

The Happy Song (Psalm 1)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 December 2020

Preacher: William HC

[0 : 00] Good afternoon, PCBC English. Turn your Bibles to Psalm 1, and I'm going to read it, and then we'll pray. Psalm 1. This is the Word of God.

Blessed is the one 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's 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. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this year that's gone.

[1 : 14] Help us as we dive into this wonderful psalm. Remind us that true happiness grows as we delight in your life-giving Word.

Father, would you help us as we hear from you today? In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Clap your hands if you feel like a room without a roof.

Clap your hands if you feel like happiness is the truth. Clap your hands if you know that's what you want to do. Welcome to the gospel according to Pharrell Williams.

These are the questions, of course, Pharrell asks in his hit song, Happy. When it came out, it was the first song with a 24-hour music video.

Perhaps you can even hear the catchy riff now, Because I'm Happy. Or maybe you can even hear the Motown beat and the hand claps. Or maybe you've watched one of the many, many videos of people dancing to the song online.

[2 : 22] There's hundreds of versions, of course. I mean, there's the sign language version. There's the one that was filmed in Auckland, even. And there's versions that were filmed all over Asia, including Hong Kong.

And then there's even the bedtime lullaby version of this song. In fact, it doesn't even matter if you've never heard of the song. Once it comes on, it's the kind of song that when you hear it, it just makes you feel happy.

But let's zoom in. Let's zoom in a little. Let's sit on one of the lines in this song. Clap along if you know what happiness is to you. And whether you realise this or not, this is Pharrell getting philosophical.

I mean, what is happiness? What is happiness? It's a question all of us ask, isn't it? Where do we find true delight? In 2021, how can I be truly happy?

Is happiness something you can know? Is it something that's unique to me? And how far can I go to chase it? If I can get a house and start paying it off, will I be truly happy?

[3 : 35] If I get good grades, get into a programme at university, will I then be happy? If I achieve my fitness goals, will I be truly happy?

And now in many ways, Psalm 1 is also a happy song. It's rather different to Pharrell's version. Don't exactly know who wrote the lyrics, but I call it the happy song.

Because actually, when you read that first line, in the NIV it says, Blessed is the one. The original word there in Hebrew, in the beginning, is the word ashray.

And it has a sense of happy, blissful, or even thriving. And we learned this before, didn't we? We learned this before, didn't we? In the Sermon on the Mount, remember how Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount.

He said this, Not just blessed, but flourishing are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, and so on. And the experience of wisdom that a songwriter of Psalm 1 wants to share with us is this, True happiness grows as we delight in God's life-giving words.

[4 : 42] True happiness grows as we delight in God's life-giving words. And now, brothers and sisters, we're going to check out a range of psalms over the summer. And every psalm that we listen to over the next month or so has this in common.

Each one is an invitation to sing along to the message, to make it your own. Whether we're singing along with King David, when he says in Psalm 23, The Lord is my shepherd.

Or with Solomon in Psalm 127, Unless the Lord builds this house, its builders strive in vain. Or even Psalm 22, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

There's a song for every season of life, isn't there? And the songs in this book, they kind of serve this God soundtrack. God's soundtrack for God's people. They're kind of as constant as the evening news or rush hour traffic.

Background music for our lives. And so, the question I want to ask this afternoon is, How might Psalm 1 serve as the backing track for our lives? Let's find out. Let's find out.

[5 : 45] There's a fairly simple psalm. There's six verses. In Hebrew poetry, writers would often use a contrast to make a point. And I wonder if you noticed those contrasts as we walked through that psalm.

Everything is grouped in twos. And so, that's how I want to walk through this psalm today. We're going to look at two delights from verse 1 to 2. We're going to see two descriptions, verses 3 to 4.

And then, we're going to consider two destinies in verses 5 to 6. Right? Two delights, two descriptions, two destinies. That's Psalm 1 for us, the happy song. The first and probably most important thing we see in Psalm 1 is this.

True happiness grows when we delight in God's Word and not wicked ways. I'll say it again. True happiness grows when we delight in God's words and not wicked ways.

Let me read 1 into 2 again. Blessed is the man or the one who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers.

[6 : 46] This verse describes someone who's not just a casual observer. Right? This person first starts by walking, and then standing, and then sitting with them.

Notice, did you notice the progression? And so, often the journey down the path towards becoming a wicked person, as the psalm describes, it's gradual.

It comes in stages. No one jumps into the wrong crowd straight away. Okay? You might start by liking their posts on Facebook. You start meeting up and hanging out.

