oh, some of my fondest memories are at that table. The story shared about the day.

[12:10] The jokes given. The associating with one another. The submission to mom and dad as they would talk with us about life.

Some of my fondest memories are when my giant nine-person family would actually take the time to sit down and enjoy a meal. And here's what I love about verse two. Part of the blessing of the Lord on the one who fears Him is not just food, which is at play here.

There's no question. Material possessions. And our daily needs is at play here in verse two. But I see something beyond it. It's what that food brings us in the home.

An opportunity to stop and to enjoy God's greatest blessing in the home. Even more than food. Even more than comfort.

Even more than the security of knowing we've got our bills paid and our next income is coming. Our bank account looks good. It's more than any of that, which all comes from fruitful labor.

[13:19] It is the people who inhabit the home. Look with me at verse three and four. This is such a beautiful picture of a home. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house and your children will be like olive shoots around your table.

Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord. Fear of God makes for happy homes.

That is the truth from the text today. That when we fear the Lord, when we revere Him as holy, when we take Him seriously, when we recognize the truth of who God is and all of His might and power, all of His love and goodness, it causes us to have a deep, deep-rooted faith and trust.

To fear Him in such a way that the Lord looks upon us who have entrusted ourselves to Him and He strives to bless us. And here are the blessings that we see in verse three and four.

A spouse, in this case, specifically a wife, and children. Verse three summarizes blessing as being related to the very people who we are devoted to and live with.

[14:43] In the home, the people who make up the home are the people who are in view. And here's the image. This is pretty cool. What's happening is this poetry.

We've got to remember, poetry is artistic. It takes on images and metaphors that we might understand something in a way that we hadn't thought of before. And here's the image. The image is a fruitful vine and olive shoots.

Now, why are these two images important? Well, in this day and age, far near eastern culture of the day, there are two commodities that would be worth more than most others.

And what were they? Fruit of the vine, let's just say wine, or the product that that brings, and olive oil. These are two commodities in this day and age that have immense wealth.

If you owned these two things, you were considered wealthy. And if you were to have these two things, you're not just considered wealthy, you are also considered to be blessed.

[ 15 : 43 ] Why? Because olive oil in this day and age was used for everything. It was used for food, to make delicious meals. It was used as like a balm, like chapstick or lotion in a dry climate to heal your body.

Olive oil was used to anoint people. It's a sign of being set apart and made holy. Olive oil was an incredibly expensive and valued resource. But not only this, we have this image of a vine that produces fruit.

The enjoyment of what God has made. Juice, grape, wine in this case. And here's the image. These two things are attached to two groups of people in the home.

The wife and the child. what are the true blessings of the house? It's the people.

So again, we look at the dining room table. The psalmist says that a wife is like a fertile vine that gives up joyous fruit in the home. The image here, the language is used, is within the place of living is that term there.

[ 16 : 55 ] For your wife will be a fruitful vine within your house. Within the place of living or dwelling. So think of this as potentially a living room or just the general spirit and heart of the home.

Who exists there in all beauty, in fruitfulness, in attractiveness? It is the wife. And this is a beautiful picture.

It's a reference to a joy that the loving wife brings to her husband and to her home. The Song of Solomon even uses imagery of a vine and vineyards to convey romantic love in a relationship.

So we have a lot of things in view here. Some people will look at this and say immediately, a fruitful vine, we must be talking about fertility, right? That the wife will bring children into the home.

It's a vine that goes and produces fruit. That's definitely at play here. It's poetic and it's a beautiful thing that the wife is fruitful in the home by bringing children.

[ 17 : 55 ] But also, some commentators look at this and say it's not just childbearing, but the fruitful vine in the home is a picture of romantic love.

So we have the bedroom also at play here in Psalm 128. The intimacy that the Lord has given between the man and the wife that have become one flesh.

And as we know, what is crucial to the happiness of any home? The love and intimacy and unity of the husband and the wife.

And this is a picture that goes far deeper than just Psalm 128. the unconditional, sacrificial, unifying love of a groom to his bride and vice versa is an image that starts in Genesis and ends in Revelation.

It's an image of God himself joining with his people in a holy covenant. that the image of a wife and a husband having a fruitful, romantic, loving, caring relationship in a home is an image of that which we will experience one day with our groom, Jesus.

[ 19 : 16 ] And it doubles down the emphasis of this image that intimacy and unity and fellowship between a husband and a wife is crucial to a happy home.

