

The Portrait of a Godly Man

Psalm 112

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The message for this morning that I'd like to share with you comes from Psalm 112. So, if you have your scriptures with you, please turn with me to Psalm 112. And hear now this reading from the word of God. I forget, is it tradition for the church to stand for the reading of the word? You know what? Stay seated. That's fine. Psalm 112 starting at verse 1.

Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments! His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever. Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.

It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice. For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever. He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord. His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries. He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn is exalted in honor. The wicked man sees it and is angry; he gnashes his teeth and melts away; the desire of the wicked will perish! [ESV]

The reading of God's word. Let's turn our hearts to the Lord, dear friends, and ask for the Lord's blessing and prayer as we meditate on this word at this time. Let's pray.

Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we come before you this morning. We thank you, dear Lord, for the word of God that reveals to us more than just the picture of a godly man, so much more than that. And as we reflect on this word, we pray that you will be with us, that we may hear once again of how great you are as our God and the great things that you have done for us as our Savior and what you want for us to do as your children. So, be with us at this time, dear Lord. Hear our prayers, for we pray all these things in Jesus's name. Amen.

Folks, I love Psalm 112. It's a Psalm that I've meditated on quite a lot. I've actually written a few little articles regarding Psalm 112. Psalm 112 is fantastic. And if you do a quick read of Psalm 112, you start to see certain wisdom themes that are starting to kind of pop up here and there, things like the fear of the Lord, the call to obedience. These are things that are associated with wisdom. And in fact, one commentator has said that what Proverbs 31 is for women, Psalm 112 is for men. And so, what you have here, then, really is the portrait of a wise and godly man.

And you have to forgive me for this. The language here in Psalm 112 is essentially very masculine. But I don't think that should in any way exclude the rest of you. Think of this not only as the portrait of a godly man. Think of this, really, as the portrait of the godly believer, the godly disciple. So, although it has the image and the tonality here of a man, it really is something that applies to all of God's people.

The main theme, then, here of Psalm 112 is this. It describes the blessed life and how this is found in faithful reverence of the Lord, someone who delights in His commands and uses this joy to serve others. Really, this is not a terribly creative theme that you find here in Psalm 112. It's something that you find in other places in scripture. The blessed man is someone who loves God and someone who also loves his neighbors by doing ministry. That really is all that Psalm 112 is talking about. The application that I hope you'll gain from this Psalm is that I pray, and I hope that you all will gain a blessed life. That's it, folks.

As we reflect on this Psalm, there are four points for us to reflect on, and four points that I hope you will come to understand. One is to have a heart for God, that a godly man, a blessed man is one who has a heart for God. And as such, this man, number two, has a blessed life. A life for himself is one that is blessed. Number three, that this blessing isn't something that he hoards to himself, but that he becomes a blessing to others, particularly his children. And then finally, number four, he is a blessing to his community. Those are the four points I'd like to share with you this morning, a heart for God, one who has a blessed life, one who is a blessing to his children, and then one who is a blessing to his community.

The first thing here, a heart for God, you see that right away in verse 1 in Psalm 112. "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments." Now, the word there for "blessed" in Hebrew perhaps is not best translated as "blessed." It's actually the same Hebrew word that begins the biblical psalter back in Psalm 1. The word here for "blessed," perhaps, is better translated as happy. Happy is the man that fits this description here.

And the first thing that it says here is happy is the man who fears the Lord. Now, that is a little bit of an odd combination. I'm not sure I would've thought of that as the first description of a happy man, someone who fears the Lord. See, we have a certain connotation when we think of fear. We think of fear as something that is menacing, terrifying, something that should be avoided at all costs, that those things which cause us fear should be avoided at all cost. And that's not what we're talking about here at all, especially when it comes to God. Remember, God is God, but God is our Father. And for that reason, He is very approachable. He is someone who has adopted us to become His children. But even though our God is our Father, someone that we can approach very freely and very openly, we mustn't forget that our God Father is also creator. That is, He is the creator king. And as such, we are His children. That is true. But we are also His creation.

You see, folks, we should never forget that there is a creator/creature distinction. And God is both creator, transcendent and holy other, but He is also Father, very imminent and very close and near to us. So, when it talks about us being overwhelmed with the fear of God, it's not talking about God as some menacing figure that we are called to avoid. It is calling us to be sort of awe inspired by the power and the grace and the mercy of God. That is what it's talking about here in terms of a fear of God, a fear of God that doesn't cause us to avoid him. A fear of God that wants us to be even closer to Him, you see. That's what it's talking about here by "fear."

In fact, any teaching that suggests that God is to be avoided, any suggestion or theology that tells us that God should be someone that we should turn away from is already built on a very faulty understanding of fear, and perhaps even more problematic, a faulty doctrine of God. So, a happy man is one who fears the Lord, you see.

Also, one who delights in His commandments, it says there. "Blessed is the man," in verse 1, "who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments!" Now, this doesn't mean that God only loves those who are obedient. We know, in fact, that the love of God is for us even in spite of our disobedience, in spite of our sinfulness. The point that the Psalm here is trying to make is that for those who truly want to seek joy, you will never find it in a sin-filled life. And I think that makes sense.

I mean, a life of degradation, a life of immorality, a life of heathenism, that doesn't bring joy. You know this, folks. A person who tries to live it up secularly, a person who tries to live in defiance and disobedience of God and thinks that they're going to find joy in this way, they're in for a very rude awakening. A life not focused upon God, a life that is not focused on others, a life that is focused intrinsically upon ourselves in a selfish way, a life that is focused on selfish gain and selfish pleasures, built on deception and greed and infidelity, this is the life that will never bring joy. A truly joyous life is one that is focused on God, a life that is focused on others. It is a life that looks like an obedient life to the commandments of God. This is a life that truly brings joy.

So, a man is happy who fears the Lord, who delights in obedience to the laws of God. What is the result of this? The second point here, he has a blessed life. If you look at verses 6-8, those middle

sections there of Psalm 112 begin to describe this blessed life of this happy man. In verse 6, it says, surely, he will never be shaken. Now, isn't that a fantastic image? It's a man who has such foundations in his life that he is not going to be rattled. He is going to be secure. He is going to be stable. Regardless of what might be happening, there is going to be security for this man. That is what is described there.

This is a man with a legacy of godliness, and this is known throughout all of his generation and even beyond. Look at the second part of verse 6, a righteous man "will be remembered forever." His godliness is going to be known, and it's going to be like a reputation that he carries around everywhere that he goes. Verse 7a, he will have no fear of bad news.

And again folks, you know this as well as I do that our lives oftentimes, even almost on a daily basis, are filled with hard news, news about things happening in our own lives, in our family members' lives, our friends within our community. It almost happens on a regular daily basis. It never ceases to amaze me how as soon as we seem to kind of hurdle one obstacle, there's another one waiting for you right after that. I can't even tell you how many times I've had a financial blessing, a bump of a little extra money that comes my way only to realize that I've got a plumbing problem, a car issue, or the kids have some dental problems. It's gone. It's almost to the point where I almost don't want the money because I just know what's going to happen. Just leave me alone, you know? I know what's going on. I'm happy with things the way they are. But news like this happens on a regular basis.

But it says a man like this still has no fear. Isn't that fantastic? It says that he has no fear in general. But it's not talking about fear of God. Of course, a godly man is one who fears the Lord. This is talking about fear of man, fear of the world in which we live. But rather, verse 7b, his heart is steadfast, he trusts in the Lord. He is one who has faith in the Lord. You see, he is not looking horizontally to the things that are around him. He is looking vertically. He is looking to God. And that is the reason why he is secure. He is a man who has victory over his enemies in verse 8.

In fact, this idea of military triumph leads me to suggest that what we are talking about here is not just the godly man, but in fact what we possibly are talking about here is a godly king. In fact, in verse 9, it talks about his horn being exalted in honor. And this horn imagery is very, oftentimes, associated with royalty, with kings. Thus, here, you have the picture of a godly man, a godly man who has a proper doctrine of God, and as he has a proper understanding of God, he is living a blessed life.

But not only is this man blessed himself, he is a blessing to others. In particular, as seen in this third point, he is a blessing to his children. And you see that in verses 2-4. It says in verse 2, "descendants," that is, his children and his children's children, presumably, "will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed." So, it is great. It sees him as a blessing not just to his children, but also to his children's children, and to his children's children's children, and on and on and on.

The word here for "mighty," "descendants will be mighty," is actually not an adjective in the original Hebrew text. It's actually a noun. What it says here, really, then is that descendants will be mighty men in the land. That is, they will be heroes in the land, that they will be warriors in the land. The godly man teaches his children how to be victorious in the midst of ungodliness. That's the image that you are getting here in Psalm 112.

Now, in our day in the New Testament era, in our day of the church, we do not conquer unbelief with the sword. We definitely, though, conquer unbelief with the gospel. And that is what we as godly men are called to do for our children is to train them to also be victorious with the gospel. We are to train our children, for that reason, to take up the full armor of God as the apostle Paul teaches us in Ephesians 6. We are to train them to destroy speculations of ungodly thought, every lofty thought that raises itself against the knowledge of God, and to take every thought captive and to be submitted to the authority of God. This is all 2 Corinthians 10:1-6.

In fact, one of the commentaries in the Old Testament is that one of the failures of the Israelite kings was their inability to transfer their faith, their love for God, to the generations that came after them. I think it's important for us to remember that fatherhood or parenthood in general is really another form of Christian discipleship. We disciple our children. You see, it's not a question of if we disciple or not as parents. The question is, what are we discipling them in? And just in case, for those who are single without children or couples without children, don't think for one moment that you are off the hook. We are a covenant community. We live and die with each other. So, although you may not have children of your own, my children or your pastor's children or your friend's children are also, to a certain degree, are indirectly your responsibility as well to set up a model of godliness for them to follow, to remind our children that sports, education, success, money, you know, these things are okay and important. But these are not the most important things of life.

I mean, I cannot begin to tell you how generic I realize that sounds. But folks, our generation is so unimaginative. We just don't get it, and we just lack creativity. We really think in the secular world that money and fame and glory really are going to be the things that bring us joy. And it just boggles the mind of how unoriginal that thought is, and how often not just the Bible but other people teach us that our interest for the wellbeing of our children must be beyond academics, athletics, professional success, and monetary gain. We are to see and help them to see that godliness is the highest of all virtues, that love for God and faith in Jesus Christ, love for others, these are the things that are much more precious and much more valuable than the things you could say that this world has to offer. That is the legacy that is set before us of generations past. That is the legacy of this church.

I rejoice with you, folks. In a few weeks, 40 years of ministry and life of Columbia Presbyterian Church. Think of the lessons and the traditions of this church, of values, of centralities to the gospel of Jesus Christ. These are the things that we hold to so dearly now that was taught to us. This is what we are called to pass on to our children. The best thing that we can do for our children, you see, for that reason is to grow ourselves as believers so that they can see that love for God is not something that is generic. It is the highest, the most important, the greatest of all virtues.

Look at what it says here in verse 3, "Wealth and riches are in his house." A godly man is wise in how he manages his resources. Again, we are probably talking about Israelite kings here because the kings are the ones who are truly wealthy in the ancient world. And it's not a question here of whether or not we are going to have riches. The question is, what are we going to do with it? This is what we pass on to our children, either to be greedy or to be gracious, either to be wise or to be foolish with the resources that the Lord has given to us.

Look at verse 4, "Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and upright." The picture that you have here of the light dawning in the darkness is really the picture of a godly man that his godliness is like the dawning of the sun as it starts to now usher away the darkness of the night. And that is what you have here is the picture of a godly man whose godliness is like a radiant light of hope, a light of glory. And he is now shooing away the darkness to instill hope and security to his children and to others around him.

Not only, then, is this godly man a blessed man himself, not only is he a blessing to his family, but finally, he is also a blessing to others upon his community. In verses 5 and following, you start to see that he is actually, again, a wealthy man who is gracious with the resources that the Lord has given to him. Look at verse 5, "It is well with the man who deals generously and lends." This is a man who has wealth and he is using that wealth to help out others within his community by lending money perhaps to be paid back at a certain point when they are able. But verse 9 is somewhat similar but slightly different. It says that he "has distributed freely; he has given to the poor." This is a man who disperses his wealth and gives to the poor. The image, really, that you have here is the image of man who is sort of walking down the street with cash in his hand, and he is just sort of throwing money out and he is giving it to the impoverished within his community. That is what you see here within this man. And the wise man is one who knows when he needs to lend and when he needs to just give freely to those who are in need.

This is the same picture, then, that we have with the church in the New Testament, remember. Acts 2:45, you have people in the church who are selling their possessions and goods, and they gave to anyone as they had need. Acts 4:35, that they put resources at the apostles' feet and these resources were distributed to anyone as they had need.

The picture that you have of the life of the church in the book of Acts is actually very similar to the picture of ancient Israel that you have in the Old Testament. The picture of the church in ancient Israel is to be a reflection of the picture of the eternal kingdom. And in the eternal kingdom, there is no need. There is no poverty. And thus, we are to live our life in such a way where we give generously to try to live up to that reality. This is why generosity is such a hallmark characteristic, then, of God's people.

We go out to eat and we fight to see who's going to pay for the bill. That really should be the picture. It's not, no, you're going to pay for lunch this time and maybe I'll cover it next time. It's really more of, no, let me cover lunch for us today. And the other person responding by saying, you know what? I'll cover lunch. And then you respond by saying, no, I insist that I pay for lunch. And the friend next to you is saying, no, I'm going to pay for lunch. Now, I'm embellishing. But really, isn't that the picture that you get here is the community that is gracious in their resources, giving of time, giving to the church, buying groceries, perhaps, for those who just can't afford groceries on their own.

You see, the type of value that we put on money is that it's what's going to be passed on to our children, it's what's going to be passed on to others around us. We need to instill into them not selfishness, not greed, but thinking of others. Remember, folks, this is a wisdom Psalm. The wisdom of this world is fallen. The wisdom of this world is tainted by sin because it is a sinful world. And the wisdom of this world when it comes to money, it tells us that it is money. We need to keep it. We need to make more of it. And you need to be able to flatter it. But there is only one true wisdom. There is only one true wisdom because there is only one true God, a godly wisdom. And godly wisdom tells us that when it comes to money, it's just money. And God is God. Jesus is Jesus.

You see, to have a little and to know Jesus is by far better than to have much without Him. In other words, to have God is to have everything. To not have God is to have nothing.

The blessed man, then, is a blessing to his community, the community of faith. But he is a curse to the wicked. Look at verse 10, the wicked sees him and the wicked is provoked to anger, to jealousy, to covetousness. And the reason why is because the blessed man has what the wicked is desperate to have as well, as blessed life. But the wicked tries to find it in the secular ways of the world, and he will never find it. But he sees the blessed man and he has it by faith in the Lord, happiness, stability, success. And because he sees that the blessed man has it, he is envious. He is jealous. And by ending with this comparison of the wicked man in verse 10 with the blessed man of Psalm 112, we recall not only the demise and the instability of the life of the wicked, but we are also reminded of the blessing that God gives to the godly, to those who fear the Lord and obey His commands.

You know, the ancient Israelites, as they read Psalm 112, they probably thought about their need for a once and future king, that godly king. Remember, back in 2 Samuel 7:14, the Lord promised them that they would have a king, a king from the line of David, and that this king would rule over them and watch over them and protect them. But this didn't work out too well for Israel as you know. These earthly sons of David were sinful men. And because of their sinfulness, they led Israel into becoming a fractured nation with a northern and southern kingdom. Ultimately, it led to their demise so that they are exiled from the presence of God. But the promise was good. The promise is true. And the expectation for Israel, then, is for the expectation for a perfect godly king, a godly man that would come and provide for them. And that's the picture that you have here of Psalm 112.

In fact, the picture of the godliness of the man of Psalm 112, you could say, is heightened even further when you see it in the context of Psalm 110 through 113. Psalm 110 begins with one of the most famous lines that is quoted in the New Testament over and over again, "The Lord says to my Lord." What you see here in Psalm 110 is the distinction of Yahweh, the Lord, and the son of David, the future

messianic king in the line of David who for whatever reason is referred to as Lord. Now, when you read Psalm 110 and you read the descriptions of this earthly son of David and you read the descriptions of God, what you find out is that they sound very similar. And to even add to that confusion, God takes on the title of Lord, and David's son is also given the title of Lord.

The question is really asked, who is Psalm 110 really about if it's going to describe both the son of David and God in similar types of ways? What you see is that in Psalm 111 and 112, it parses those two figures out. Psalm 111 is a portrait of Yahweh of God Himself as divine creator and redeemer of God's people. Psalm 112 as we saw is the portrait of that great godly man, that great son of David. And when you read Psalm 111 and Psalm 112 together, what you see is a striking similarity between the two. Psalm 111 ends the same way that Psalm 112 begins with the concept of the fear of the Lord. Psalm 111:10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Psalm 112:1, "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord."

In fact, when you see the structure of Psalm 111 and 112, they are both referred to as acrostic poems, which means every poetic line begins with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 111 is that way, Psalm 112 is also that way. And in fact, when you read the descriptions of Yahweh, of God in Psalm 111, it is profoundly similar, in fact, almost identical to the man of Psalm 112 which is truly extraordinary. The man is described in godlike terms.

Look at Psalm 111:2, it says, "Great are the works of the Lord. They are pondered by all who delight in them." Psalm 112:1, "Blessed is the man who finds delight in the law of the Lord." Back to Psalm 111:3, "Glorious are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever." That is, God's righteousness endures forever. Psalm 112:3, "Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever." It's the same exact phrase except this time it is describing the son of David, the godly man. Psalm 111:4, "God is gracious and compassionate." Psalm 112:4, this godly man is "gracious and compassionate." Psalm 111:4, "God causes his wonders to be remembered forever." In Psalm 112:6, it says that the righteous man "will be remembered forever."

It's such an extraordinary thing. You see, the righteous man is one who has been redeemed by God. And for that reason, the righteous man is the wonders of God that is remembered forever. You see, this extraordinary picture that you have here of the similarities between the Lord, between God and this godly man which leads us to see that the godly man of Psalm 112 is really more than the portrait of the godly man. The godly man of Psalm 112, the portrait that you have here is really the portrait of the God man, the God king. We saw a literary chain that connects Psalm 111 with 112.

But we also see that Psalm 113 also needs to be grouped with these as well. Psalm 113 celebrates both the divine Lord of Psalm 111 and the divine man of Psalm 112. Verses 1-4 in Psalm 113 praises the Lord because He is seated in the highest place. Verses 5-9 in Psalm 113 describes this son of David. He is going to rule all creation through His messianic Son. Verse 5 is interesting in Psalm 113 because it asks a rhetorical question. The question is, "Who is like Yahweh our God who is seated on high?" Who is like God? But folks, you see, you know the answer to this question. Our children know the answer to this question. It's a rhetorical question because the answer seems so easy. The answer is, there is no one like God. But is that really true? According to Psalm 110 and Psalm 112, there is one person who is almost exactly like God. And that is the godly man of Psalm 112.

And this is the reason why David's Lord, that is the son of David that is sent by God to be his messianic king, ultimately, we know is the Lord Himself. Or the way that the book of Acts says it, "The Lord's Christ is Christ the Lord." You see, the true man of Psalm 112 is Jesus Christ. He is the one who found great delight by following the law of His Father. He is the one who makes us His brethren heroes, victorious warriors in our spiritual warfare of the church. He is the one who works and accomplishes righteousness that will endure forever. He is the one who is the dawning light who will be truly gracious, compassionate, and righteous. He is the one who not only scatters His wealth through others, but in fact, He is one that gave His life as a blessing to others. And we rejoice, we are blessed because of the true man of Psalm 112.

But folks, it is even so much more than even that. You see, if we stop right there and you read Psalm 112, you may have a bit of a feeling of burden, a sense of await. I don't know about you, folks, but when I read Psalm 112, this is not even remotely close to describing me. I read Psalm 112, and to a certain degree, you can feel a certain weight that is put upon your shoulder. But in fact, you could say Psalm 112 is not to be a weight. It can be an encouragement, not another burden, but a blessing. But a blessing and a great source of joy only when we can read this next point, which is so important, and I cannot stress this next point enough, only insofar as you see by faith your union with Christ, the true man of Psalm 112.

And in that sense, you can see that Psalm 112 is not just an ancient Israelite Psalm. This is not just a Psalm about Jesus. By faith in Christ, by our union with Christ, folks, this is your Psalm. This is my Psalm by faith in Christ. You see, in Christ, I am the blessed man of Psalm 112. You are the blessed man of Psalm 112. You are the blessed believer of Psalm 112.

For that reason, you see that this Psalm is really another proclamation of the good news, a proclamation of the gospel. And the Psalm is teaching us that what it is that we need to do is not just be consumed with things to do, but this is a Psalm that is telling us who we are, who we are by faith in Jesus Christ. The foundations for a good life on earth really is not a mysterious one, it's not really even a difficult one. It is one that we need to remember every day, every single week. It is someone who rejoices in God and loves others. Really, that is it. But this is something that we cannot do on our own, and for that reason, you could say the blessing of Psalm 112 escapes us. But by faith in Christ, the true man of Psalm 112, we're not only reading about an ancient psalmist, you are not only reading about Jesus, but you are reading about yourself and the blessing that God gives to you. Praise God for Christ our Savior. Praise God for the man of Psalm 112. Let's pray together.

Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we come before you this morning and we thank you, dear God, for Jesus Christ, our Savior and King. He who, O Lord, redeemed us, gave to us godly commands, standards by which to live, and transformed our hearts to be able to live according to them. We thank you, Lord, for all that He is, all that He has done. And as we reflect on Christ, we pray, Father, that we will also remember the blessings of who we now have become in Christ. Be with us, dear Lord, as we meditate on these words, that these words will not be a burden but will be a joy and a blessing to our hearts. Hear us, dear God, for we pray all these things in Jesus's name. Amen.