You start soaking up all the TV shows that they like. You're walking in their counsel. Eventually, maybe they whisper, happiness is doing what feels good to you.

Happiness is having control of your destiny. You start hearing it. It all sounds good. You're starting to stand in the way. And then eventually, you start to make choices in your life based on their beat, based on their backing track.

[7 : 45] Happiness is doing what feels good. So, you start eating as much as you want. Or, happiness is never seeing my children suffer. So, you'll buy everything they ask for. Happiness, oh, hang on, what's going on?

You're sitting. You're now sitting in the seat of scoffers. And I know it sounds like this is happening in the wicked world out there. And we're different.

But we mustn't assume these are just attitudes out there. It's not Farrell's fault that we chase happiness in other places. This is an attitude that's in the church too. Had an argument with my family.

No, there's no need to talk about it again. Because I need to be happy. Not enjoying church. And the problem's the church, not me. I'll go find someone else that will make me happier. Give generously to those who need it.

I'll see what's left on my card after Boxing Day sales. You see, the happy trap, it gets us too, doesn't it? It gets us too. Too often, we buy the lie that what makes us happy must be the truth and right.

[8 : 48] And what doesn't is wrong. Friends, we too often let our personal happiness be our main compass that navigates us. Our lifestyles become no different then to the chatterboxes around us.

Instead of verse 1, what does the truly happy person do? He refuses to travel down that road. Let me read verse 2. Delight is such a powerful word, isn't it?

Right? You delight in riding a bike for the first time. Or when you clock that game that you've been struggling hard to. You delight in snuggling into bed after a long, tiring week.

You delight in a tasty, well-presented meal. Delight. Delight. And rather than delighting in the world's advice and values, someone who's truly happy, truly blessed.

Delight in God's law. Literally, His Torah or His instructions. For the Israelites, the Torah wasn't just the first five books of the Old Testament. It encompassed everything that they read.

[9 : 55] Living words to a people saved by grace. But it definitely includes those first five foundational books. And I wonder if you remembered in Exodus 20, think about the Ten Commandments.

Are those God's laws? Yes. But how does God introduce the Ten Commandments? Right? Do not lie. Do not steal. And so on. How does He introduce them? Anyone know?

Exodus 20, verse 2 says this. I'm the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. And then only then, He says, you shall have no other gods before me.

Right? You shall not make a graven image and so on. So likewise, as we are Christians, as we read Psalm 1 as God's people, we don't just see it as rules to obey, as Julianne reminded us as we sing.

But ways to delight in our life-giving God. Okay? God's Word is not a rule book to make you sad. God's Word is words of grace from a Father who wants you to delight in Him.

[10 : 58] We can be free, loving, self-giving because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. That's how Tim Keller describes it. So God has shown His grace and then we follow and obey Him.

It's no different here in Psalm 1. We delight in the law of the Lord because He first rescued and redeemed us. I think the other thing worth noting in that verse, verse 2, is that it tells us how we delight in God's Word.

It uses the word by meditating on it. Some of you with a Buddhist background might think, oh, meditating means to clear your mind and to think of nothing and to kind of be in that space.

Well, in the Bible, biblically, meditation actually is probably better translated as to mutter or to murmur something. It's kind of what you do when you learn the lines of a song and repeat it over and over again until you get it in your head.

Or if you've ever been an actor and tried to act for a school play, you have to memorize lines. You have to say it over and over and over again until you know it by heart. That's what it's like to meditate on God's Word.

[12 : 00] To chew on it through the day. To let it steep into your life like tea steeps into water. That's how we delight in the law of the Lord.

We meditate on it day and night. It's the same attitude that Jesus had, isn't it? When he's tempted in the wilderness, he's meditating on God's law so much that he can just spit it out.

Man does not live by bread alone, Satan, but by every word of God. To meditate is to sing with a psalmist later on. Psalm 119 verse 11.

I've stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. William Wilberforce was a famous British politician.

And he would recite Psalm 119. It actually has 176 verses. And as he walked from his home in Hyde Park to Parliament House each day.

[12 : 58] Meditating. Meditating. Or I think of John Bunyan, who wrote the best-selling book, Pilgrim's Progress. And the way he meditated on God's law was that he was stuck in prison.

And so he just thought and thought and thought of all of God's words that he remembered. And people would say, this man is a living Bible. You prick him anywhere and you'll find that his blood is Bibline.

To know how to meditate and delight in the Bible is the secret to a relationship with God. And to life itself. It is.

And so, friends, if you're struggling, if you're kind of feeling like 2020, you're about to crash land. And in terms of your relationship with God, the first question I think you should ask yourself is this.

