

Psalm 112

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: 09 August 2020

Preacher: Robbie Laidlaw

[0 : 00] Hi, let me extend another warm welcome to you this evening. Thank you for joining us. I'm Robbie and I'm going to be talking through the Sam we're looking at tonight. We live in a world where bad news is the norm. People are having to switch off from social media or stop watching the news because the sheer amount of bad news they see is affecting their mental health. Day after day it feels like nothing good is happening. The explosion in Beirut is just another sad thing on the list of bad news stories that is 2020. Every time these happen it's so difficult to hear but for the Christian we don't have to fear bad news. Psalm 112, the Psalm we're focusing on today, gives us a really heartwarming reminder of why that is. Psalm 112 as a whole describes the godly person but I don't want us to be just okay with seeing what the godly person is or does. I want us to dig deeper into why they are the way they are and to do that we're going to need to think through what Psalm 111 says as well as 112. These two Psalms are almost mirror images of one another. If in your Bible, which would be really helpful if you could keep open throughout, you'll see if you've got them on the same page that they are the same lines, the same formats.

They're both acrostics so go through the beginning of each letter of the lines in Hebrew is the beginning letter of the alphabet. They're clearly intrinsically linked so I want to use that tonight to use 111 to explain why the godly person is the way they are in 112. If you tuned in last week you'll have heard Michael talk on the works of God which is the focus of 111 and we saw that what God has done reveals what he is like and this week in Psalm 112 we're going to see that what the godly person is like reflects what God has done. So before we dig into the psalm let me just pray for us. Father we ask that you would speak to us now through your words. May we be people who delight in your word and rejoice in the works you have done. Be with us this evening, give us concentration to focus on what you're saying to us. In your holy name Lord, amen.

Now Psalm 112 opens in a similar way to Psalm 111 closes. They both talk of giving praise to God, they both talk about fear of the Lord and then they both talk about his precepts or his commands being good for the person who reads them. We could then read all of Psalm 112 as a bit of digging into that final verse of Psalm 111. What does proper fear of the Lord look like? What might life look like for the person who follows his precepts? Now I just want to take a few seconds to dig into that phrase fear of the Lord. Just you might not understand what that means and it can be quite confusing.

Well what it doesn't mean is that we need to run away from God, that we should be terrified of him like we would be some bad guy in a you know a horror film. We are not scared of him. It could almost be described as a great reverence for. Fearing the Lord is giving him the correct level of respect that he is owed because of who he is. He is so great and powerful that we must reflect that in the way we perceive him, in the way we respond to him. The next line in verse one really helps us realize that being afraid, having fear of the Lord isn't being afraid of him in the same way we'd be afraid of the boogeyman because it says those who fear the Lord also delight in his commands.

[3 : 44] If we are delighting in what he said to us it's not a negative fear. We don't delight in the words of Freddy Krueger if he appears in our dreams. No, we love the Lord and what he says but we still fear him for how great he is. So verse one gives us great context for the whole psalm. The godly person is someone who reads God's words and delights in it and then acts accordingly. The rest of our psalm shows us what life might look like for those people. So we're going to look at the rest of the psalm in three sections. We're just going to follow most of the structure built in. First we're going to look at what life will be like in verses two to four. Then we're going to look at what the godly person should do in verses five and nine. And then thirdly we're going to look at how the godly people should think in verses six to eight. So first off let's think about what life will be like for the godly person.

It's important to note as we look at these two psalms and we see how God's work affects the life of the godly person to think who is the first listener of these psalms. Who wrote these psalms and when and what are the works of God that Psalm 111 is talking about? Well as you glance through 111 you'll see how much of God's character is shown through his works. He is gracious and compassionate and righteous and majestic and faithful and just and the reason we know this is because of the works he's done. His works reveal his character. So specifically what works are we talking about?

