

The Way of the Righteous and the Way of the Wicked

by George Plante

The sermon explores the contrast between the way of the righteous and the wicked, emphasizing the importance of God's law and the need for careful influence in our lives.

Duration: 1:20:03

Scripture: Psalm 1:4-6, Ezekiel 33:2-6, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Christian Living", "Spiritual Guidance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the topic of entertainment and its impact on Christians. He acknowledges that some people may view entertainment as just a form of enjoyment, but he urges believers to think about it from a Christian perspective. The speaker emphasizes the importance of teaching children to see through the world's glamorous portrayal of life and to recognize the emptiness and ugliness of the path of sinners. He references Psalm 1 to highlight the path towards blessedness that leads away from the world's philosophy of life. The sermon also includes a scripture reading from Ezekiel 33, which discusses the role of a watchman and the consequences of not heeding warnings. Additionally, the speaker mentions the church's plans to start a midweek Bible study and a missions fund.

Transcript

I'd like to welcome you this afternoon to our service here at Christ Covenant Church. I'd like to draw your attention to the minutes for the council meeting. They're on the back table back there.

If you have not gotten minutes for the council meeting, you'll want to procure some of those. There's a couple of things that I want to highlight out of this. Number two, it was decided to start a mid-week Bible study on the week alternating with youth groups.

Youth group's one week, Bible study's the next week. That Bible study will run on Wednesdays, and it is starting this week, Wednesday night, 7.30 at my house. At the Sol's house.

We're going to be using N.T. Wright's Living Faith DVD series to begin with. We'll start this up, and we'll see how it goes. See how it works.

Also, just below that in number three, the council decided to start a missions fund. If you have your page in front of you, you can appreciate the way that spelling mistakes sometimes work. Because it says, on the

first Sunday of every month, we will have an extra collection specified for the fund.

Duh. Duh. Fund.

Duh. We are going to start doing missions collections, and there will be a special offering every month. We have not yet specifically determined where and who we're going to be supporting, but we are considering such things, and we're looking at them just now.

So, that is going on. Would you please stand? The Lord calls us to worship today with Psalm 24. The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.

For he has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the rivers. Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false, and does not swear deceitfully, he will receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty. The Lord, mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O gates, and lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts. He is the King of glory.

Congregation, where does your help come from? Our help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. Grace to you and peace from God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Please take your canvass and turn to page 288. O creatures of our God and King, lift up your voice and with us sing Alleluia! Alleluia! The burning sun with golden beams The silver moon with softer gleam O praise Him! O praise Him! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Thou arching wing that art so strong Ye clouds that sail in heaven above O praise Him! Alleluia! Thou rising morn, in praise rejoice Ye lights of evening, find a voice O praise Him! O praise Him! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Thou flowing water, pure and clear Make music for the Lord to hear Alleluia! Alleluia! Thou fire so masterful and bright God giveth man both warmth and light O praise Him! O praise Him! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! And all ye men of tender heart Forgiving others take your part O sing ye Alleluia! Give you long pain and sorrow bear Praise God and on Him cast your care O praise Him! O praise Him! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Let all things their Creator bless And worship Him in humble dance O praise Him! Alleluia! Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son And praise the Spirit three in one O praise Him! O praise Him! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Amen. Our scripture reading this afternoon is from the book of Ezekiel, chapter 33, verses 1 through 20.

Hear the word of the Lord. The word of the Lord came to me, Son of man, speak to your people and say to them, If I bring a sword upon the land and the people of the land take a man from among them and make him their watchman, and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people, and if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning, but his blood shall be upon himself.

But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life. If the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet so that the people are not warned and the sword comes and takes away any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.

So you, Son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel.

Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.

And you, Son of man, say to the house of Israel, Thus have you said, Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us and we rot away because of them. How then can we live? Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel? And you, Son of man, say to your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him when he transgresses.

And as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall by it when he turns from his wickedness. And the righteous shall not be able to live by his righteousness when he sins. Though I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, yet if he trusts in his righteousness and does injustice, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered.

