

Psalm 112

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[0 : 00] Tonight's reading comes from Psalm 112, and you can find that on page 614. Praise the Lord.

Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who find great delight in his commands. Their children will be mighty in the land. The generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches are in their houses, and their righteousness endures forever.

Even in darkness, light dawns for the upright, for those who are gracious and compassionate and righteous. Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely, who conduct their affairs with justice.

Surely the righteous will never be shaken. They will be remembered forever. They will have no fear of bad news. Their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord. Their hearts are secure.

They will have no fear. In the end, they will look in triumph on their foes. They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor. Their righteousness endures forever. Their horn will be lifted high in honour.

[1 : 04] The wicked will see and be vexed. They will gnash their teeth and waste away. The longings of the wicked will come to nothing. Thanks for reading Nicola.

My name's Jack. I'm a member of the church family here. I'll just give a moment to get Psalm 112 opened up here. And then I'll pray for us as we start.

Let's pray. Father God, we thank you for your word. And thank you that we can hear what you say through it. Please speak to us now and help us to live lives of obedience to you.

Amen. I'll start by asking a question. And the question is this. Do you ever feel that you might have something to lose by obeying God?

Do you ever feel that you might have something to lose by obeying God? Because it might feel like we can put a lot on the line, actually, when we decide to do something that God says.

[2 : 09] It can feel like doing what God says isn't always what is best for us. For instance, say you're a student. There's lots of students here tonight, I think. And you really want to do well in your career.

It would make sense, wouldn't it, to spend as much time as you could studying or networking to try and get the right internships, try and get the best job you could get after university. And then in that context, well, God's command to meet with other Christians as a church, to meet regularly, could feel like a risk.

It could feel like it might damage what you really wanted. And it would take your time and your energy away from what you wanted to do, to do something else. And if you're here and you say, actually, well, I'm not a believer in the Lord Jesus, well, I think that question perhaps makes even more sense.

There might well be something to lose by choosing to obey God. You might think there might be too much to lose in sticking to what God says about sex or money or how we speak and how we relate to people.

And it can feel an awful lot safer to decide for ourselves. We know what is best for ourselves. We know what means we will flourish. And we will only obey God when it feels convenient to do so.

[3 : 28] And what does God have to say to us about that? And we're going to see what he says to us through Psalm 112. The Psalms, they are a collection of poems and songs written, spanning a period of time about 800 years, and brought together as a final collection perhaps around 500 years before Jesus was born.

And like the rest of the Bible, they are God's words to us as God speaks to us through human authors. And it starts off with a note of praise, doesn't it? Psalm 112, verse 1, praise the Lord.

And that tells us that what follows is going to be good. It's going to tell us what is good about God and what is good about the way that he works. And then the rest of verse 1.

Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who find great delight in his commands. I guess we read that and we think, well, what does it mean to be blessed?

What does it mean to be blessed? Well, to be blessed means to be happy. But it's more than just a feeling, although it is that. It's when something good happens to you, but it's kind of objective.

[4 : 43] It actually happens to you in your circumstances. As you could say, I went on holiday. It was beautiful and sunny and relaxing, and I had time away from work and with family and friends.

And that was objectively good. But also, it makes me feel happy. It makes me feel good. So that's what being blessed is. It's something objective and also changes how we feel as well.

And blessing in the Bible is something that God gives to us. And Psalm 112, verse 1 tells us, well, who is blessed? Who is blessed by God? Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who find great delight in his commands.

Fearing the Lord. Well, what does that mean? I think it means two things to fear the Lord. Firstly, it means that you recognize that God is boss, that God is in charge.

He's in charge of the world, and he's in charge of us. And two, it's not just a theoretical knowledge. I know God is in charge, and he is king. It's also practical.

[5 : 49] So God is king, so I do what he says. I obey what he says. I read his words, and I do what he tells me to do. And fear of the Lord, it could sound scary, couldn't it?

