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God's Desire for You and Me

Psalm 1

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.

Are you ready for his return? Are you prepared? Are you hungering and thirsting for righteousness?

Jesus gave many examples, encouraging us to be spiritually alert, spiritually alive, spiritually sharp. Be discerning in the world as we live out our lives here. The kingdom of God is at hand. Jesus said right now it's in the here and now. Jesus came as the Son of Man, the Son of God, ushering in the kingdom. And his main message was, turn away from the things of this world and turn to the things of God, the things of eternity. Repent was the word he used, for the kingdom of God is at hand. It's near, and we're mindful that he will come at some point and judge us based on how we lived here.

In the meantime, we're waiting here on the earth, you and I, traveling as sojourners or strangers here in a fallen world made for a better place. This is why we have groaning and angst in our spirits and souls at times. The suffering and pain of disease and sickness and death is not something natural to us, but we journey here this side of eternity, and God has given us His Word to instruct us and guide us in this journey.

And I want to just give you a couple reminders here this morning about, while we're here, what God has revealed to us in His Word.

First of all, very clearly in His Word, he tells us that you and I are not the product of random chance.

There wasn't some random creation come together and produce you and me. We are the product Of intelligent design. All of creation is. There is a source and intelligence behind everything. Our lives have

a purpose. We have a designer. The Bible reveals to us that it's in great love that all of this came into existence, and he designed you and I with meaning and purpose.

Luke writes in the book of acts, "From one man he, God, made every nation of mankind to live on the face of the earth. He determined the exact time and the boundaries of their dwelling place."

He placed us here in this time, in this place, not by random chance, but by God's divine sovereign will. You and I are here today from the love of God. We have life. We have opportunity. We get to experience all that we experience.

The psalmist said it this way: you and I are fearfully and wonderfully made. God himself knit us together in our mother's wombs. Not a mistake, but designed by a loving creator, breathed into us then the breath of life. It's love. It's power. It's God.

Ephesians two, verse ten, says that you and I are God's workmanship, his workmanship, and were created to be brought into the life of Christ so that we could do things that he Be prepared in advance for us to do. Purpose. Meaning. God's sovereign intelligence behind everything. He made all the nations of men, women.

He determined the exact time and place where we would live right here, right now. Us. And he did this so that we might seek him. Giving us freedom, we might seek him, perhaps feel our way towards him, and ultimately find him, though we can't see him.

Luke writes, "He is not actually far from each one of us. Actually, in him we live and move and have our being." Everything comes from him and to him and through him. And we're here to get to know him, to know him.

When Paul wrote to the believers in Philippi, he said this: don't be anxious, don't be nervous. Pray to God. Let your gentleness, your gentleness be known to everyone. And then he emphasized this point: for the Lord is near. He's near. He is not far from us.

You and I are not the product of random chance. God has a purpose for our lives. We're not a mistake. He has a plan, and that purpose is found, we see this throughout all of the scripture, in a relationship with God as we get to know him better. And God has revealed himself to us in the person of Jesus. And so the relationship ultimately is a faith driven relationship with the Christ who has been resurrected and his living word.

Now, Psalm one gives us a picture of what happens to a person if they do what God put us here to do. If they seek God and they find him, and they mature in him, and they grow in him, and they have this vibrant relationship with the living Christ through His Spirit and through the revelation of His Word.

Psalm one paints a picture for us of what can happen inside of a person. Blessed is the one. Deeply satisfied and fulfilled is the description that's given here. That person who responds to this purpose of God will be blessed, fulfilled, satisfied. The person whose delight is in the law of the Lord, who meditates on the revelation of God, and this giving us instruction about God and what he's like and his nature. This person will be blessed.

And then this image comes, inspired by the Spirit of God, to inspire you and I to do what he's created us to do, to seek him with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength.

That person, the Spirit of God says, will be like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, whose leaf does not wither. Whatever they do will prosper.

There are so many self-help books in the world, friends, but you only need one, really. Only need one. It tells us why we're here, what we're called to do, and what might happen inside of us if we respond to God's design, his intelligent design. We will be blessed, says we'll become like a tree. He uses something that we see in everyday life that's planted by streams of water.

What does this mean? This is a tree that's firmly rooted and constantly nourished or fueled by an outside source.

If we seek the face of God, we'll start to grow rooted and strengthened in him, in our faith and our confidence in God, and all of a sudden will start to sense a constant flow of spiritual fuel coming into our lives. The Spirit of God will well up in us and strengthen us and encourage us and affirm us, and the fuel of the Holy Spirit will consistently flow inside of us.

Jesus said it this way in John chapter seven: if you believe in me and deepen a relationship with me, here's what will happen. Rivers of living water. This is spiritual symbolism of the Holy Spirit flowing in. A person will flow through that person on a consistent basis.

A person who sells out in their life to know God, whatever the cost, will be like a tree planted by streams of water with constant nourishment from God Himself in the work of His Spirit. And that tree will yield its fruit in season, which means spiritual fruit will just start to appear in that person's life.

A tree doesn't strive to produce fruit. When it's well nourished, it produces the fruit it was designed to produce. It's just a byproduct, a product of being alive. When you and I are made alive in God and were rooted in him, strengthened by his Spirit, all of a sudden patience, kindness, mercy, goodness, faithfulness, long suffering just starts to be a part of our lives.

And not just internal fruits, but things start to multiply outside in our lives. Multiplication happens. This is the great hope described for us that God has for each person that he's put here on the earth, that they would come to know him. And in knowing him, they'll be like a tree that's constantly nourished and starts to bear fruit.