To the God-fearing man, his wife is a romantic partner and friend who also serves as the fruitful mother of children. But I want to apply this both directions as well.

To the God-fearing woman, her husband also will serve as one of God's greatest sources of happiness to her in this life. This is true from both sides.

And it is a picture of the blessedness of marital union. Happiness. Now, I do a lot of marriage counseling. I did four years of young adult ministry and as Pastor Scott told me when I took that over, Eric, you will be doing many weddings and much counseling.

Just be preparing for it. And I have and one of the things that I've continually said to couples as we have gone through marital counseling is marriage absolutely should contribute to our happiness.

[ 20 : 24 ] We should be happy in our marriage. That's absolutely correct, right? But one of the things that I've said over and over again to couples is happiness actually shouldn't be the primary reason we get married.

Because if it's the primary reason we get married and has the greatest weight, what happens when we become unhappy in marriage? We won't become unmarried. But here's the picture of Psalm 128.

in view of this picture of a wife being a fruitful vine and a picture of great, beautiful unity and happiness in this marriage, we have the cornerstone which is what?

Happy, blessed is everyone who fears the Lord. The foundation of the very happiness of the home still rests not even in the husband and the wife but in God who is the giver of all good gifts.

Secondly, we have children and I love this image. Your children will be like olive shoots. Now, just in the past few days I've been calling my children olive shoots and they don't know what I'm talking about.

[ 21 : 34 ] Come here you little olive shoot. And they're like, Dad, what's an olive root? I'm doing this to be silly but at the same time I want to convey to you how meaningful this image has become to me over the last few days.

Having three children under the age of four. One of the things I love about little children, I've never had older children but specifically this age is just the absolute innocence and joy to see happiness and life and vibrancy in anything.

Whether it be the water at the lake or the flower that's just starting to bloom or the bee that ran into our window and then flew off. It's all real examples. Or the grass that's growing in all my dead spots that I've replanted this spring.

Look, Dad, there's grass growing out of there. That's amazing. I know how that happened. I just love the joy, the innocence of children. And here's the image.

It's so beautiful. Olive shoots. An olive shoot is a beautiful, vibrant flower that has come unveiled and what follows the beautiful flower?

[ 22 : 48 ] The olives. The most prized possession of the olive branch or olive tree is the olive itself. No question. But here's what I love about the image. It's not saying blessed, or excuse me, children are like olives that are really wealthy and give you lots of good sustenance and give you a lot of wealth and prosperity.

It's not saying that. It's saying that the children are like the shoots that come way before the olive. And why is that important? Here's why it's important. Imagine a gardener who's out in the garden on a spring morning and begins to notice some flower buds on the strawberry plants that they planted in the spring.

What does that tell the gardener? That strawberries are coming soon. And there is joy in seeing the flower. Even if the strawberries haven't come yet, what is it that we have to hold on to when we see those flowers budding?

Hope. That there is fruit coming. And that's the picture of the shoot. The olive shoot. That children present a hope in life.

That parents get to watch children grow from just a shoot and over their lifetime they get to watch their children and presumably according to the way that things organically run, I know sometimes this doesn't always happen, parents will typically watch their entire lives their children grow.

[ 24 : 16 ] And it's a picture of the start of new life and the budding into something that will come in the future. And the joy that is behind that. offspring are the promise of hope and a bright, joyful, happy future.

And that's the picture of the olive shoot. So now we're at the dining room table again because it says your olive shoots will be around your table.

And we see this image again of the man comes home from work and sits down and there's a glorious meal. That's the first sign of happiness or blessedness in the home. But then what follows which is infinitely more important, the wife is there.

The children are at the table. And now the picture of a happy home really starts to take shape.

Notice in verse 4, here's the summary of the home.

Behold, thus shall be the man blessed who fears the Lord. And then we have a verse in verse 5 which changes gears a little bit.

[ 25 : 22 ] So let's read it. The Lord bless you from Zion. May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. Now we've taken a little bit of a sidestep into a different view.

The home is still at play here. It's still in light here. But I want us to notice now the transition. The Lord bless you from Zion. An image or a picture, a word picture of God's holy city.

The eternal dwelling place of the Lord is the same word used to describe Jerusalem. And then you see this word in here, prosperity. May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem.

Here's where I want to take a second. Because if you're like me, you read the word prosperity and you think this is a loaded term. Likely when I repeat this word, you may think of the prosperity gospel espoused by so many modern preachers today.