But it's not terror. It's just right thinking about God. He's more important, and he's in charge. And that's completely different, isn't it, to how most of our society thinks about God.

The default stand is that God's not in charge. I do what I want. I make the rules, and I decide what I should do. But the fear of the Lord is a complete about-turn from that.

Instead of listening to ourselves, we listen to God to see what he says and to do it. And we choose a new king, and we take ourselves off the throne, and put God back on the throne where he belongs instead of us.

And Psalm 112 says that is the happy way to live, and that is the best way to live, the blessed way to live. And first of all, I think I want to say that naturally is that's not you, and that's not me either.

[6 : 56] It's something actually that we really don't want to do. Left by ourselves, we are much more like a toddler or child or teenager, or perhaps even an adult who's just really good at hiding it, whose first response when they are asked to do something by someone in authority is just to say no.

You ask me to do something, and because you ask me to do it, I just don't want to do it. And we fight and resist and ignore. But the good news we find in the Bible is that God is able to take us and to change us so that we do recognize Jesus as our king, and that we want to listen to him and follow him.

And that is what it means for us now to fear the Lord, to recognize Jesus as king. And he offers us forgiveness for not fearing him and not doing what he says.

He gives us a new life when we turn to him and we say sorry. And he gives us that forgiveness not because we are good and because we deserve it, and we don't deserve it, but because he loves us and is merciful and gracious and compassionate.

It's not about being good at obeying God. It's our attitude and our hearts towards him that turns to follow him and ask for forgiveness. So when we do that, we fit into verse 1.

[8 : 14] Even though we might look at verse 1 and say, well, I don't necessarily feel like I'm very good at finding delight in God's commandments. It's a heart attitude towards having God as king. That's what it's talking about.

And we see that what he says is good and best for us. So the question is then, is what is the blessing that God offers to people who fear him?

And we see that in verses 2 and 3. So look down for me at verses 2 and 3. What sort of blessing do people get from God? Their children will be mighty in the land.

The generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches are in their houses, and their righteousness endures forever. They have children who prosper.

We can see that in verse 2. Their children will be mighty in the land. Their children will prosper and succeed in what they do. And verse 3, they are going to be rich. Wealth and riches are in their house.

[9 : 12] And verse 3, they also know that the good things that they do, those things will last forever. They will be remembered. And for the people who Psalm 112 has first written for, the Old Testament Israelites, these are perhaps some of the best things that you could imagine, in line with the blessings that God had promised to them.

Psalm 112 says that God blesses people who fear him with prosperity, wealth, and he blesses them with a legacy as well. Children who are wealthy and influential as well. And we had to do a bit of thinking about how this applies for us.

What do I get if I obey the Lord? Will I find a couple extra thousand pounds in my bank account overnight if I turn and trust Jesus tonight? Is that how it works? It's not.

But for them, they had been promised that if they were to obey God, then they would receive blessings in this world. But for us, from the rest of the Bible, we know that when we obey God, we get these blessings in the world to come, in the new creation, that happens when Jesus returns and makes everything new.

And what we commonly call as heaven. And I don't know if everyone would like to think to yourself, what is heaven going to be like? It's a good question. Before we want to actually, I was thinking about this, I should think about this more often.

[10 : 30] What is heaven going to be like? Well, from these verses, we can say that being in heaven is going to be like being really, really rich. We're going to have the security of being rich, the luxury of being rich.

We like being able to afford the most beautiful place to live and to eat the very best food, to have the money to do what you want. I think it's pretty easy for us to see that that is brilliant.

But then the other part of these verses are, imagine having kids. So perhaps it doesn't seem like the blessing, but I think for lots of us here, just looking around at our age range, most of us probably don't have kids.

But I should think that for parents, one of your greatest longings would be that your kids would do well, but nothing would make you happier than if your kids were to thrive and to prosper.

And being in a new creation is going to be like that, having people you love and care for succeeding. I've got a quick clip to illustrate this. Hold on for a minute, Jorge, if it's going to play okay.