But in his injustice that he has done, he shall die. Again, though I say to the wicked, he shall surely die, yet if he turns from his sin and does what is just and right, if the wicked restores the pledge and gives back what he has taken by robbery and walks in the statutes of life, not doing injustice, he shall surely live. He shall not die.

None of the sins that he has committed shall be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right. He shall surely live.

Yet your people say, the way of the Lord is not just, when it is their own way that is not just. When the righteous turns from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it. And when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he shall live by them.

Yet you say, the way of the Lord is not just. O House of Israel, I will judge each of you according to his ways. Congregation of Christ, we are here in the presence of Almighty God.

Let us with penitent and obedient hearts confess our sins so that we may obtain forgiveness by God's infinite goodness and mercy. Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart.

We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways to the glory of your name.

Amen. Arise and hear the good news of God's forgiveness. Almighty God, in His mercy, has given His Son to die for you and for His sake, forgives you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Alleluia. Praise to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Glory to You, O Lord, both now and forever.

Alleluia. Amen. Please be seated.

Let's come before the Lord in prayer. Our Father in Heaven, You have been gracious and kind to us, and we thank You for this. We thank You for giving us Your Word.

We thank You for sending Your Spirit to cause that Word to become alive in us and before us. We pray, Father, that You will continue this work by Your Spirit of causing us to grow in the image of Christ. You have done great things for us, and we are glad of them.

Lord, we pray that You will bless the works of Your Church. We pray for this body in particular. We pray, Father, that You will watch over each activity that we do, watch over our studies that we engage in, enable us to worship You in spirit and in truth, and pray that You would teach us.

We confess, Lord, that we are not wise, but You have said that not many who are wise are among those who are called, and Your strength is made perfect in weakness. So we pray, Father, that You would strengthen us, make us strong in faith, enable us in all ways and in all things to trust in You. We pray for Your Church beyond our walls and beyond our company.

There are many, many people in Grand Prairie and in the surrounding area that name Your name and that worship You. We pray, Father, that You will strengthen Your pastors and Your elders and Your deacons and those who lead in Your Church. We pray that You would work in them in such a way as to build and deepen and strengthen a love for Your Word and a desire to instill it to Your people.

We pray, Father, that You will please guard against error and help us to guard against error. We pray, Father, that You will work in each of the churches that name Your name in our town, that You would bless their ministries, that You would cause them to prosper, that You would use the work of Your Church in this town to bring many to faith who have never trusted in You before. Lord, we pray for Your Church at large in the world.

In our country, Lord, it seems that there's many ways in which there's been such decline in Your Church. But we know that that is not the end of things because in other parts of the world we see Your Word is going forth with power in great and mighty ways and there are many, many people turning to You. We pray that You will strengthen the hands of Your Church.

We pray, Father, that You will break the teeth of the lions that tear at Your Church. There are many lands where it is illegal to worship You in public. We pray, Father, that You will break down those barriers through the praises and prayers of Your people and that You would bring about the day when the earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Use us, Lord. Use our efforts. Use our works for the sake of Your Kingdom and for the sake of Your glory.

We pray now the prayer that the Lord taught us, His disciples, to pray, saying, Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Please take your compass and turn to page 42. Unto Thee, O Lord, my Savior, I lift up my waiting soul. O my God, in Thee I trust it.

Let no shame now o'er me be. On my enemies be shame. But all those who trust Thy name honor with abundant blessing.

Show Thou unto me Thy servant. All that my life's spirit guided, clearly I Thy pathway see. In Thy truth wilt Thou me guide.

Teach me, God, of my salvation. All the day for Thee I fight, Lord, with eager expectation. Wilt Thou then, I pray, be mindful of Thy mercy's manifold.

All Thy care and lovingkindness which have ever been of old. Twins of youth, remember not, nor recall my transgression. For Thy goodness' sake, O God, think of me in Thy compassion.

He, the Lord, is good and upright, in his dealings evermore. Sinners are by him instructed in the way untrod before. He will ever guide the meek, in his judgments true and holy.

Teach his way to those who seek, with love, contrite heart and glory. All the path the Lord hath chosen, speak of truth and mercy's pure. Unto such as he is calling, and his testimony's sure.

