This week we are taking a break from the lectionary, and looking at Psalm 1, which I believe is absolutely foundational in showing us how to live as God intends.

**Home Service Sheet 7th May 2023**

**Call To Worship                 2 Timothy 3:16-17**

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,that the man of Godmay be complete, equipped for every good work.

**Opening Prayer**

Almighty God, we come to You today, knowing that You have revealed Yourself to us through Your Word. As we read that Word today remind us of how great and marvellous You are, and of all that You have done for us in and through Your Son, Jesus Christ. May our hearts and minds be filled with Your praise and may our lips proclaim Your glory. Help us to worship You through the work of Your Spirit within us, and in the truth that You show us in the Scriptures. Help us today to understand and obey Your Word that our whole lives may be lived to Your praise and glory. This we ask in the Name of Your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, amen.

**Hymn                                     Lord of all hopefulness**by ***Jan Struther***

<https://youtu.be/LCBjxVP6GWE>

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy, whose trust, ever childlike, no cares could destroy:
Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray, Your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith, whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe:
Be there at our labours, and give us, we pray, Your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.

Lord of all kindliness, Lord of all grace, Your hands swift to welcome, Your arms to embrace:
Be there at our homing, and give us, we pray, Your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm, whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm:
Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray, Your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

**The Lord’s Prayer**

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 trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.

**Bible Reading                     Psalm 1:1-6**

Blessed is the man
    who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
    nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
but his delight is in the law of the Lord,
    and on his law he meditates day and night.

He is like a tree
    planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
    and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.
The wicked are not so,
    but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

Therefore the wicked will 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 wicked will perish.

**Reflection**

We tend to think of the collection of Psalms we find in the Bible being the hymn book of God’s people, Israel, and to some extent this is true. Throughout the book of Psalms we find quite a variety of verses, from hymns of praise to songs of lament, and proclamations of the truth about God and the things that He has done for His people. There are even prophetic statements about what God will do in the future through His Messiah, Jesus. Like any good collection of hymns, though, the book of Psalms also contains verses that teach us how we should live. The theology found in what we sing matters as we will often subconsciously pick up beliefs from them.

The Psalms, though, are much more than simply a collection of good, theologically sound, hymns and poems. They are a part of God’s Word, the Bible, and as such are literally breathed out by God and will equip us to be the people God intends us to be (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Psalm 1 contrasts godly people with wicked people, showing us exactly how we should live so that we will be counted with the ‘righteous’. At this point it’s important to remind ourselves that no human being can be completely righteous, or right with God. Righteousness is rather attributed by God to those who have faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, the only truly righteous one, who was without sin.

This points us towards the fact that Psalm 1 takes the extremes of wickedness and righteousness. None of us is completely wicked or completely righteous – we are somewhere between the two ends of the spectrum. We are called to be more godly than wicked. The first positive thing said about the righteous is that they ‘delight in the law of the Lord’ and meditate on it ‘day and night’ (v.2). What is the law of the Lord? In its original context I think we can confidently say that this is the first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), but from our place in salvation history I think we can widen this definition to all the Scriptures. The way of godliness comes from reading, thinking about, understanding and applying the Word of God in our lives, with the help of God’s Holy Spirit.

As we think about the Psalmist’s delight in God’s Word, this may cause us to consider how often we read the Bible. Is reading the Scriptures something we enjoy, or is it a hard slog? Most of us, if we are honest with ourselves, don’t find reading the Bible regularly all that easy, but we should not use that as an excuse. Good spiritual habits take time and discipline to establish. Christian missionary, Paul Washer, recently shared about his own struggles reading the Bible in a YouTube video. His practice is to make  himself read three chapters of the Bible at the start of each day, re-reading it until it goes in and he understands the basic message. This daily discipline of reading the Scriptures, and praying for understanding, will benefit us all so much! If we all committed to doing this we would all grow in faith and love for God and one another.

The Psalmist also shows us that spending our time with wicked people is not a good idea. Again, we should not take this to extremes as we also have a command to proclaim the Gospel to those who do not yet have faith in Christ. Rather this shows us that we are not to be counted with those who God describes as wicked, as when God comes to judge all people He will condemn the wicked to hell. Those who do not pay attention to God and His Word are described as being like chaff that is blown here, there and everywhere by the wind (see Ephesians 4:11-14).

If, however, we meditate on God’s Word and find our delight in God then we will be sustained and fed like a healthy tree. Verse 3 describes such people as those who will bear “fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.” What is there not to like about this promise? We will mature and grow in faith and we will be blessed by God. Just as a quick aside, this reference to prospering is not about health or wealth, but rather about our relationship with God and our eternal security in Christ. We reach our full potential for the life to come through Christ Jesus, and we come to know Him through the Scriptures in which He is proclaimed. Through that self-same Word He will guide us how to live, if we will listen and obey! Amen!

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we ask that You will make us a blessed people who do not walk in wicked ways. Instead, may we be those who find such delight in Your Word that it is always on our hearts, minds, and lips. Make us like well-watered trees, nurtured to bear fruit and blessed in all You call us to be and do. Keep us from being like those who oppose You and Your ways. Their plans have the appearance of wisdom, but will ultimately come to nothing when You come in judgment.

We trust You, O Lord, and know that Your judgment is always righteous. Thank You for showing us Your path - the path that leads to life - in Your Word and through your Son Jesus Christ, amen.

**Benediction**

Gracious God, may we rest in Your love each and every day, in the wondrous assurance that You know the path we take, and are bringing to completion the good work that You have started in us. Send us out with courage and love to proclaim the wonderful truths contained in Your Word. In Jesus' name we ask this, amen.