[11 : 32] I thought it would be actually better to hear from a dad about this. So it's in the 2012 Olympics, South African swimmer, Chad LaClos, won the 200-meter butterfly gold medal, beating Phelps.

And I think, I hope it's going to show on the screen. This is him and his dad afterwards. And here is Chad's father, Bert. My word, what a performance! Unbelievable! Unbelievable! Unbelievable! I've never been so happy in my life.

It's something indescribable, undescrivable. I mean, what happened to now, it's like I'm down to heaven, and whatever happens to my life now, it's plain sailing.

It's plain sailing. And there is your boy down there. I think he could hardly believe it, not just that he's won the gold medal, but that he's beaten Michael Phelps. Wow, this is unbelievable.

Look at him! And he's beautiful! Look at this! What a beautiful boy! Look at him! Sorry, sorry! Oh my God! Tell us a bit about Chad, and when he committed his life to swimming, and how he's got this good.

[12 : 33] He's unbelievable! He's committed like you cannot believe it. He's the most down-to-earth, beautiful boy you'll ever meet in your life. He will not, you know, he likes all the...

Look at him! Look at him! He's crying like me! I love you! Oh my God! Every time I see myself, I look at him! Wow! Thanks, all hey! Yeah, unbelievable, unbelievable.

It's so great, isn't it? My beautiful boy. And that's what the new creation is going to be like, what being there will be like, that sort of joy, to enjoy forever. And it sounds like a...

It seems like a great deal, doesn't it? Choosing to put your trust in Jesus, to have a new king, means we get blessed by God, and blessed amazingly well by God, in the future, in a new creation with him.

But I think the question that Psalm 112 really helps us get to the heart of, is now that if we were to choose, if we choose to live with Jesus as king, is what sort of life does he want from us?

[13 : 34] What's the sort of direction of the life that he wants us to take? And what does living with the fear of the Lord and delighting in his commandments, what would that look like on the ground in my day-to-day life?

Well, the rest of the verses, verses four to nine, they give us a portrait of the person who fears the Lord and what they are like or what they should be like. Look with me at the end of verse four and verse five.

Verse four, even in the darkness, light dawns for the upright, for those who are gracious and compassionate and righteous. Verse five, good will come to those who are generous and lend freely, who conduct their affairs with justice.

And then verse nine, another description of them. They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor. For us, this is not like, if you are like this, then God blesses you.

Instead, for us, this is if we trust in Christ, then this is how he would have us live, given that he has promised that he will bless us. This is how we should live. It doesn't work kind of conditionally.

[14 : 43] I don't know how you'd sum it up, but I think it sums up the sort of life that God is saying here is good is a generous life, a life that gives to other people. It's rooted in mercy and compassion.

The righteous person, they are gracious and compassionate, like God, as God has treated us in a way that we don't deserve by rescuing us and blessing us, despite our rebellion against him.

So the person who obeys God, who fears the Lord, treats other people in a way that they don't deserve, and is compassionate, and they deeply care about the welfare and good of other people.

And what they do as well, it's just and righteous. You can see that. They conduct their affairs with justice. They are compassionate and righteous. And that means their behavior is rooted in what is true and what is fair.

And the righteous person of Psalm 112 knows what is just and right because they know God's word. They know what God has said. And they mirror God's rightness and God's justice.

[15 : 49] And if we've been reading through the book of the Psalms, one Psalm after another, this would be no surprise to us. If you were just to, they're actually very nicely laid out in the NIV, I guess, for us, but Psalm 111 and Psalm 112.

If you just look over the one column into 11 verse 4, when it talks about God, he has caused his wonders to be remembered. The Lord is gracious and compassionate.

He provides food for those who fear him. He remembers his covenant forever. To be the person of Psalm 112 is to be like the God of Psalm 111, who is merciful and compassionate and righteous.

The person who knows God and who fears the Lord treats people with mercy and compassion and generosity. It's a bit like, I was trying to think of a non-English example of this, but I couldn't think of any.