For the glory of Thy name, pardon, Lord, my evildoing. Grieve us, O my sin and shame. Hear my cry, Thy love renewing.

Amen. Wilt Thou then, just not walk in the wisdom of men, or dance in the path of sinners, or sit in the seat of the sufferers? Blessed is the man, who does not walk in the wisdom of men, or dance in the path of sinners, or sit in the seat of the sufferers? For his delight is in the love of the Lord, in his body meditate day and night. He shall be like a tree, planted by rivers of water, bearing its fruit in season, and its leaves shall not wither.

He shall be like a tree, planted by rivers of water, bearing its fruit in season, and whatever he does will prosper. Blessed is the man. Be I God, be I my soul, say I shall wish to win, but the way of the Godless man will die.

Blessed is the man, in whom the Lord divine, he shall be like a tree, planted by rivers of water. Although we've just sung it. Blessed is the man, who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night.

He shall be like a tree, planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither, and whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish. Let's ask God to bless our time here this afternoon. Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Word.

We thank You that You have given it to us, but we also recognize that without Your Spirit to quicken us and give us understanding, that we lack that understanding in and of ourselves. So we pray that You would illuminate our hearts, our minds, that we may hear and understand and do those things which You revealed to us in Your Word. For we ask it in Jesus' name.

Well, this is a very familiar passage of Scripture to us. And as I was thinking about what to do today, one of the things that came into mind was the fact that we were practicing or putting into practice the singing of these psalms. And Jamie taught us his rendition of this.

And perhaps we should have a look at it and to ponder on it a little more so that when we do sing it, some things come to mind. Now grant you, there are people out there that have done six sermons on this. So we're going to have an overview of Psalm 1 today.

Psalm 1 is what's referred to as a wisdom psalm. But it's much more than that. Psalm 1 is also a gateway, if you will, alongside of Psalm 2. A gateway to the whole collection of psalms that are in the Scriptures.

What is introduced here in Psalm 1 points us forward to what follows in all the other psalms. For instance, numerous psalms speak of God's law. And what's the quickest one that comes to your mind? Psalm 119.

Other psalms, like Psalm 92, speak of flourishing like a tree. Still others point to the ungodly. Psalm 35, for instance.

Not the only one, but these are just examples. And the Lord knowing the way of the righteous can be found as well. An example of that is Psalm 37.

Before we can have an intimate conversation with God, we must consider our attitude toward the law of God. The righteous person loves and studies it, while the wicked person hates and reviles it. Psalm 1, as a stand-alone psalm, but not only that, as the gateway to other psalms, reveals and introduces us to the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked.

Now, if we want to be blessed, what kind of life should we live? What pathway? What pattern of life leads to blessedness? Well, the world has all kinds of quick answers to that. We see it all the time. For example, commercials.

Now, they don't necessarily put it exactly this way, but they could. Blessed is the man who gargles with our mouthwash. Blessed is the man who drives our car.

Blessed is the man who drinks our beer. Now, it's humorous, but it's not because there's a message underlying, isn't there? We hear it all the time. I work with guys.

Many of us work in a place where we hear people talking about their goals, their lives, about their plans for the weekend. Well, their philosophy is blessed is the man who gets rich and famous and gets to go out with all the good-looking girls. But if we want real blessedness, what pattern should we follow? Well, Psalm 1 gives us an answer.

Blessed is the man. Or another way of saying it is oh, the blessedness of that man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. We begin with a negative definition, so to speak.

And those three verbs that are used to describe the things that we ought not to do alongside the wicked to walk, to stand, to sit, those three verbs cover the whole of our lives. Don't they? The blessed man, the man whose life we ought to desire to be like, isn't living by the pattern of the world at any point in his life. Now, does that mean that we can never associate with the ungodly? With wicked people? That we can never go anywhere that they go or do anything that they do? Well, if that were the case, we would have to

leave this world behind.

Where could you go? Psalm 1 is not telling us to set up a little Christian commune or to move into a monastery and hide from the world. Psalm 1 is, however, calling to make a break away from the mindset, the worldview, the life pattern of the world around us. Blessed is the man who doesn't buy into the advice of the wicked.

