

'Blessed'

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Preacher: Derek Lamont

[0 : 00] Okay, so this series is entitled Songs for Life, because what we want to do above anything else is to remind ourselves that this is the Word of God, that it's a living Word.

It remains relevant even though it was written thousands and thousands of years ago. And even when there's things we find difficult to understand, even sometimes from the Hebrew poetry and the way it's written, then we hope to bring it to life for us.

I guess this would be a gauge of how many times anyone ever reads the Wednesday email. But the Wednesday email this last week had a link to the Bible project, which is a tremendous resource for giving you a summary, a visual summary in drawings, beautifully done, of all the books in the Bible.

And there was a link, if you want to look back to that, or if you just want to go online and type in the Bible project, SAMS. And it will give you a six-minute summary of the whole book of SAMS, which is very helpful and is beautifully done.

And that might give you a much, much better and more succinct introduction to the whole book than I could give today, because I'm really going to focus on these two SAMS because they really reflect much of the thinking and the themes of the whole book of SAMS, indeed the whole of the Bible.

[1 : 34] And I'm going to ask the question, where do you find true happiness in life's battles? Now that is a question that we all face. It's something we all wrestle with.

It's something you're all looking for, and I'm looking for, is true happiness in life, literally when we find that difficult to understand and achieve in life's battles.

What is the song of your life? If you could describe your life as a song, what would it be? Both in the good times, which we like, and in the bad times, what would be the characteristic of your life?

How do you respond and reflect to these times? How do we find true happiness? Now if I was to ask that to the... You know, if you ask a...

Doesn't matter what kind of question in a children's top context, that you ask the kids, you ask what the answer to the question is, they always say, Jesus.

[2 : 35] Even if it's just an answer, what did you do last... Or whatever, I don't know what it would be. But usually you get the answer, Jesus. Well, you know, they're right, aren't they? Get out the mouths of babes and children, because the answer to finding true happiness is God, and through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Absolutely right. And that's what we've got. And I don't mean that in a trite way, or in a thoughtless way, or in an easy way.

But if we don't recognize that, it will be very difficult for us to partake in the Lord's supper that we're taking today, because it's an acknowledgement that that is the case in our lives, in the good and in the battles that we face.

So really the theme of this sermon is blessing, or being blessed, because the two Psalms are sandwiched with that word. It begins, blessed is the man who walks not in the council of the wicked, and it finishes with in Psalm 2, salvation belongs to the Lord.

Your blessing be on your people. And it's this whole idea of being blessed. True, that word biblically just means happiness, sometimes translated happiness.

[3 : 48] Now we sometimes, happiness, it's kind of a maybe a shallow word for us in our context, but it wasn't the case, blessed is really the Bible word for true happiness.

And when it says blessed, it doesn't mean an emotional state. It doesn't just mean a response to good things that happen.

It's a state of being. It's what we are from the inside. It's not a reaction primarily to an external event, something that makes us happy. You know, something that makes us smile.

It's an internal experience. It's an inner restfulness. It's a peace. It's a shalom. It's that desire that we have that all is good in my world.

This is being done right is happening. I'm loved and I'm loving others. And in my heart, everything is going well.

[4 : 45] It's life, isn't it? Life to the full, that's how we would describe blessedness. Both internally, blessed.

In the company we have, blessed. And in the environment in which we live, blessed. Long to distract or take away no hatred, no evil, no darkness.

And that's unrealistic, isn't it? We might have tasted it, but you may be confused and I'm confused because it seems so aspirational.

You know, it's what we'd love to be, but it's never our experience. It's always snatched away from us. There's always something that takes away that true, deep happiness, that blessedness.

But let's go a bit, let's peel it back a little bit more. Where does that desire come from within us? Where's that concept of true happiness that we strive for that we often don't find in this world?

[5 : 48] Where does it come? Where is that unfulfilled longing that we have? Where does it come from? It comes from the character of God Himself.

Because if we're looking at blessedness, the most blessed person in the universe is the living God. Internally completely and utterly blessed.

Completely at rest, content, totally good, totally happy. You don't think of God as totally happy, do you? Do any of us ever think of God as the most happy being?

Being in the universe, full of joy, full of love, full of perfect holiness and justice fused together in that happiness? Now for us that's incomprehensible.

A God who is both holy and happy, we can't really comprehend that fusion of characteristics within His heart. Can I just say even in His wrath, He is blessed, He is completely happy?

[6 : 52] Why, how can we wrestle with that concept because His wrath is not reactive, it's not capricious, it's not malevolent, it's not just bad temper that He throws out and disturbs His being.

It's His settled response to evil, to hatred and to injustice. And that's a good thing. It's a good thing that He has settled in His opposition to evil and darkness and that is why He can be blessed and happy because He knows it will be dealt with by Him.