What are the majestic wonders that God has done? Most likely it's talking about the exodus. That great story we have of God rescuing his people from slavery in Egypt. The splitting of the Red Sea, the ten plagues, feeding them with manna in the desert. All these things are the works worth thinking of. He led them out of slavery in a foreign lands to the land of Canaan, the land he had promised them and he led them to conquer all of it and live in it as his people. Lots of the phrases used in this psalm are found in Exodus and that kind of other Old Testament books and so as we look at these we have to remember what life would be like for those people. That this psalm is talking about them and to them. God has taken them out of a land they're in slavery and gifted them the land they're in. So with that in mind it seems like the godly person will receive three things if they fear God. They're going to receive stature, they're going to receive wealth and they're going to receive hope.

Now as we read these three things it can be easy to feel weary and uncertain about what this is telling us. The verses say their children will be mighty and it says wealth and riches will be in their houses.

Now this makes it sound like every single Christian who follows the Lord will be wealthy and rich and if taking a vase value may drive us to the question well if God gives everyone who fears him wealth and riches why am I poor? Why am I struggling? Why am I not able to support myself financially? Am I not a good enough Christian? Is he not giving me it because I'm not godly enough? And this is where it's important to remember those first readers. We are in a very different part of the Bible timeline. The Bible's one big story and we are not the same people who wrote this or would read this in the beginning.

[7 : 06] Now it doesn't mean that this is not true for us but it just means it's not true in the same way. It doesn't mean we're guaranteed these things yet on this earth. So why does this psalm tell us that God the person is going to be blessed in that materialistic way? Well in the book of Deuteronomy God gave, he makes a covenant with Israel after he rescued from Egypt and this covenant it says how God will act for and to Israel and how they will react to what he has done for them. God promised them great wealth and prosperity if they live in the lands for God doing what he's asked them and pleasing him.

If they dedicate themselves to the God, the one who rescued them, he will help them prosper.

That's the covenant that Psalm 111 talks of so much. It's repeated several times in there.

This Psalm is a reminder of that covenant. The godly person will follow God's will and good things will happen to them. That's what the covenant says, that's what this Psalm says.

So as the Israelite would read these Psalms together, they'd be reminded of the great covenantal promise God made and they'd aspire to follow God in the right way so that may happen.

And this did often lead to material and spiritual prosperity for the Israel. Think of when King David became king and he led them exactly like God wanted to. They prospered massively. They had a great amount of land. But we don't live in the promised land. We are not in that same era of the Bible.

[8 : 40] In fact, we are exiles living in a world that we are not made for. We are awaiting our rightful home that will come when Christ returns again. We're not going to automatically gain stature or wealth. We won't be seen as mighty. In fact, after Jesus ascends to heaven, we see in the early church that it's almost the opposite. They are likely to be poorer and they're to be seen as lowly. And we still see that today.

But if we fear the Lord and delight in his commands, if we live godly lives now, we are guaranteed prosperity spiritually and we will rule the world with Christ when he returns.

We will have that stature and wealth when we are united with him in the new heaven and new earth. We can read these Psalms and be reminded in the same way the Israelite would be. We should read these remembering God's promise of what is to come and aspiring to live in a way that glorifies him and prepares us for that.

One thing, however, that is still true for us now, right this second, is that we have the same hope that was promised to the Israelites. Verse 4 says, even in darkness, light will dawn.

I'm going to spend more time looking on that idea in just a little bit, but let's just take a second to think that through. For those who fear the Lord and live for him, there will always be a light.

[10:12] Even in the darkness, the absolute darkest darkness, a light will dawn for those who fear the Lord. Now let's move on and look at what the godly person should be like.

And more importantly, let's look at why they should be that way. So let me read verses 5 and verse 9 from Psalm 112. Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely, who conduct their affairs with justice.

They have scattered freely their gifts to the poor. Their righteousness endures forever. Their horn will be lifted high with honour. The godly person who fears the Lord will be generous with what he has. He will give to the poor and help those in need. I'm sure this isn't news to most of you, that the Christians should be generous and charitable. We need to give to help those who have not. But in these psalms, there's a really interesting link between verse 5 and 9 of Psalm 112 and verse 5 and 9 of Psalm 111.

So let me read those verses, the same verses from Psalm 111. He provides food for those who fear him. He remembers his covenant forever. He provided redemption for his people. He ordained his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name.

While Psalm 112 tells of the generous godly person, Psalm 111 gives a reminder of where it all came from. In Psalm 111, God provides so that in Psalm 112, the godly person can give away.