Blessed is the man who isn't party to the ways of sinners. Blessed is the man who doesn't laugh along with the wicked when they make fun of God and His commandments. If we want this blessedness, then we can't let the world shape the way that we think because the things that shape our thinking shape our lives.

What you think, more often than not, is what you end up doing if that's left to go on its own. We need to be careful in our friendships in that respect, in the friendships with unbelievers. And perhaps there's an extra caution here for young people, for those that are new to the faith because there's not a maturity.

You see, there is a tendency to talk and to act and to think like our friends. Now, if you don't think that's right, then all you need to do is listen to a group of young people talking. I'm trying to debrief my children from dropping the word like as a comma in their conversations because they pick it up from their friends.

And it's like this and like that. And they're not saying things are similar. It's just a comma.

But we rub off on one another. So our relationships with unbelievers, if we're not careful, will rub off on us. If we're not influencing others in a good way, we may be very well being influenced in a bad way.

We mustn't come to the mindset to think that these words in Psalm 1 apply only to people that are tempted to hang out in bars and party like pagans. Yes, that is one application. That's one way to be conformed to the world's way of thinking.

But it's not the only way, is it? We need to ask ourselves a number of questions on various areas of our lives. For instance, Mr. Glant has been teaching us some sessions on how we ought to think as Christians culturally. Well, here's a question for us.

Am I working for the weekend just like the other guy? As a Christian, I think that's a relevant question. If I let the world teach me how to think about my money, about my family, about the use of my time. Here's a dicey one.

Have I let the world influence my thinking about fashions? Are we thinking modesty when we go out shopping? It's a pertinent one, young ladies, because do you dress differently than the world? The scripture would say that modesty is in place. Young men, have you bought into the attitude that depending on the age of hard work and studies are not necessarily a cool thing to do? And good manners is a sign of weakness. What about our entertainment? The world tells us that that kind of thing is neutral.

Is it really? Unfortunately, I think that many Christians actually buy that line. They think that entertainment is neutral. And again, Mr. Gwant is going to have a talk on that and I'm looking forward to it.

The whole aspect of entertainment. Well, you know, people say it's really only entertainment. Don't take it so seriously.

After all, it's just a TV show. Or how about you like your music and I like mine, but it's just all a matter of taste, right? Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not on a crusade to boycott rock music. Maybe country, but not

rock.

Nor boycott movies, right? No, that's not it. But what we have is a reminder to think about all our entertainment and to think about it like a Christian. In faith, we say, we just sang, Psalm 1, that the path toward blessedness leads away from the world's philosophy of life.

Parents, we need to continue to teach our children to see through what the world shows as the glamorous life. We need to learn to hear that hollowness in the world's laughter. We need to recognize the emptiness and the ugliness of the path of sinners so that we turn away from it in disgust.

How can we do that? Well, the answer is given us right here. Only by turning toward God and letting Him shape our thinking. That's what we see in verse 2. Blessed is the man who doesn't go along with the wicked, but his delight is in the law of the Lord.

And on His law, He meditates day and night. Now, it has been said, and sometimes we get into the mindset where we say, well, that's typical of the Old Testament, isn't it? There he goes, talking about the law again. But now that Jesus came, maybe we should replace that word law with gospel, shouldn't we? Well, I believe that's a false dichotomy.

If we read Psalm 1 with that mindset, then we have misunderstood the gospel. Christ didn't come to do away with God's law. He came to give us the power to keep the law.

To live by God's direction. To follow God's pattern. He came to make us delight in God's law.

Well, what does a person who takes pleasure in God's law look like? Is he grumpy? Does he walk around all the time? No, don't do this. Don't do that. I told you not to do that earlier, Judah.

Is he always scowling at people around him? Does he look like his shoes are three sizes too small? No. What's the description here from Psalm 1? He's blessed. He's blessed.

That's what we just sang. That's what we sing every time we sing Psalm 1 and other psalms as well. We look at the life of this man and we say, blessed is that man.

I want to live the way he's living. God's law isn't a burden that saps all the joy out of life. It isn't a catalog of dry rules.