That all wrongdoing will not, no wrongdoing will go unpunished. That's good. That's a good thing. And now we all agree with that. We all agree, we've seen it a lot in the press this week in judgments that have come out.

We all think it's a good thing that wrongdoing does not go unpunished. We all agree. Sometimes we don't agree with the standard.

We don't agree with the fact that God is the one who also judges us. We like the idea of God judging all evil and all wrongdoing, but we don't like the idea of His look piercing our hearts because He says that we fall short.

[8 : 20] We don't like the idea of us being in the dock of God's righteous judgment and wrath. We hate that naturally. We recoil from that naturally.

And we deny that that can possibly be the way to true happiness, to believe that kind of truth. We can't think in our own minds and hearts that it's impossible to be blessed without God, without knowing God.

But can we listen to what God says here and why it's so important to come to terms with how He reveals Himself in this way?

Because Sam 1 describes the path that we are on, and it uses pictures. I love that, that it uses pictures. When Thomas was here, he was great at using the screens, and he was very visual.

I'm not visual that way, but I'm visual imaginatively, and so is... That's how often the Bible speaks to us. It uses metaphors and pictures.

[9 : 23] And so here it speaks about the path of life that you're on. You know, blessed man who walks not, who stands nor sits. And it's speaking about a trajectory, whether you're walking or sitting or standing on one way.

Then he uses the picture of a tree, a fruitful tree planted by water. Now we know that image, we know that picture from our discipleship model that we seek to follow.

And then he uses a third picture of the chaff, which the wind drives away. That is the husks of the corn or the wheat, which when the wheat is thrown up in the air and the wind catches it, the chaff, the light chaff, the husk of the corn and the wheat is blown away by the wind.

And it's using... God is using there a picture of blessing and not blessing, the path that you're on in life. And it's either with God in our hearts or it's without God in our hearts.

And that is really the theme of what is really the whole of the Bible, isn't it? With God in our hearts, the one who walks and delights in the law of God, that is his code and his standard.

[10 : 39] We delight in that law of love, loving God and loving your neighbor. Hey, we all live by codes. We all live by standards, don't we? All of us do that.

But this is those who delight in God's law and code and standard, his worship, his ethics, his morality, his character traits. They are good.

We've come to know that through putting our faith and trust in Jesus. The whole direction of our life as believers is towards God, in Christ, knowing His companionship, walking with Him, standing with Him, sitting with Him, knowing that on this path the best is still to come.

That's really the path of blessing that's been spoken of here. The question is, who is it that we are walking with?

Who is it that we delight in? What are you looking to for true happiness? God says, you never find it without Him at the core.

[11 : 46] And He speaks about that in the direction of your path of life, the way you're walking is God in your heart. That is the way of blessing because it also contrasts that living without God in your heart, the chaff, the picture of something different altogether.

Now we can still be in church but not have God in our heart. We can be moral and upright and good by the standards of the world but not have God in our heart.

Is He in our thinking and our desires? Or if we were utterly, if you were utterly honest and I was utterly honest, are we on the run from God? Are you a fugitive from His justice?

You hate the talk of sin. Oh, not again. You can't stand the concept of His judgment. You wince reading a Psalm, particularly maybe Psalm 2 here.

You don't like His gaze, the pure, perfect, holy gaze. So you deflect and you avoid and you laugh it off and you mock even sometimes. I hope I don't think anyone here mocks but sometimes we know that, don't we?

[12 : 59] People who mock about the living God and who scoff as it's spoken of here, His truth, His back is turned away from God in the very root of your being.

If you're utterly and completely honest, God is nowhere. Maybe it's the difference of where you put the gap.

Is God now here in your life and heart or is God nowhere? Nowhere, really, that you're not in relationship with Him.

You're not asking Him. You're not talking with Him. You're not praying to Him. And that's the condition of every single person who doesn't take God at His word about Himself and about themselves.

And that way can seem, and it can be a real struggle for us because that way can seem like a really secure path. You know, the sinners are standing and sitting and it seems quite a secure way as well.

[14 : 06] It's popular. It's quite easy. We don't need to think too hard and wrestle with the problems of illness and darkness and difficulty in the same way. But in the light of God's justice, everyone will give account and will stand before Him.

And that day, it's interesting, Hebrew uses a lot of parallelism in the poetry. So there's things that parallel each other at different points. I'm going to mention it.

It talks about sitting in the way of sinners and standing in the way of sinners and sitting in the seat of scoffers. And then it talks later on about the wicked.

They won't stand in the day of judgment, nor will they sit in the congregation of the righteous. So it uses a kind of parallelism there that while they think that they're secure and they're standing and sitting in their life, it's when it comes to their relationship with God, they'll not be able to sit with Him.