The prosperity gospel fails in that it trains the wayward human heart to connect duty, obedience, at the command of God with getting a treat at the end of the day.

[ 26 : 34 ] The prosperity gospel puts the worshiper in the driver's seat. It teaches us to idolize our wants and minimize God's role in shaping us how He pleases. But, as false of a gospel as it may be to tell people that if you ask God and do what He says, He is obligated to do this for you, which I would argue is the prosperity gospel at its core, we're the driver, the Lord is the one who works on our behalf and not the other way around.

Okay, here's the truth, even in that, the prosperity gospel, hang on with your judgment of me until I finish this, that prosperity gospel still does contain kernels of truth though, doesn't it? It's the way in which we see it. And it's the way in which we understand God's role in bringing prosperity and blessing to us.

Because here's the truth, God does indeed desire our prosperous life, church. And the word prosperity here is to be, which is the word for good in the Old Testament that's used a million times. And here's what it describes in this context, the best things of a certain place. Where's the place? It's Jerusalem. So here's the idea of prosperity in this verse. The wish is that may you experience all the greatest things in Jerusalem.

[ 28 : 04 ] That's how we explain this, okay? The best eateries and artisan foods, think of Spokane, what are those places? Maybe Green Bluff strawberries, a wood-fired pizza from the Flying Goat, my favorite.

Natural parks and outdoor recreation here in Spokane, there's so many places to go. The best of what Spokane has to offer in the outdoor world. First wave coffee, like Rebel 77, right Josh? By the way, that's what's in your cup this morning. Good coffee. Elegant homes that you drive through on the South Hill and see. And more. May you experience the best of the best that that place has to offer.

And if we're not careful, we can get very, very dangerously close to a prosperity gospel. But Lord, I want those things desperately. Please give them. But here's the reality of the world we live in. We will not always experience prosperity in this life. When we come to certain genres of Scripture, we need to take those genres into account and understand the ways in which they were written.

[ 29 : 17 ] And for the genres of poetry and wisdom, a lot of times you will read things that seem definitive, A to B promises. I'll give you one.

In the Proverbs, it says, train up a child in the way they should go and when they were old, they will not depart from it. That seems definitive, doesn't it? Great. Okay. So we're going to pray with our child. We're going to read the Scripture to our child. We're going to get them in church.

We are going to love this child with the truth of the gospel. We're going to take this seriously because the Word says if we do these things, the child will not depart from it when they get old. But then we're disappointed when we raise the child with all of our might, power, and strength to love Christ. And they still depart. But here's the reality of the Proverbs and even in this psalm and sometimes in the psalms, the Lord conveys to us, lays out in these sections of Scriptures principles that are generally true according to the pattern and way that the Lord has ordained all things. Principles not necessarily guaranteed sign and deliver, seal the bow promises. Now I'm not saying that the Lord is lying when He says that if you raise up a child in the way they should go, they won't depart from it.

[ 30 : 34 ] I'm saying this, that that is the pattern that the Lord has ordained that we would trust. But, we all know that even when we do our best to follow these principles, sometimes the Lord still withholds what we would define as prosperity.

Isolation. We see a picture of a home that's filled with life and people but we also know that isolation is a thing. The 30-something that has been dating and dating and dating, looking, desiring to be married and can't seem to find the spouse.

How are they supposed to see this picture of Psalm 128? Loss. The woman that's been married for 30 years and is just about to enter into retirement with her husband.

Man, we're seeing all these plans, we're going to go across the country, we're going to do all these great things together, we're so excited. And the husband dies immediately, suddenly. Where's my spouse?

Where's the fruitful vine in my home? Grief. Like I mentioned before. We raise our children to love the Lord and devote them in prayer night after night, day after day, to love Jesus.

[ 31 : 55 ] Nothing else, just love Jesus. And they still turn to what the world has to offer. They walk away from Christ. They refuse His grace and His mercy and His love.

The grief of a rebellious child. How many families I have known throughout the years and parents that have told me our greatest grief is this child.

But we still pray and hope. Infertility. This might be a really difficult thing to swallow. Psalm 128. The idea that the wife will be a fruitful vine, that children will be olive shoots, the house is full, the table is filled, the meal is had, joy, happiness, the happy home.

And you have the couple that's been trying for five years to get pregnant. And the Lord keeps seeming to say no, no, no. The reality is that we live in a broken world that still is filled with heartbreak.

And if we cling to things like a prosperity gospel that says if you do A, God is obligated to give you B, who ends up being the one who disappoints?