Loving God's law isn't legalism because if we love God's law, we also love the liberty that His law gives to us. Loving God's law doesn't mean giving up our desire for blessedness. Rather, loving God's law is the pathway to satisfying an innate desire that every human being has.

It's the pathway to deep, lasting joy. And that man is blessed. Where do we find true blessedness in life? We find it in God.

That's the message of Psalm 1. God doesn't want us to settle for all the little pleasures in life only. He wants us to find the big pleasures, the deepest happiness of all, the joy, the blessedness of life with Him. The Lord reveals to us that joy in His Word.

He teaches us to live with Him. He teaches us to respond to His love. In His law, He reveals His will for our lives and points us in the direction of full life.

So what does that mean? It means that we need to commit ourselves to getting to know God's Word better. But more than that, getting to love God's Word better so that we don't simply read it for maybe a few minutes at a time or a few minutes a day. But we need to meditate on it and turn it over in our minds and think about how it applies to our lives all day long.

No matter what we're doing. No matter if we're at work. No matter if we're at play.

No matter if we're listening to a song or watching a movie or gathering for worship. Now I've probably said this before. Some of you will recognize me.

This meditate has got some interesting connotations. Meditate is in one sense literally to mutter and to murmur to oneself. Now we're doing that.

The question is what we're doing while we're doing that, right? What was the problem that Israel ran into once the Lord led them out of Egypt into the wilderness and on their way to the Promised Land? They murmured. They muttered. They complained against... We left all the leeks behind.

Who is this guy Moses? And where did God go? What was God's response? There was a price to pay. Their sin in the wilderness at times was a murmuring and a muttering, a meditating on all the wrong things. Oh, what a poor boy am I. I think I'll sit down and eat some worms.

Instead of this is the day that the Lord has made. Or I will delight in His law. Now granted, we can't do that all in our own strength.

But God in His mercy and His grace has united us to Jesus Christ. You see, Jesus said my food is to do the will of God. And by His Spirit He is giving us an appetite for the same food.

Jesus is the blessed man of Psalm 1. But that is good news for us because He is working in our hearts to make us blessed with and through Him. That's the pattern of life that's pointed out to us in Psalm 1. This blessedness comes from the right pattern of life. And that in turn leads us to prosperity of life.

Verse 3, He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf shall not wither. And whatever he does shall prosper. Trees need a lot of water.

We don't have any trees on our property. We have a neighbor that has several trees and our front lawn shows that because they're soaking up all the water in the neighborhood. But what is the meaning here then of this tree? When we go through a dry summer and the winds blow, the rain doesn't always fall.

Even the trees eventually start to wither and die. But Psalm 1 says here, we don't. Our leaves stay green and fresh.

Why? Because we have an unending supply of water. You see, God has taken us. We are planted by the Lord.

We are being nourished and fed by God Himself in His Word. His Word gives us a blessedness that lasts. A blessedness that is deep enough to survive adversity.

God strengthens us and He refreshes us and He makes us productive. As we take pleasure in God's law, He says that we are going to bear fruit in season. Our lives will be characterized by love, by joy, by peace, by patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

These things aren't unknown to us. We will do good works to God's glory. We will speak in a way that also nourishes and encourages and refreshes others.

Planted near streams of living water, we are going to bear fruit and whatever we will do will succeed. Ah, and here comes the contrast. But the wicked, the ungodly, are not so.

The wicked aren't fruit-bearing trees. It's interesting. The contrast here is that they're not dying trees or they're not even shriveled little shrubs.

What is the contrast? The contrast is they're chaff. It's even that far removed. There's no nourishment in chaff.

When farmers separate wheat from the chaff, they let the wind blow the chaff away because it's good for nothing. The righteous are like a beautiful green tree, but the wicked are like worthless, lightweight chaff that gets blown away. But maybe sometimes we think the real world isn't like that.

You might hear somebody say, when I look around at the world, I see wicked people making buckets of money, hand over fist. And I see Christians striving to make ends meet, some of them living in outright poverty. I see wicked people who haven't been sick a day in their life, and they live it up all the time.