You know when you're a kid and there's something, this sport happening on television? For me, the moment I could think of was the 2005 Ashes, England versus Australia.

[16 : 56] I was usually reminded of it because the Sky Sports had a documentary about Kevin Peterson, who's one of the England batsmen. Now, what I remember from the summer of 2005, when England regained the ashes from Australia, amazing series, some great documentaries out there.

Anyway, everyone wanted to be like Kevin Peterson, this kind of swashbuckling English, really South African batsman. He'd come over seeking better opportunities.

We had this kind of cricket bat. It was a wormwood cricket bat with a, I think it was one of the yellow handle. And so in that summer, normally at school, it's like, oh, everyone gets the tennis rackets because it's Wimbledon. That's who we're going to try and imitate.

We're going to try and imitate like Federer or Nadal or Tim Henman for some reason. But everyone wanted to be like Kevin Peterson with the wormwood cricket bat. And that's what it's a bit like with people who fear the Lord.

We see God. We see him as the one who's amazing and the one we want to imitate. I was going to go for Johnny Wilkinson as well, you know, if they're kind of just looking, clasping their hands, looking at their goalposts, but that's culturally insensitive.

[17 : 59] Okay. Verse 5. Sorry. It is, and they say, Psalm 112 said, it is well with that person. Why is it well with that person?

And we ask ourselves. They are like God's. So I think our temptation is to think that it is not well with the people who are like that. It is going to be well with the people who look after themselves and who look after their own interests.

And I think we can fear that obeying God is somehow going to put us at a disadvantage. Perhaps one way this would work out would work out with our money. And we think the most secure thing that we can do is to hoard our money and hoard perhaps more than we need so that when that's the most secure thing so that when the hit comes or when the time of trouble comes, I'm able to buy my way out of it.

It can feel safer not to live the life of generosity perhaps that God would have us to live. We think that living for ourselves is really what's going to make us secure.

I think what Psalm 112 wants us to see, what God wants us to see is that to choose obedience and being like God is actually to choose security not insecurity. Look down at all the all the ways the righteous persons describes in verse 6 to 9 to see and enjoy the security of those who obey God.

[19 : 25] Verse 6, surely the righteous will never be shaken they will be remembered forever. The righteous they are remembered beyond this life I think for the Israelites who read this that would have meant well they're going to be remembered after they die but we know that that means we're going to be remembered in eternity known in the world to come an eternally secure destiny in God's new world.

Verse 7, they will have no fear of bad news. anything that can happen now that's not going to stop them from receiving their rewards in the future and they know it.

The Bible is realistic and we know that bad things will happen to everyone and bad things happen to righteous people and people who trust in Jesus as well and it's not that the bad news will never come but it's they know they have nothing to fear from it because of their eternal security and nothing that can happen to them in this life can stop what is to come.

Second half of verse 7, their hearts are steadfast trusting in the Lord and they don't know that God is the one who's going to make them stand firm forever who will make sure that they get their rewards and it's not something they do for themselves as if they need to rely on their own strength to secure their future.

They obey God and God is the one who safeguards their future. And then the rest of verse 8 and in the end they will have no fear in the end they will look in triumph on their foes and they have eternal victory and they know it.

[20 : 56] Triumph over their enemies over God's enemies of sin and death and the things that ruin life now. And then perhaps best of all well one of the great ones their righteousness endures forever verse 9 the second time it's been said the good things that they have done the obedience to the Lord that they have shown that lasts forever as well their obedience itself is completely secure and the outcome of what they have done will be remembered forever and be rewarded they will be rewarded for it forever.

And as I was thinking about this I thought there was a quote it's very famous I'm sure lots of you will have heard it before so perhaps hear me if you have by a guy called Jim Elliott a missionary in South America who said he is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. And it can be tempting to feel foolish when we feel that we might lose out by obeying God but that forgets that the things of this world are temporary and don't last and there are things that we cannot keep but there are things that we can use to choose something instead that lasts forever and that we can't lose that is completely secure.

and what cannot be lost is obeying God and being like him that is what will last and is the only secure and eternal thing. And then the last verse of the psalm and verse 10 this outlines a choice for us and I think is to show us the painful futility of the alternative.