[11:47] This is a really great picture of what sanctification is. That's a big word. And if you don't know what it means, what it basically means is that when a Christian is sanctified, they are made more like God. Their behaviour becomes more in line with his character.

To be sanctified is to be made more like God. And this is how we look to God and see what he has done for us. And then we look to do it for others around us.

God provided for us. In this case, he provided foods in verse 9. And so in verse 5, sorry. So in verse 5 of 112, they can give generously and lend freely of what the food is given.

The whole of these Psalms show this idea of sanctification and looking to God and being more like him. Look at the ways God is described in 111. Here's just a few. He is righteous, he is gracious, he is compassionate, and he is just.

All of these phrases are then used to describe the godly person in Psalm 112. The reason the godly person acts the way they do is because of what God has done for them.

[12:56] May we continually look at the works of God and try to be more like him. Now doesn't this put that verse in verse 3 into slightly more context, the one we were unsure of?

He will give them wealth and prosperity and riches in their houses to the person of the godly. But that's never going to be hoarded because the godly person will look to give that as freely as God gave them.

When he blesses people in such a way, they don't look to take it and use it for themselves. They look to give it out to the people who need it most. Because they realize they didn't deserve what they've been given.

So they need to give to the people who need it. The godly person delights in giving to others like God delights to give to them. As we read these Psalms, we need to ask ourselves, do we actually appreciate what God has provided for us?

Not just financially too, do we give thanks for the gifts he has given us? Verse 9 reminds us he's provided us with redemption. How often do we give thanks for that? And does this drive us to freely give of the gifts to others?

[14:02] The more we are able to give thanks and accept and reflect on what has been provided for us by God's graces, we will be more willing to give freely and act to others like he has acted to us.

Let's move on to verses 6 to 8. And we're going to look at how the godly should think. Psalm 112 is a great example of how the godly should live.

And we can read this and aspire towards that. We can aspire to the goal this psalm sets out for godliness. But we might not ever read this psalm. In fact, we will never read this psalm and think, you know what, I've done everything that has ever asked me to and I've fulfilled it perfectly.

But we don't have to. Thankfully, someone already has. But I'll get back to that later. We can continually meditate on these psalms and become godlier each time we look at what God has done for us.

The next section is not necessarily how to act, but how we need to think and the attitude the godly people have. Let me read verses 6 to 8 then. Surely the righteous will never be shaken.

[15:08] They will be remembered forever. They will have no fear of bad news. Their hearts are steadfast. They will have no fear. In the end, they will look in triumph on their foes.

If you're like me, there are some text messages you can get that immediately get your heart pumping faster. If someone ever texts me, the message is just saying, so dot dot dot, and then you get that symbol that means they're typing a long message.

I'm absolutely terrified. What have I done wrong? What are they going to say? What news, what bad news might they give me? I immediately expect the worst. Or picture on all those TV shows or movies that we might have seen, where it's late at night, the character wakes up, and there's blue lights flashing in the hallway.

Then a knock on the door, and two policemen standing there. That's never a good sign. They come bearing news of death or serious accident or grave injury.

These are harbingers of bad news, and they give us anxiety and they terrify us. But Psalm 112 tells us that we can have no fear of bad news. Why is there no fear of bad news for the believer?

[16:22] Psalm 112 tells us they will never be shaken. They will have no fear, and their hearts will be steadfast. This sounds amazing. How can I react in this way?

What is it that gives them this confidence? Well, verse 7b tells us, they trust in the Lord. They trust in who he is, as is revealed by what he has done.

Luke, verses 6-8 of Psalm 111. He has shown them the power of his works. Those works are faithful and just. His precepts are trustworthy, and he is faithful and upright.

The reason that the godly can have this level of trust and steadfastness is because they know exactly who they are trusting in, and they know what he has done.

So how might that have helped the Israelites? Well, imagine the Israelite who has been, who's reading this psalm, but he's in Babylon. He's no longer in the promised lands. They've been captured, removed, taken away.

[17:26] They're in exile. And he's reading this psalm. He's away from his home and away from the temple where God dwelled. Well, the righteous Israelite would read this, and he'd have no fear of what was happening around him, because they would think back to what God has already done for them.