[ 33 : 11 ] It's God. So here's my plea to us and my call to us that yes, the point of this morning, the point of this psalm, I'm not going to shy away from it, is that the fear of God makes for happy homes.

Sometimes this psalm is definitely, definitely telling us, telling Israel and by proxy us that if we fear God, revere Him, trust Him, serve Him with all that we have, He will bless us with a happy home.

However, sometimes this definition of prosperous only includes Jesus Christ.

And family, let me tell you, if that were the case, we are still oh so prosperous. That if every person at our family table were to leave, were to disappear overnight, that were all of the sorrows and griefs of the world that come upon a person who has had a home, had family, had children, had grandchildren, if it all were to disappear as hard and as sorrowful as that would be, here's the reality.

We are still prosperous. Sometimes God's definition of prosperous includes just that, Jesus and Jesus alone.

[ 34 : 34 ] but sometimes his definition of prosperous includes Christ along with material blessings, comfort, security, well-being, children, grandchildren, incredible, good blessings from God.

And that's where we get into verse 5 here because the image is we've now taken a snapshot of the home and we're taking the postcard and we're going somewhere else and we're posting it somewhere and it's actually outside the home, it's in the communal, the communal home, the city home, which is Israel.

Take the home and we post it in Jerusalem and here's the picture that every single home that has been blessed by God with happiness, the children, the grandchildren, the unity and blessing of a marriage, that entire family unit is part of a giant, larger family unit.

That's what verse 5 is teaching us. That Israel, don't forget, even at your dining room table, at the blessing of that table, you have another, even greater, larger family.

And here's the beautiful truth that our individual families, the happiness that we experience in them, now get to be broadened.

[ 35 : 54 ] We all bring our collective happiness in our families and we come together as one spiritual family. We worship together where the Lord is found in His church, with His people.

And for Israel, this was Jerusalem. Go to Jerusalem. Live with God's people. Take your family.

Enjoy the fruits of God's holy family. And then finally, a benediction in verse 6.

May you see your children's children. True prosperity is enjoying relationship with God and the good gifts that He imparts.

In all of life, the secret to happiness is to recognize the giver behind the gift. As we enjoy the gifts in and of themselves, as we do, we gain an unbelievable, eternal, satisfying joy on top of just the sheer enjoyment of the thing when we recognize who's behind it and His kindness in our lives.

This is a doctrine called common grace. Natural displays of God's mercy on created beings, food, weather, skills and abilities, sustained breath. Every day that every person does not pass away from the earth is a common grace by God.

[ 37 : 12 ] Ice cream on a sunny day, a loyal dog, picking up our favorite novel, an intense board game of strategy and intellect, a deep conversation with a friend or family time with loved ones.

Each and every one of these forms of happiness includes the grace of God in our lives. And that grace is offered to all. It is possible to experience God-given divine happiness through common grace.

But, each sliver of happiness we get from what God has given and made for us to enjoy is just a temporal snapshot of the eternal happiness that we have in Him.

Special grace is God's eternal loving favor on sinners through the work of Jesus. Our mission statement here at this church is to display the light of Christ for the glory of God and the good of all. What is the good of all? Is our mission statement are we shining Jesus' light and loving our community with compassion and care that they might come in here or meet them out there and that they would experience simply common grace?

[ 38 : 31 ] Now, don't get me wrong. We wish common grace on our brothers and sisters in the neighborhood, on our neighbors. We want to bless them with all sorts of acts of kindness that they would experience general happiness and goodness from God.

But when we say at the end of that mission statement for the good of all, what we mean is that the lost would experience the greatest good, Jesus.

The highest possible good that can unwrap and envelop the human heart is the love of Jesus. And God has made it abundantly clear that His Son, Jesus, is the greatest blessing, the greatest gift He has given to humanity.

John 3.16, which is a verse that everyone is familiar with, is the proof verse here. Listen to this. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever should believe in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

God loved us so much that He said, I have given so many gifts already. They have homes, they have food, they have a dining room table, they have games, they have fellowship, they have conversations, they have rain and sun.

[ 40 : 00 ] But I want to give them one more gift. And it is the gift to define all gifts. It's my Son. And this sublime gift is just waiting to be received and open.

The way to receiving this gift is through what Psalm 128 says today is fear the Lord. Fearing the Lord and responding to the gospel are one in the same.

Using our definition from earlier, holy reverence, the fearing heart God recognizes that which is true for the first time. That God is holy. That God is loving.