And verse 10 It's a pretty sobering truth that in the end anything that is done that is not based on what God is doing will pass away.

[22 : 55] For those who look for life outside of God and outside of Jesus will have nothing permanent to show for what they want only anger and bitterness and gnashing of teeth is an expression of rage and jealousy as they see what the righteous gets.

I think it's designed to push us into a choice isn't it? To choose what God says and to choose to obey him because actually there's nothing that lasts and nothing that is good outside of that.

Why would we choose the alternative? Why would we choose something else? So I think the thing that I want us all to take away from it this evening is that the best and the only secure thing is to obey God because he gives everlasting reward to those who do so and to see the person of Psalm 112 and to want to be like them and it's almost designed to make us be confident enough to be that person to help us to do away with fear and insecurity about what we might lose.

and perhaps just a minute or so on what that might look like for us here at St. Silas. To be gracious and merciful and compassionate and generous and those are huge things that have big implications for our lives and would give us loads of things to talk about with each other afterwards.

I think the way I summed it up was it means for us taking what we have and using it for the benefit and good of others in line with God's purposes for the world.

[24 : 29] To take what we have and to use it for the benefit and good of others in line with God's purposes for the world. This psalm gets quoted in the New Testament to Corinthians 9 chapter 9 if you're taking notes.

We heard a bit from the first letter to Corinthians this morning with Simon but he applies it to money and he quotes verse 9 he quotes Psalm 112 verse 9 they have freely scattered their gifts to the poor their righteousness endures forever.

To the Corinthian Christians when he's trying to persuade them to give money to help with a famine relief for poor Christians in Jerusalem. The Corinthian church is in Greece and they're quite wealthy he's trying to persuade them to give money and to help with poor Christians and to relieve their hunger in Jerusalem.

And you can read more about that in 2 Corinthians chapter 9 that's such a different way to see money isn't it? Something to give away to help secure an inheritance that lasts forever.

So we can see we can change how we use our money but also it's more than just money isn't it? They conduct their affairs with justice all of our lives all that we do and what we have.

[25 : 47] And that's the thing I'd like to talk to each other afterwards is to think about perhaps the person next to you or somebody you came along with what do I have that I could use? And maybe think about one thing I think it would be quite overwhelming when faced these sorts of verses to think there's so many ways in which my life doesn't look like this and feel overwhelmed by that but just to pick one thing what's one thing that perhaps you could change in light of what God says here?

His main purpose is the salvation of people through the spread of the good news about Jesus to create a new people for himself so it would make sense that our generosity and compassion runs along those lines as well our generosity to people should be shaped by God's priorities for the world an example of this it seems quite extreme but I was talking to a friend over the summer he told me that his family on some of their family holidays they actually use their family holiday to smuggle Bibles into Cuba when it was illegal to do so isn't that kind of it's so bizarre it didn't strike me as the sort of person who would do that but that's what they did but what a generous thing to do what a compassionate thing to do it involved risk it involved holding pretty loose to ideas of safety to give people what they really need and to give people God's words and that's that's one example I'm sure you can lots of you will know many others from Christians you have met and been blessed by in your lives and the great thing is we know these things aren't pointless and righteousness lasts forever and the good we do now is something that we will enjoy forever in the new creation it's not a risk obedience to God is secure let me pray to praise

Father God we thank you that we have your words and that we can know what you say and that we can hear you and obey you please help us to turn away from fear and to trust you and thank you that obeying you is the most secure thing that we can do please help us to be more like you in lives of mercy and compassion and generosity amen you and thank you thank you I've Weinbach and thank you make sure that we haven't in all years you are gonna be I'll see you in all once and find you in all years I hear you and thank you