They'll not be able to stand in His presence. And there is no true happiness there. It's the way of chaff. It will be blown away and lose connection because the chaff, you know what the chaff, it loses connection, doesn't it, with the fruitfulness of the corn or the wheat and the usefulness of that and it's blown away, no true happiness.

[15 : 28] So Sam 1 speaks about the path of life we're on and how that brings blessing. The second Sam is about where you find shelter.

It finishes with these words, blessed are those who take refuge in Him. And that's really just an image of finding your trust and security in someone more powerful than you.

It's a power Sam, this one, because it speaks all about the different power brokers of the day, you know, the nations, the kingdoms, the rulers, and it says, where is your trust?

What is it that is sovereign, kingly, powerful in your life in which you're looking to give you true happiness? What is it?

What is the sovereign reality of your life? Who holds it? Where is the power vested in your life that you're looking for happiness in? Is it in yourself? Do you hold the sovereignty of your own life thinking, yeah, I'm the one who can find happiness my way?

[16 : 39] How's that working out for any of us? Is it in money? Really? Even the Beatles recognized that that wasn't the case.

Money can't buy you love. Is it influence? Are we that influential? Does it make that much difference? Is it a cause? Which one? You know, take our pick.

Is it a philosophy? Who's? TikTok, Instagram, the academy, the street wisdom, politics, pleasure? Is it ever enough?

Does it satisfy us? Whatever it is, whatever power politics is in our life that we're looking to for true happiness, where is it that we are resting?

Where is it we are finding refuge? In whom are we trusting? Because this psalm speaks about, and this is a really, it is a terrible psalm for a twenty-first century Western person to read, because it speaks about the incomparable God.

[17 : 40] And it says He's all powerful, and He is all authority, and He laughs at the nations because of the miserable attempt they have to rest power from Him.

He's the sovereign judge, He's to be feared. And He speaks about the destructive power of His wrath that sin will not go unpunished. He compares Himself to the symbols of power back in His day, whom mock God as we saw in Psalm 1.

And it's what He's trying to do, and He's using humor in a sense, and He's using divine sarcasm if I can use that phrase again, and parallelism to compare Himself with these gods.

He's saying they, and Psalm 1, He says that they sit in the seat of scoffers or of mockers, and then He and Psalm 2, basically, is in verse 4.

Somebody says He who sits in heaven laughs. So He's in the position of sitting, and He is mocking. And it's provocative language.

[18 : 55] In a sense, He's trying to get across the idea of a tiny grain of sand walking up to Mount Everest and saying, come on then, you know, give us a fight.

You know, it's a ridiculous concept of the massive power of Mount Everest and a tiny grain of sand times a billion. And He's saying, who are you to mock this great God?

And it is intended to shock. It clearly is, as He speaks about who He is and the vanity of trying the world and His own people trying to find happiness away from Him.

Now I hope you recoil a little bit from that model of that picture of God. I think we do, because if we thought that was the end of the picture, that is a glorious and scary prospect and the reality of a God whose vengeance as a sword bearing God we avoid and we don't ever like to talk about.

To grasp that is unfathomable for us. And we, maybe as Christians, maybe as preachers, we just tend to avoid that holy Rebbe, because well, that can't possibly talk about that today.

[20 : 12] Why can we talk about that? Why can we speak about this incomparable great God? Why? Because this incomparable God is also the fugitive King.

This glorious God is also God the Son to whom Sam too is pointing forward. God the Son who takes on flesh.

Because this just God, this holy God is also the God of unparalleled love who takes on flesh. Now if we look at, there's a couple of verses I think I've put up there.

Can you put up the first verse? Yeah. Okay, so Hebrews 1 verse 5 is taken from Sam 2 verse 7, so it's a direct quote from the Sam and the Hebrew, the writer to the Hebrew saying, for which of the angels, speaking about Jesus, did God ever say, you are my Son, today I've begotten you, it's taken from verse 7 of Sam 2.

Or again, I will be a Father, He shall be my Son. And again, when He brings the firstborn into the world, let God's might angels worship Him. So He's taking this Sam, where He's speaking about His glory and power and wrath and authority, and He is applying it to His Son Jesus Christ.

[21 : 41] And then in Acts 4, oh sorry, Hebrews 5, Hebrews 5, 5, the next one, can we put the next one up? So also Christ did not exalt Himself to be in the high priest, but was appointed by Him who said to Him, you're my Son.

Today I have begotten you. That's the same verse. He's speaking about Jesus, you're a priest forever, according to the Order of Melchizedek. And so we recognize that this incomparable God is Jesus Christ who becomes the scapegoat and who takes on flesh and who Himself is mocked in the seat of judgment and is nailed to a cross.