God had already wrested them out of Egypt, and he'd given them the land once, and he remembers his covenant forever. The trusting Israelite would have no fear of the Babylonians and what they were going to do to him, because he knew that God was working for his goods, because he'd promised that.

Their faithful God had not left them, and they trusted that he would remain faithful and upright, and that he would return them to the promised lands. Israel looked back to the Exodus to see what God had done for them.

But we have something so much better that we can look back on today. When we, as Christians, look back, we look at what God did for us through his Son on the cross.

He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us. We can be absolutely certain in what we have, because that was a historical moment where Jesus died for us. That happens.

[18:38] And we can never doubt that, because it's a historical moment. As I said, maybe you're new to church. Maybe you've never heard this before. Or maybe you're a church regular. I still want to remind you, because we can never think of this too much.

Jesus Christ came down to earth to live a perfect life and die so that those people who believed in him, me, you, any Christian throughout the world, he died so that we could be reunited to God and have eternal life with him.

No matter what we have done in our pasts, Christ has paid the price of that punishment. When he came, he died, he rose again.

He defeated death itself. He loved us so much that he sacrificed himself. He gave his life so that we could be with him forever.

Jesus lived the perfect life. He fulfilled all the Old Testament, including this psalm. He is the godly man. If you read this psalm thing, I could never be that. Don't worry, because he has been.

[19 : 44] His righteousness will endure forever. Jesus is forever gracious and compassionate. And because of what he did, we can face anything the world today throws at us.

When bad news comes, whether it is cancer, COVID or catastrophe, whether it is redundancy, racism or riots, we can have no fear of it.

Our hearts are steadfast, our hopes secure in the unchanging and eternal works of Jesus Christ on the cross. Now, let me clarify.

This does not mean we as Christians are not negatively affected by the world around us. It doesn't mean we ignore it because we don't have to. We mourn and struggle and fight on no matter the bad news that we face.

But as verse four puts it, even in the darkest light, even in the darkness, light does. So maybe right now, you feel like you're in darkness. Life has collapsed around you.

[20 : 46] Let me encourage you. Whatever is happening cannot destroy you. Your heart can be steadfast because Christ has died and risen again. Our hearts are safe with him in heaven.

The works of God are trustworthy. Whatever circumstances you are facing now or we will face in the future, his works cannot change because they have already happened.

So we can rest assured eternally, no matter what we feel or think, because of what he has done, we are able to be godly and act like he did.

Our psalm ends on a slightly different note. It turns to look at the wicked. Verse 10 of Psalm 112 gives us a view into the fate of those who do not fear the Lord. What a contrast there is between the wicked and the righteous.

Firstly, the wicked will waste away. They are gnashing their teeth. They're constantly aching or striving after that thing that the righteous have because they've seen it. They try to grab it, but eventually they just turn to dust while the righteous endures forever.

[22 : 10] The longings of the wicked, the desires of this world, things like lust, power, and dreams of wealth, they all come to nothing. The desires of the wicked will constantly change yet never fulfill.

But those who long for the Lord and delight in his words, their hearts are secured forever. So these are the choices we are left with. Do we want to long after the desires of the flesh in the world and eventually waste away to nothing?

Or do we want to have our hearts secure in Christ as we delight in his commands? So as we finish, let's remember that because of the great works of God and Christ, we are confident that he will bless us with eternal riches.

Let's remember that because he has provided for us, and given so graciously and abundantly to us, we can give to others around us. Let's act towards others as Jesus acted for us and towards us.

And finally, let us focus on the great saving works of Christ. Whenever the world feels too much and the bad news comes knocking, look to the cross and remember that nothing is bigger than him.

[23 : 23] Nothing is bigger than that act. Let's see the light that spills forth from his act of sacrifice. Let me pray. Father, as we go into the week ahead, we ask that you would help us remember the great work Christ did on the cross for us.

Keep that at the forefront of our mind and let it continually show us more of who you are. Father, we ask that as you show us more of yourself, as you give deeper revelations of what you are like, that your Holy Spirit would work in our hearts, making us more like you every day.

In Jesus' name, amen.