And I see faithful Christians fighting to survive another bout of cancer. So how can we say that Christians are like green trees? How can we say that whatever Christians do will prosper? Is Psalm 1 really realistic? Brothers and sisters, yes, indeed, it is. This psalm introduces a whole book of psalms, and many of them are lamentations.

Cries to God for help in distress. We read, for instance, in Psalm 34, a righteous man may have many troubles. And if we think about Psalm 1, even here, Psalm 1 recognizes that Christians suffer.

How so? Well, if we have to stand out from the crowd, we are not to go along with that advice of the wicked, and that's going to lead to mockery and to opposition, because we dare to go against the mainstream. Psalm 1 is realistic. It's not an impossible ideal, as if we have got to keep God's law perfectly, and then we will be blessed.

After all, this blessing is for the righteous, isn't it? We need to remember that when the Bible speaks about the righteous, it's not talking about people who have never sinned, or who will never sin. It's talking about God's people. It's talking about the people that God has made covenant with.

It's talking about covenant keepers. It's talking about people who want to keep God's law, and who make a practice of repenting of their sins when they fall, and who seek their life in God through Jesus Christ. Here in Psalm 1, God gives us a promise.

He promises to make us like a green tree. He promises to provide us with everything we need for life. He promises to refresh us, care for us, even when we are sick and suffering.

He promises to make our lives beautiful and fruitful and productive. That's what Jesus says in John 15. If a man remains in Me, and I in him, he will bear much fruit.

The Lord promises to make our lives successful so that everything we do prospers. Now that doesn't necessarily mean that we're going to be rich. That's not the measuring stick.

However, it does mean that all our work for God's glory, we can count on God's blessing. We must admit that our work is not perfect. It's full of flaws.

We don't do anything perfectly, do we? It's never quite as good as we want it to be. And sometimes our efforts seem like an outright flop. But God promises that our work is going to succeed.

He's going to take it and use it for His glory. And in the end, for our glorification. We may not see immediate results when we live a godly life in front of our co-workers or our neighbors, or when we teach our children to know the Lord.

But again, remember, we have through the Scriptures. Paul reminds us, for instance, in 1 Corinthians 15. He ends with, always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

It is true. The wicked do seem to prosper in this life at times. At times it seems like more often than not.

They look strong. They look stable. They gather their riches together.

But what does Proverbs say? Proverbs says that the wealth of the wicked is stored up for who? For the righteous. We hear it again and again in the Psalms. The wicked spring up like grass and evildoers flourish.

But they will be destroyed forever. When we compare our lives to the lives of the wicked, we need to remember God's judgment. The wicked forget about God.

Don't they? But God doesn't forget about the wicked. Does He? He's judging them right now even. He's punishing the wicked already in this life.

We need to understand what's pointed out here. He is weeding the wicked out from among His people. He's doing so even right now.

And He does so in a number of ways. Possibly through death. Possibly through church discipline.

And sometimes it's even through their own stubborn disobedience. The wicked don't have a place in the assembly of the righteous, the Psalm tells us. And that's part of God's judgment.

That's part of God's curse. The man is blessed who walks in the way that God designates. But those who don't come under the curse.

And perhaps the wicked may not even think that that's a half-bad idea. They didn't want to be with the Christians in the first place. Their hearts are hardened.

Only those who are in the assembly of the righteous will stand in God's judgment. The wicked don't have a leg to stand on, so to speak. The wind of God's judgment will blow them away like chaff.

We, however, will stand. Every Christian is a green tree with deep roots fed and nourished by streams of water who will flourish and live before God forever. So what makes the difference? What makes the difference between the blessed man and the wicked man? Well, the difference is the Lord, our covenant God.

Verse 6 says, the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. The wicked are heading for destruction. And on the last day, the Lord will say to them, go away from Me.

I never knew you. But the Lord knows His own. The Lord knows the path that His people are on.

His knowledge is love. He never loses sight of us because we are walking in the way of His own Word. We are following in the steps of His Son, of the blessed man.

Jesus Himself is the way and the truth and the life as He revealed to us. And when we follow Him, when we walk that path, the Lord watches over the path and leads us safely to Himself. He leads us to blessedness.

That's God's promise to us, congregation. We will face hardship and grief. There's no doubt about it.

There may even be sickness. There will be definitely sorrow. The ungodly are going to be all around us and they're going to tempt us and they're going to offer advice and they're going to call us to follow them.

When we don't, they might very well make fun of us. They might ostracize us. They might alienate us.

Contrast that, however, with God on the other hand who promises us security. We will never be out of His sight. We will never be out of His hand.

He promises us His blessing. The blessing of a life that bears fruit for Him. The blessing of a life of good works.

The blessing of a transformed tongue that speaks His praises, that sings His praises and builds other people up. He promises us a life that will attract and draw others to Him. He promises us blessedness.

He promises us prosperity. Not by the world's standards, but by His standards. A life that carries out His purposes now and all the way into eternity.

Let us use God's word to point us to true blessedness today. Let us join as God's people as we have already sung Psalm 1 in celebrating the blessedness not of the rich man, but of the righteous man. Let's sing about the blessedness of the man who succeeds not in the world's eyes, but in God's eyes.

Let's cultivate a hunger for this kind of blessedness so that we feast on God's word every day and bear fruit by God's blessing. Fruit that will last for all of eternity. Let's take our cantors and stand together and turn to page 158.

Please stand. Before Thee let my pride come near, O Lord, true to Thy word, teach me. Before Thee let my singing come true, Thy promise rescue me.

True to Thy promise rescue me. Fix Thou Thy status, teacher, free, O let my lips Thy praise confess. Yea, of Thy word my tongue will sing for Thy commands are righteousness.

Be ready which I am to have because Thy three steps are my choice. I've longed for Thy salvation, Lord, and in Thy holy law rejoice. And in Thy holy law rejoice.

O let Thy forgiveness and help my soul shall live and praise Thee yet. A straying sheep Thy servants seek for Thy commands are righteous, for Thy commands are near for years. Amen.

At this time we'll do our tithes and offerings. As we've seen in Psalm 1, God has taken us. He has promised to nourish us.

And as we come to the Lord's table, we think on those things. God the Father sent His Son Jesus Christ to be the bread of life, given for the life of the world. And Jesus assures us that when we come to Him as the living bread, He will by no means cast us out.

We are hungry and we are thirsty. And in coming to the table of the Lord, we confess that we have no sufficiency in ourselves, that He by His grace is the one who fills us with every good thing. He blesses us and He makes us blessed.

He also calls us in His Word to hunger and thirst after righteousness. He also assures us that as we hunger, we shall be filled. He calls us to taste and to see that He is good and that the one who takes refuge in Him is indeed blessed.

And as we commemorate the death of Jesus Christ, we are assured that He will truly nourish and refresh us with His crucified body and shed blood to everlasting life. As those who share in that assurance, let's confess our faith together with the Church of All Ages, with the same lips by which we receive the bread and the wine, and also speaking together our Holy Catholic faith. Let's stand together and sing the words of the Apostles' Creed.

Our Lord says, Come to the water. Yes, come by wine. Our Father who gives bread for our life, we bless you that you cause us to live, not by bread alone, but by the living Word.

Our Lord says, Yes, come by wine. Our Father who gives bread for our life, we bless you that you cause us to live, but by the living Word. Amen.

Our Lord says, Our Father who gives bread for our life, not by bread alone, but by the living Word. Our Lord says, Our Father who gives bread for our life, we bless you that you cause us to live, not by bread alone, Please stand. From heaven, O praise the Lord.

All angels praise the Lord. Let all the earth keep praise. Praise him, O God.

The moon and star, the moon and star, ye of the far and loving God. Yea, let them for your sake always the worthy praise. Stay until being changed.

And from that place where faith strayed, where faith strayed behind its degree, they cannot pass. From earth, O praise the Lord. While we stand to his word, he comes by rail and snow.

He mountains high, he cedars tall, he cedars tall, he cedars tall and birds that fly. Let all the people praise. Let all their words be praise.

We touch and keep no hand. I, I, and all, I, maid and youth, I, maid and youth, this famous truth should we exult. Till the day we praise.

For he is great, and great, and that there's power on high. In praise of God, we always shall praise. Always shall praise, dear to his great praise, he, the Lord.

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