And we see that same thing in the next verse that we have in Acts 4 where Peter is speaking about the release of Peter and John. They went to their friends and reported to his chief priests and elders, said to them, and when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, Sovereign Lord who made the earth and the sea and everything in it, who through whom the mouth of our Father, David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, why did the Gentiles rage and the people's plot in vain, and the next slide, the kings of the earth set themselves and rulers are gathered together against the Lord and against His anointed.

For truly in this city they were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus whom He anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate. You see the link? The link there between the rulers of Jesus day, Herod and Pontius Pilate, they set themselves up against God.

The Caesar ultimately would have been the one who people worshiped and yet they set themselves up against the Lord anointed. And so we have the sovereign king and Lord and glorious, wrathful, vengeful, perfect God nailed to a cross.

[23 : 36] When nobody, nobody sent him there but his own desire and love for us. Took all the dark forces that conspired against him, dies as a fugitive, dies as a scapegoat, mocked as unrevealed in order that we can celebrate the Lord's Supper today as believers, as those who have been saved by His grace and who can know true happiness because our sin has been dealt with and all the wrong desires that we sometimes channel into finding happiness, find our fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Share imaginable love for you and I want you to remember that because it says at the end of Psalm 1, you know, that those who are sinners will not stand in the congregation of the righteous.

Now that might sound an arrogant thing to say we're righteous, wouldn't it? And people who are not Christians sometimes think that's what we think about ourselves. No, we're better than other people.

The only way we can claim righteousness is when we are covered in His. That's the glory of the gospel. That's the glory of the message. He is our righteousness and we, we come to Him.

And that is my encouragement to you today. The only place to find true happiness because this Psalm speaks about power, the power to give us happiness, and it speaks about the path of happiness, these two Psalms.

[25 : 16] There's only one person that has the power to give you true happiness in your life today, in my life, in all its battles and struggles and questions and fears and doubts and tiredness.

The only place you can go today as a believer, I want to remind you of this as I remind myself is the foot of the cross. To find that shelter, that refuge, that safety, that belonging, that relationship, that eternal life, that's where you find it.

When you entrust your life, take refuge in the blessed one and you become blessed. And you walk in the path of Jesus and no blessing because of that.

And the transformation that a life in relationship with Him brings, it doesn't mean that life is easy, we know that. But we're asked to delight in His law of love, even in the darkest of days, and delight in loving one another to breathe the air of His company in the good times and in the challenges.

We all need His shelter, you know that? We all come today needing His shelter, needing His trust, needing to trust in Him, needing His love, needing that happiness, that state of heart that even in our tears He can bring us.

[26 : 48] Paul says in Romans 8, I think the quote is here on the screen. For I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

That is a song of life. That is a song of true happiness. And I'm asking the question of myself and I hope you're asking of yourself, what's the theme of the song of your life, the direction of your life?

When people ask, is it to Jesus Christ that you give the praise and the glory for the blessing of your life? And I just finished with a question about your prayer life and my prayer life.

What is it like? What is your prayer life like? Is it coming to a safe place, a place of love and warmth and forgiveness and urgency and need?

Is that what your prayer life is like? If you could visualize it, would it be like running to a rescue shelter for protection, for security, for forgiveness, for hope?

[28 : 05] That's really what our prayer life should be, running into a rescue shelter. Blessed are all those who take refuge in Him.

Or is your prayer life unmind more like talking on the phone to someone you don't really know? No real relationship, maybe complaining about the service that you're getting or maybe talking to a distant relative who you get in contact with once in a while but who has no impact on your day-to-day living.

I think that reflects, will often reflect as we look at our own prayer lives, where our trust lies and where we are looking for true happiness from.

As we find physical, spiritual, emotional, mental happiness, that state of mind when we are right with God through Jesus Christ.

I hope that that is a challenge and an encouragement and a blessing for us as we participate in the Lord's Supper.

[29 : 20] Let's pray. Father God, help us to see You and know You better. Help us to be blessed not because of anything we are in ourselves.

Help us to even take the blessings that You showered on us just without us even asking. And may we look to the giver and find the source of that blessing, life, happiness, laughter, joy, strength, courage, boldness, all these things, even if we are not Christians here today, find these things that He still gives us, to encourage us to seek after the greatest of all gifts, salvation in Jesus and to come out from that place of judgment and vengeance and just wrath, which no one will be able to stand against on that great day.

Remind us of the solemnity of that in our arrogance sometimes, in our self-reliance, in the poverty of our strength.

May we find Your love and grace more than sufficient for us as You took all the wrath and took all, internalized all the judgment on Yourself on the cross because You loved us so much and provided the way.

Amen.