And that we are not. Enter Jesus who provided a way for man to become holy by becoming sinful. Or excuse me, sin himself. He made him who knew no sin to become sin on our behalf that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Fearing God starts with a place shall we see his holiness and we see our brokenness and we embrace Jesus through repentance and belief. So what do we do as a church? We display this very gift to the world.

[ 41 : 09 ] And here's the most amazing part about Psalm 128. I believe that one of the main ways that the Lord shines the light of his gospel to the world is the witness happiness of the family, of the home.

That when we think about the church being a light to the world, it's not just when we're here, when we're on a prayer walk, when we're gathered. I want you to think of this Psalm and think through this.

That the happiness that the Lord gives to those in the home as one family unit united together to fear God, that witness is how people see Jesus.

Which is why marriage is a picture of the everlasting gospel. Which is why children are our primary disciples, parents.

That as we raise our children to love Jesus, that we are raising, proclaiming, Jesus-loving, people, that then make up the church.

[ 42 : 23 ] But I want to speak quickly here to those who have never known a happy home. Perhaps you hear this Psalm, you read this, and you're not able to join in with the affirmations of yes, happy home.

Take courage, for God has made a home for the homeless. He has made brothers for the brotherless and sisters for the sisterless. He has fashioned a redeemed family that shares the happiness of Jesus together.

And when we gather church, we take our homes and we see the beauty of the church. Now I want to go back to the olive shoots here because that's how the Psalm finishes.

Back to the olive shoots. Verse 6. Vines give way to shoots, shoots give way to more growth, and growth gives way to a fully grown olive tree over time. I want you to think of that in verse 6 here.

May you see your children's children, peace be upon Israel. The olive tree is a symbol of longevity. There are olive trees in Israel that are believed to be around a thousand years old.

[ 43 : 29 ] So here's the picture. May you see your children that are olive shoots have children that have children that have children that have children.

it's an eternal benediction. May you continually see fruitfulness that continues to contribute happiness.

It's this compounding image. More children, more grandkids, more great-grandkids, and then maybe even great-great-grandkids if you're lucky to see that. The happiness builds in the home, the witness increases in the home, the health of the home, all of this is in view.

And one of the highest blessings in life during this time, as David said last week, was to see a recurrent generation, was to have children that are not burdens, that are not things that we regret having, but instead are people that love us and care for us, because here's how life happened, everyone was in the home, and that was the model.

And here today we have children, we have grandchildren, we have parents, we have grandparents, we even have some great-grandparents in the room. I want to offer to us that this psalm is suggesting that you could not offer a more well-wishing blessing on someone than may you see your children's children.

[ 44 : 57 ] But what is required to believe that is a redemptive view of children. As David said last week, that children are a blessing, that they are worth the best of our time, our energy, our love, our care, our attention.

That over time our children become our friends. That over time those friends become loving caretakers. That over time those children continue the legacy that the parents have set, whatever it may be.

But what is in Psalm 128? Fear of the Lord. To all married couples here without children, there's a lot of things to discuss about when having children, timing and all that, but here's what I want to say. The Lord has it in your future to have children. May you see them. To all married couples here who already have children, but no grandchildren, here's what I want to say to you. May you see your children's children.

children. But the Lord says that they are a blessing. To those in here who are grandparents who already have their children's children with them, I'm going to say in faith, may you see your children's children's children.

[ 46 : 21 ] That's the image. Fear of God makes for a happy home, and a happy home is filled with laughter. So I want to end this morning just with a few applications for us.

First, that we would fear God. It's clear in the text, verse 1 and 4, that happy homes are a byproduct of God's providence should He bless us, but that comes by way of fear of Him.

So fearing God means that we avoid sin, and by extension we avoid its consequences. We make life-giving choices, friends, church, career. We seek not our glory, but His. We obey the leading of the Spirit.

Parents, we have the joyful privilege of modeling Christ to our children. their adult understanding someday of what it means to fear God will be primarily formed by your example.

I know that's raising the weight of our example, but I think that's a good thing. I know that sometimes we fail, often times we fail, but I want to encourage you parents, set the example.

[ 47 : 24 ] Revere God that your children may revere Him too. Let's model what it means to fear Him. Secondly, application for us, delight in your spouse.

It's clear in this psalm that a spouse is a rich, rich blessing. Husbands and wives, recognize that you are one of God's greatest blessings, sources of happiness in your spouse's life.