How have I been hearing from God's Word? Am I delighting in it? When was the last time I read this book for enjoyment, not for service? And related to that, if you don't have a plan to read the Bible just to enjoy him, can I suggest that you start one?

[14 : 03] There are so many ways out there. Okay. Online Bible reading plans. You could make a group and read something together. I loved hearing about one of the groups that did an Advent Bible reading plan together.

That was great. You can't live on Christmas leftovers forever, right? We've had lots of awesome meals.

Christmas Day, you get a big feast. And then on Boxing Day, you're eating the leftovers. You don't have to plan much, right? Breakfast, you just eat the leftovers. Lunch, you eat the leftovers. But you can't live like that forever. Okay.

And so if you can't live like that forever, why would we think that we can do the same with our Bibles? Oh, I'll just live on that mountaintop moment at church or at a conference or when I became a Christian.

No. We need to plan to keep eating and delighting from God's Word. Friends, true happiness grows when we delight in God's Word and not wicked ways.

[15 : 03] Let's move on to our next set of contrasts. Verse 3 and verse 4. Here we see that delight in God's Word brings fruitfulness and prosperity.

Delighting in God's Word brings fruitfulness and prosperity. Here we see two pictures from the world of gardening. And this echoes back to the Garden of Eden as we heard, right?

Let me read verse 3. He is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season. Imagine strawberry vines full of sweet, juicy berries or a watermelon stripping with yum.

And even if everywhere else in the ground is parched and dry, the godly tree still stands, still blooms and blossoms, firmly rooted in well-watered soil.

That's the picture that we want to be, right? And notice that phrase, in season. I think, as I was reading this week, that really spoke to me.

[16:03] In season. I think that's really important. Often we think that Christian life is always like this, you know, high, high, high, high, high, and then we see Jesus. No. In season.

In season. There will be times when you read your Bibles, when you pray, when you're at church with people, and you just, inside, you just feel like, you feel lousy.

Or you feel like not much is changing. Or you feel like progress is slow. You make the same mistakes. Remember, in season. In season. When you're planted by streams of water, it yields fruit in season.

It will bear fruit in your lives. Don't count by days or weeks. Count by years what God is doing in you. So, I want you to see, I want you to see, as we head into 2021, that there is value in being hungry for the Word.

And it will bring fruitfulness and prosperity in your life. When you put down roots in God's Word, you'll bear fruit and prosper. That's what Psalm 1 promises. That's the wisdom of this writer.

[17:09] But if you chase the way of the wicked, there is a different consequence. Let's look at verse 4. Not so the wicked. They are like chaff that the wind blows away.

Chaff is the kind of husk. When you grab some grain from the harvest and you've got to beat it down to get the good stuff from the bad, the chaff is the bit that just floats away. Absolutely useless.

It's kind of like the difference between Christmas ham that you put in your sandwich and candy cane wrappers. No use. Into the recycling. Chaff. Which one do you want to be? Rooted by streams of water?

Or chaff that disappears? Do you want to be the one that bears fruit and blesses others? Or the one that floats away and feeds no one? Well, again, the reminder.

If you want to be fruitful and prosper, the answer is to delight in God's life-giving Word. And perhaps you're here this morning and, sorry, this afternoon, and you're still searching.

[18:10] You're not quite sure if you want to follow Jesus. Maybe your happy song might sound like this. I faced it all. I faced it all. And I stood tall. And I did it my way.

That sort of thing. But if that's your happy song, that's a view that won't comfort you, I don't think. I don't think it will comfort you when something you purchase disappoints or when a life moment really failed you.

Or, you know, you're looking up into 2021 and there's not much to look forward to. Or maybe your mum is diagnosed with cancer. Or you fail an exam. Or whatever.

If your life is driven by your needs first, your happiness first, that will not offer you stability amidst suffering. It is not life-giving, well-watered soil.

Friends, you can't sing Pharrell's happy song if you're struggling at a funeral, can you? But when you are anchored in God's Word and His promises, can I tell you, there is true happiness that stays.