Look at the world that God has created. Fruit bearing everywhere. And that's the design of us as human beings. Internal spiritual fruit and external spiritual fruit, whose leaf does not wither. Even in dry seasons, this person will have an enduring vitality, a supernatural strength that's outside of the natural. When the whole natural world is against them, something inside of them will keep flourishing, keep rising again, keep being renewed.

Paul said it this way: though outwardly things are wasting away and we are wasting away, inwardly the person who is drawing near to God will be renewed day by day by day, with an enduring offering of life, with a life giving spirit.

This is the great hope for you and I. Imagine if the world was filled with people like this who were strong in God, filled with spiritual fruit, multiplying in good ways and constantly filled with hope and joy and peace and love, even in the hardest of times. This is the kind of world we were made to live in. A world where people are fully alive spiritually, not restrained by their flesh and burdened by straying from God and pinned down by enslavements to addictions and evil and all of these kind of things, encapsulated with hatred and a love of power and a lust for the things of this world, but free from all of that to be a life giving spirit.

Psalm one. This is what a person can be like, what God hopes happens inside of you and I because he put us here for this purpose. The Holy Spirit just summarizes it this way. Whatever they do just keeps expanding. Whatever they do prospers, just grows. They consistently find their life expanding forward with more to offer.

It's such a great hope, friends, to be filled to a full measure with the goodness of God just flowing out of his people of patience and kindness and love and mercy and truth.

And this is, of course, where we find our picture for our discipleship series. We have this picture that you see there, and it's in line with our mission as a church, but it is the great hope that God has for you and I. An image of it, and how we want you to understand what we would love as a spiritual leadership here at Nazareth for you to experience, along with God's heart for you to experience this: that we would help people come to know Christ, come alive spiritually in him, be born again, and have a new nature put within them. And then they would grow in Christ through adolescence to spiritual maturity, where they themselves would be like Psalms one, filled with the goodness of God.

I don't know about you, but when I reflect on this picture, I find myself understanding that I have room to grow, that there's still some bad fruit inside of me That God needs to deal with. There's still some roots that need to go deeper so that I can grow stronger and broader and bear more fruit.

And that's why we're adjusting our schedule around here, because it's hard to be nourished like that in a church family if we just show up here for one hour a week on Sundays and then don't grow in fellowship together and grow in seeking the Lord together, because this is not designed to be done by a person in solitude.

God has encouraged us, yes, to receive Christ and begin this journey. But then he said, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up. Colossians chapter two. Strengthened in the faith as you were taught, overflowing with Thankfulness.

"See to it," he said, "that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depend on human tradition, the elemental forces of evil in this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of deity lives. In Christ, you've been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and every authority."

We are to do this as individuals. But listen to the writer of Hebrews in Hebrews chapter 12.

He says, since many have gone before us and experienced the power of Christ in their lives and live faithful to the end and borne much fruit in this world, since we're surrounded by many who've done this

in the past, let us, not as individuals, but let us as a community, throw off everything that hinders, the sin that so easily entangles. And let us, notice the communal statement here, run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

This is why in our discipleship diagram, you will see that there are three trees in different stages. But then in the background we bring in other trees as a part of the community of faith that we're to gather together, to fuel each other, to encourage each other, to build each other up, not tear each other down, not pick each other apart, not be judgmental or critical of each other, but to look for the good in each other and fuel that and build each other up. Strengthen each other in the faith. Fuel each other in God. Seek him together until what we've been praying about this morning, his glory starts to break forth more and more in our midst. And we stand there in wonder and awe, like the early Christians, saying, God is good. God is great. What is he doing in our midst? We're experiencing him. We're sharing in his love.

Others are coming to draw strength from his love. This is all the natural byproduct of people who abide with the living Christ and seek the living Christ and want to walk with him. More people come alive in him. More people grow in him, more people mature in him.

And friends, it's happening all around the world. And I don't know about you, but I want us to be more and more a part of it. I want to be more a part of it. This world has very little to offer to satisfy our souls. But God has the fullness of himself to give us.

In our gospel reading today, Peter was being instructed by Jesus for how to do this in his life. He was supposed to become a spiritual leader who would help feed other people spiritually. And because he was called into this, Peter was going to suffer. Jesus said, in the resistance of this world and the evil of this world, you're going to experience a painful kind of death.

Well, Peter didn't necessarily like that. So he turned and he saw the disciple John following them, and he turned to the Lord and said, "Lord, what about this man? What about him?"

And Jesus said to him, "Well, if it's my will that he remains alive until I return, what is that to you?" And then he said this to Peter, and it echoes down through history to each one of us. He said to Peter, "Don't worry about others callings. Don't worry about it. You follow me."

We're called to encourage each other in our faith journeys, friends, because we need each other. But in the end, we will all stand individually before God. And it's part of the faith communities job to help all of us be prepared for that day.

There's a divine purpose in it all. There's a sovereign intelligence behind it all. And at some point, this era of life will wrap up and we will step into the next era. But for now, here we are. And we're to encourage each other and build each other up in the faith.

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for the opportunity to gather here and look into your word. It's very clear that you want us to flourish in life, especially in our spiritual lives, to be overflowing with your goodness and

your kindness. And so we ask that you would work in us by your Spirit, to draw us out of ourselves and out of the natural and into the supernatural.

And father, for those that are sitting here this morning who maybe are sensing that there is more, but they've never tasted of it, I pray that you continue to minister to them. Create a hunger and thirst for you inside of their soul until at that point, when you reveal to them the gift of your son, the forgiveness of sins, and the opportunity of new life through him.

These things we pray in Jesus name. Amen.