

SERMON TITLE- "Wisdom For Living"

TEXT- Psalm 1

PREACHED AT- Neighbourhood Church

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Last week we began our series in the Psalms. I introduced it with a picture of the "Food Groups." The Scriptures can be divided into 4 groups- each with a purpose for our spiritual health.

The Gospels

The Epistles

The OT

The Psalms

I had mentioned that I saw the Psalms characterized by-

"A spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down . . ." Mary Poppins

Not all of the nutrients that our bodies need, taste good but when they are prepared nicely they often become delicious. I suspect that for most of us, the Psalms are the most "delicious" part of the Bible.

But like truly healthy food- delicious also goes along with nutritious when food is prepared by a skilled cook.

Now there is one more thing that we want to add as we begin our series. The Psalms themselves have all kinds of categories- some are savory, some are sweet, some are spicy, some are even bitter.

Today we are going to look at a category of Psalms that I would call, "savory." They are the Wisdom Psalms and are represented by Psalm 1, which we read earlier.

**Blessed is the man
who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners
or sit in the seat of mockers. Psalm 1:1**

Psalm 1 begins by identifying-

#1. The Problem- Wickedness Exists

The "problem" is that wickedness, sin and mockery are alive and well on earth- and in the lives of those around us- and frankly in our own lives.

At one level, when it gets down to the very personal level of "me" and especially the "real core" of who we are- that admission is

the least "fun." It is fine to admit that wickedness exists in the world at large but all of us are quite sure that down in the very essence of who I am there is fundamental goodness.

Psalm 1 doesn't challenge that up front- but it does remind us of something that we don't have a hard time accepting- there are wicked people, and sinners and mockers, out there.

Getting a little closer to home, Psalm 1 reminds us that we are regularly offered "the counsel of the wicked", and stand around with "sinners", and do enjoy the sarcasm of "mockers".

Of course we don't enjoy any of the above when it is directed at us- but a cutting joke at the expense of someone we don't care for in the first place is something that makes all of us feel pretty good.

This is something that we do actually know is wrong and therefore we easily and quickly agree that those who aren't **complicit** with wickedness are blessed.

The word "complicit" is actually a very important idea and I thought that actually thinking about it would be a good idea.

What does "complicit" mean? **"com-plic-it adj- being involved with another in doing something illegal or wrong"**

The thing to note about "complicit" is that it does not mean actually doing something wrong oneself- it means that we often can keep the actual "wrong" a little at arm's length.

If there has ever been a "wrong doing" the matter of who actually did the "wrong" becomes very important.

"Who threw the rock that broke the window?"

"Who hit the person in the fight?"

All the other people who threw rocks but didn't actually hit the window or the people who were goading the fight on- are in far less trouble than the person who did the "wicked" act.

But all those who were there, and did not try to stop the "wickedness" are "complicit."

And this is what the Psalmist is reminding us of here. You don't have to admit to being a wicked person to know that you are less than ideal and need improvement.

We also know that without people who are willing to stand up and refuse to be complicit- wickedness will win the battle.

Those who are willing to say- "I don't think that is right" are actually the true heroes of a healthy community and society.

There is a very famous quote that says- "**All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.**" **Edmund Burke, Irish philosopher, & politician (1729 - 1797)**

That is a profoundly true statement and one that I believe we can all agree with.

But there is a challenge attached to it. Really it is not good enough that we call these people "Blessed"- we are supposed to be those people.

The problem is that we are so easily complicit.

So what is the cure for the disease of "complicity"? How do we become the "blessed"?

The Psalmist tells us-

**But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night. Psalm 1:2**

#2. The Cure- The Right Diet

One of the most insightful comments on what a good diet I ever heard was- "Follow a healthy, fit person around. Eat what they eat and do what they do."

That is the principle behind any training camp- especially a fitness training program, like the army. And I suspect that it works pretty well.

This is the principle that the Psalmist employs. "Look around at those who don't allow themselves to be complicit in wickedness and you will find that they have a particular moral diet- the law of the Lord."

And what will you find when you observe those who will not be complicit, says the Psalmist, is that they are people who fill their diets with "the law of the Lord."

This is something think about. Those whose moral fiber is robust will have their characters filled up and strengthened by ingesting this into their beings.

This is an important "to do" for those who want to be among the non-complicit. We are to be people who do not merely snack when we are hungry and nibble at whatever tickles our appetites- we are people who are intentional in what we ingest.

And what happens to those who do this?

Here the Psalmist sets out a set of contrasts-
**He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither.**

Whatever he does prospers. Psalm 1:3

This is contrasted by-

Not so the wicked!

They are like chaff

that the wind blows away. Psalm 1:4

#3. The Result

It follows very sensibly. Those who have healthy diets will be healthy and those who don't have healthy diets will suffer.

Now there is something that we need to add here. Sometime people think that a good diet should ensure that they never get sick. I hear this regularly. This person was the healthiest person someone knows and they still get cancer.

The conclusion that they usually follow with it- "All that healthy living was a waste of time. They might as well have eaten pure fat and slept all day."

While the conclusion seems to follow from what was observed- it doesn't really. A good diet doesn't guarantee perfect health but a bad diet is guaranteed to weaken your body.

The same principle is recognized by the Psalmist in another place. It is the same frustration that we have when we do everything right and still get sick.

Psalm 12 A psalm of David.

**1 Help, LORD, for the godly are no more;
the faithful have vanished from among men.**

**2 Everyone lies to his neighbor;
their flattering lips speak with deception.**

**3 May the LORD cut off all flattering lips
and every boastful tongue**

**4 that says, "We will triumph with our tongues;
we own our lips—who is our master?"**

**5 "Because of the oppression of the weak
and the groaning of the needy,**

**I will now arise," says the LORD.
"I will protect them from those who malign them."
6 And the words of the LORD are flawless,
like silver refined in a furnace of clay,
purified seven times.
7 O LORD, you will keep us safe
and protect us from such people forever.
8 The wicked freely strut about
when what is vile is honored among men.**

This seems to be saying the opposite of Psalm 1. When it seems like that the actual answer is the opposite of what we think it is actually that- we didn't understand.

Understood in the larger context, Psalm 1 does not guarantee health at every time but make no mistake- a healthy diet is part of the critical path towards being one of those people who do stand up to wickedness.

That is just what we are to do- in fact even during those times when it looks like things aren't working out right at all.

In fact as we study the rest of the Scriptures we find that those who do right seem to have more trouble than others.

So what is going on here? I think that the answer is this-
-there are things that lead to health
-as long as we are on earth the prudent will live by them
But- as long as we are on earth the "odds" may run for us or against us.
-However- before God the wicked will pay.

And that is why Psalm 1 reminds us of a theme that also rolls through the Scriptures-

**Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish. Psalm 1:5-6**

As God's people we are always reminded of the End. As long as we are living here on earth we are destined to see partially. That is the nature of life on earth.

But the viewpoint we have here is never the last word. We take God's Word into our beings because it is God's Word. We do not willingly comply with wickedness because it is wrong.

Psalm 1 does however remind us that just as a good diet is a very healthy thing to practice- having God's Law deeply imbedded in our souls will lead to health. That is something that you can guarantee! In this life there are always exceptions but in the end there will be none.