- [19 : 13] There's true delight that does not just ebb and flow. It is not based on your own feelings. It's rooted in a God who never stops being good. Never stops being gracious and kind.
- And so, it's an invitation, isn't it, Psalm 1? Come in. See life God's way. Time and time again, you will, as you read the Psalms, you will see how good an anchor God's Word is.
- How good an anchor God is for the songwriter. In good times and in bad times. The grass withers, Isaiah 48 says. The flower fades, but the Word of the Lord will stand fair.
- How we need that in our lives. That kind of stability. That kind of stability. Two delights. Two descriptions.
- And then, finally, verses 5 to 6. Two destinies. Right? What happens at the very end? What happens at the very end? Not so the wicked. We've read. They are like chaff that the wind blows away.
- [20 : 11] Verse 5. 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. Finally here, the Psalmist tells us, where you find your delight reveals your final destiny.
- One path, verse 6 says, is to be known by God. The word here is not just watch over. It's actually a Hebrew word that describes intimacy and closeness.
- Use it when you're married to someone. I love my close friends or my children, my wife. But even better than their love is to be known and loved by God truly and deeply.
- That's the first destiny for those of us who find lasting joy in His words. And yet the other path is here too. And the other path, when we follow it down, is to be condemned and to perish.
- It says, caught out, shamed, rejected. And while the Psalmist here speaks of an earthly judgment amongst the Jewish community, we know that our Lord Jesus warns us many times about an eternal judgment, doesn't He?
- [21 : 21] A place called hell where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Where people who have rejected God in His life, reject Him forever. Where no one sings because I'm happy.
- It's two delights, two descriptions, two destinies. Is it just that we then go, oh, right, now I'm going to read God's Word more. Thank you, Pastor William.
- Is that it? Can I also say to you this? Can I say to you this? Apart from God's grace, all of us face the wrong destiny, right? Without God's help, all of us walk the wrong way.
- We have all sat in sinful ways. At some stage, we have chased wrong fruits. And actually, all our sins accumulated deserve God's judgment. And so that's why, ultimately, ultimately, the good news for Christians is this.
- True happiness grows when we delight in God's life-giving Word, capital W, Jesus Christ. The Word who is God. The Word who left His Father's side and the joy of heaven to become one of us.
- [22 : 33] To become the blessed man. Jesus who never walked in step with the wicked. Never sat with sinners. Jesus lived in total delight and dependence on His Father.
- He never chased down the wicked ways. He always lived under God's rule. He always did what God commanded. And His Word-soaked life brought fruitfulness and prosperity to so many people, right?
- Heal the sick. Raise the dead. Cleanse the unclean. So He did not deserve that judgment that He got. We're on the cross.
- We're on the cross. Hung between two mockers. Sitting between two scoffers. Pierced and nailed down with pain. Jesus, the blessed man, willingly died for us.

For the joy set before Him in heaven. He stood and took God's divine judgment for sinners. So that if we turn and follow Him, we can stand.

[23 : 32] Not because of us. Because of Jesus. Among the assembly of the righteous one day. Not because we earned this honor. But because we have followed the blessed man. And so, friends, when your own happy song runs out.

When you and I forget again and start to sing the world's lies in our heads. Then we need to stop, all of us. And retune our heads and our hearts to Jesus, the truly blessed man.

We need to remember 2021. I will find true happiness as I follow the Spirit's leading and walk with Jesus down His path. Friends, true happiness grows as we delight in God's life-giving Word.

PCBC English. Will that be the soundtrack of your life? The heartbeat of this congregation? By God's grace, maybe 2021, listening through this psalm and the others, we might see this fruit of God's Word blessing and bearing fruit to us and to others.

And we'll see men and women, young and old, find true happiness in Him. And so, in your discussion groups, I've suggested a few questions.

[24 : 47] Feel free to chat through them in your groups. But also because the psalms, they're creative. They're songs, right? I want us to think, how can we be creative ourselves and respond with a bit of creativity?

So, I've suggested as well to your groups, let's do a bit of a creative project together. I don't know how it works because I only thought about this this morning, but it'd be great if we can have a dialogue, okay?

A back and forth. As we hear a psalm each week, a different one, why don't you paint something? Or take a picture of something? Or design something? Or write something down like a poem or a spoken word?

Just in reflection of what you're hearing from the psalms, okay? That's how the psalms are designed. They're not designed just to be a lecture to listen to, but to respond to, to imitate.

Okay? And then share that with your group or feel free to send me your creative outputs. Or maybe we can hashtag it and we can kind of have a list together. So, maybe I can bring out the best ones each Sunday and we can have a look and talk to each other about what God is sharing with us.

[25 : 58] This is one way to meditate on his life-giving words. So, I'd encourage you to have a discussion in your groups about the psalm and also let's get creative as well.

So, let's pray. Father, we thank you. Father, we thank you that because you sent your son, the blessed man, we can be truly happy.

Not chasing things that our selfish minds and hearts wanted, but chasing you, delighting in your life-giving word. Being so thankful for your grace and wanting to live that out for ourselves and for our families and for our communities.

Help us with this as we continue to look through the summer and to all the wisdom you have for us in the book of Psalms. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.