Remember that you are a divine source of joy to them. Remember that you have an opportunity and privilege to cultivate a home along with your spouse, in partnership that fears God collectively and enjoys the manifold blessings of that living.

Protect your fellowship as husband and wife by fearing Him through confession of sin, as hard as that may be sometimes. Being quick to apologize, praying for one another, and spending time together even when things get busy.

Delight in your spouse is one of God's greatest forms of happiness we will experience in this life. And then lastly, delight in your children. As we heard last week, our children are an immense blessing.

[ 48 : 33 ] They should be taking the top priority of our lives, parents. But our children deserve so much. But in the very minimal sense, here's what I would encourage us to do.

There's a great book by Donald Whitney called Family Worship. It's short, it's like 80 pages, it's like five bucks on Amazon. I encourage you to grab one. And in this book, Donald Whitney says this, so unbelievably refreshing to hear how simple the image is.

Historically, here's what the church has done to disciple their children. Read, pray, sing. There's certainly more we can do, parents, but I know for me as a new parent with some young kids, I feel overwhelmed.

How do I disciple and raise these children? There's so many things to consider. I read this book and it was just a stream of cool water to my soul. Focus on that.

Read the word in front of your children, to your children, with them, get the appropriate books at their age level so they can understand the stories, the biblical stories. We have great biblical teaching happening down the hall in our children's ministry.

[ 49 : 39 ] The Jesus Storybook Bible is a great resource for this. Pray with our children and for our children, teaching them the pattern of being dependent on God. But then finally, sing.

I'm grateful. I did not grow up in a singing family, but I married into a massively singing family. And so the Lord has blessed me through my wife and through my in-laws to say, sing, Eric. It's going to be all right.

And thankfully our children have a lineage and a history and a legacy of singing to the Lord. Read, pray, sing. Although it can be difficult to bear children at times.

I've also spoken to many parents over the years who say that their greatest joy in life is watching their children make God-fearing decisions. And that's His mercy on us.

I want to speak quickly to this as well, even though this text does not speak about singleness. This text is clearly about the happy home filled with people. I do think that singleness is something that's important to God.

[ 50 : 44 ] In 1 Corinthians 7, we see Paul commands the Corinthians with this, I wish that all were as I myself am, but each has his own gift from God, one of a kind and one of another.

To the unmarried and the widows, I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. If you're here, you're not married, and you've wondered, Lord, I don't know if I'm ever going to be married. I desire it. I don't know, Lord, wherever you may be. Here's what I want to encourage you. You have been given, this is from the word of God, you have been given a gift. Not just a choice, not just a circumstance, you've been given a gift, says the word of God.

To use your singleness to work and labor in the gospel and bring about the good of all everywhere you go. Being single affords you a unique opportunity and time and energy to serve his kingdom. That's what Paul's talking about in 1 Corinthians 7. And even though the focus of this psalm is definitely toward the family human, I am confident the blessing of the Lord follows those who fear him, period.

[ 51 : 53 ] And that includes singles. Not just those who fear him and get married and have children, as much of a blessing as those things are. You shall be blessed and it shall be well with you in verse 2.

That applies to all of us. And church, let's remind ourselves, we are to be a happy home of a spiritual people every time we gather.

And every single person here in our midst, members of one another, is part of that table. Let's welcome each and every person in.

Fear God, delight in your spouse, delight in your children, and experience a happy home. Jesus, I do pray over every home that is represented here.

Lord, I know that there are homes here that consist of multiple single roommates that all make up the same house. I pray that there would be happiness that comes from you that is experienced in those homes.

[ 52 : 56 ] Lord, I know that there are homes here represented by young couples that are recently married, and still young. Lord, would you bring happiness to those marriages?

And Lord, I know that we have many families with children here as well. Lord, may we see happy homes with children that bring joy to parents, parents who delight in their children for who you've made them to be.

Lord, for all of this church and every person here, I ask Lord, that you would do a work that anywhere where there may not be happy homes.

And Lord, we all experience seasons where our homes are not happy. They don't feel happy. None of us are immune from that. But Lord, in those seasons, if there's anyone that feels they're there now, you remind them of the greatest prosperity, the greatest joy that we have in you. that just like the olive shoot represents the hope of a future, a fruitfulness, Lord, that us too in our homes during the unhappy times can have hope that you will restore our joy again.

[ 54 : 09 ] Thank you for our children. Thank you for our spouses. Thank you for the gift of homes and the joy that they bring in our lives. May they be used for your glory and your work. In your name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen.