

“We Can Be Blessed.”

Psalm 1:1-4

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by Senior Pastor Hong Poonghwa

Psalm 1:1-4 (PowerPoint)

Preface

Following the New Year’s Day service, we would like to share the words of Psalm 1, the theme verse for this year.

If you missed the sermon at the New Year’s Day service, you can listen to it on the Megumi Church website.

During the New Year’s Day service, we confirmed that Psalm 1 is the word of God that contains such a vast content that it could be said to be a summary of all 66 books of the Bible, and that it is like a prescription for happiness and blessedness that God has given to us human beings.

We also confirmed that the content of the prescription is to be best friends with the Bible, and that being best friends with the Word of the Bible, the Word of God, is the blessing that God has offered to us.

Part One

The fundamental reason why God’s words were written down in the Bible is that God, the Creator of heaven, earth, and all things, who created human beings in the form of the One and Only God, who is different from any other creature, wants us to “live happy and blessed lives” rather than unhappy and miserable lives.

One important fact that the Bible tells us is that “one can be happy” and “you can live a happy life”.

For example, from the postwar period until the collapse of the bubble economy, I think the idea of happiness that Japanese society as a whole had was to become rich, to become materially wealthy. However, even though people have actually become rich, they still feel a sense of emptiness and anxiety, and a vague fear of not knowing what will happen when. In fact, after being surrounded by material abundance, we are no longer sure what makes us happy and what makes us unhappy.

In such an age and world, where there is such a wide variety of superficial happiness that changes from person to person and situation to situation,

the statement that “you can be happy and have happiness” itself may sound suspiciously trite and clichéd.

However, the Bible tells us as a fact that “happiness is possible” and that “happiness exists”.

In the New Year’s Day service, I mentioned that I had various dreams since I was a child, and looking back on those dreams, I thought that I would be happy if my dreams came true. I think we all have a tendency to think that we can find happiness, protect it, and sustain it.

When we are young, we tend to think that we have some kind of secret that makes us different from others, and that it is surprisingly easy to achieve the happiness we desire.

I am sorry, I am still a young man, but it was the same for me when I was even younger than I am now, and I am sure you may have some of these thoughts in your mind as well.

“Look at those middle-aged men and women! Those people have gone the wrong way. They look like idiots. They don’t know what happiness is. But I do. I see a kind of secret that they don’t see! So I’m going to get that thing called happiness!” I think everyone starts the life by saying so.

But not long after that, we begin to realize that finding and grasping happiness is not as easy as we thought it would be.

And as we go further, we will realize that if there is one thing in this world that is truly difficult to grasp, it is happiness.

And what is the next step?

It may be discouragement, or pessimism, or despair.

If you don’t know the person of Jesus Christ, you will say, “Peace? Perfect peace? In this world? No, because that’s impossible,” or “Blessed? Perfect blessedness? No, that’s impossible...” One would fall into, or let’s say, settle down to such state.

But I don’t think this kind of reaction is a reaction that is not in accordance with the facts.

The most abundant thing in the world is the human word, and even in the world of literature, which is made up of human words, the great literary books tell of the tragedy of discouragement, pessimism, and despair in human activity and in the human world.

The same is true of the work of Han Gan, who won the Nobel Prize in Literature last year.

So why do people tell stories of tragedy?

Because life is a tragedy.

If you live a little, everyone realizes that life is not rosy.

Every New Year's Day, the Hakone Ekiden (relay race) is televised on TV. When I was little, I used to think, "It's New Year's Day, I get New Year's money, I get to eat delicious food, I get to see my family and relatives I have missed, and it's kind of fun, so why not just broadcast a funny TV program that makes me laugh and have fun? Why do they have to broadcast a totally boring ekiden for two days from 7:00 in the morning until late in the afternoon? What a waste of time. And they call it wonderful, interesting, and moving, so I don't get it."

However, when I grew up, got married, started a family, started working, and experienced the waves of life in my own way, I found the Hakone Ekiden to be very interesting and moving, and I could no longer watch it without crying.

It is a human drama, and before I knew it, I began to feel people's sorrows, both joys and sorrows.

Moreover, the words of the Apostle Paul, "I finished running the way I should have run and kept the faith" (2 Timothy 3:7), were going through my mind, and various feelings were coming and going in my heart, and tears were welling up in my eyes.

As I watch the Hakone Ekiden with tears in my eyes, my children are saying to me, "Why are you watching such a boring race? I reply, "You will start to cry when you see them running, connecting, and living their lives as hard as they can."

There seems to be evidence scattered all around us that life is not rosy, that it is a tragedy.

I think this fact is the biggest problem and thing to explore in the human creature (breath creature).

I think the very fact that we humans are searching for happiness is the flip side of the fact that we are in the midst of tragedy at the moment.

And I think that many people, as they are struggling through tragedy, come to the conclusion that perfect happiness is an impossibility.

Even literature ends up depicting death as the destination of human tragedy.

Part Two

I said the end, but I still think that if we go further, we will come to cold, wan laughter, cynicism, mockery, and nihilism.

“Life? So what? Don’t be too happy, don’t be too miserable. Just do as much as I can and let it gently pass me by. Don’t be sad because water spilled, and don’t hope for anything,” we say coldly and sarcastically.

But the deepest part of us that is saying, “I want to have a great life. I want to say I am fortunate. I want to be happy. I haven’t really given up on the idea of being happy.” I think this is the flip side of that

Even the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes says, “Empty, empty, all is empty. Everything is empty,” as if he agrees that the world is empty. But the truth is that he does not mean to say that the world, this life, everything is empty. He wants to say something like this: “In a sense, it is fact that everything is empty. But that is not the end of the story! The important thing is that if you feel that way, it is because you have forgotten what you must not forget in your life. You are empty because you are leaving out the most important One, the Loving One who is called God, the One who created heaven and earth and all things, the One who made you!”.

Ecclesiastes 12:12-13 (PowerPoint)

And,

Psalms 1:1-3 (PowerPoint)

Blessed is the Lord, for He has given us the power to do what we want to do. He who delights in the Lord’s instruction, who hums it day and night. He is a tree planted by the stream. When the time comes, he will bear fruit; his leaf will not wither, and all that he does will prosper.

“There is happiness in this world.” “There is a way that does not require us to live in coldness, in pessimism, in despondency, in resignation! Perfect peace, in a world littered with this tragedy, there is perfect peace, happiness!” We are being spoken to by God as such.

The words of the greatest resistance to the discouragement, pessimism, despair, or cynicism of a godless, Christless world can be found in Psalm 1.

“There are blessing.”, “There are people who are blessed.”, “Man can be blessed.”

It tells us, “The man can be blessed only when he is with the Word of God.”

The Bible keeps telling us, “Why can’t we human beings search for happiness?”

In other words, it tells us that “We cannot be perfectly happy because we are looking for happiness in the wrong way.”

People say, “I will obtain happiness,” and then leave.

They don’t even know how to do it.

If they go on without knowing the right way to find happiness, they will have no choice but to start out on the wrong path and end up at the wrong end of the road.

It is a simple problem.

All you have to do is to know the right way and use that right way.

The Bible clearly presents us with the “Do this, and you will be blessed.”

I think that the “wrong way to look for happiness” that we humans tend to do is to depend on improving the environment and circumstances around us and the conditions that we have.”

“If I have money and sunshine, I am happy, but if I lose my money, if I lose my sunshine, will I still be happy? If I could be like that, I would be happy. But if it doesn’t happen, if it goes the other way, I’ll never be happy.”

Human happiness, as we think of it, depends on circumstances and unfolding events and incidents. However, the Bible teaches us that happiness is not dependent on conditions or circumstances.

Another fact full of wisdom that the Bible teaches us is that “Blessing is never obtained for the sake of blessing itself.”

In other words, blessing is a product of other things.

The Bible never says, “Blessed is the man who seeks after blessings.”

It tells us, “Blessed is the man who does not walk according to the ways of the wicked, but rejoices in the instruction of the Lord, and hums them day and night.”

The most important characteristic of this blessed person is that he does not live in search of happiness.

This is the core of the wisdom that the Bible teaches us.

If one lives for the purpose of seeking happiness, he or she will never have the happiness that he or she desires.

Never.

This is the greatest wisdom of God that Psalm 1 teaches us.

Let’s look at Jesus’ words in Matthew’s Gospel.

Matthew 5:6 (PowerPoint)

Jesus never said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for happiness”.
“ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”

He says, “Not those who strive to go this way and that way in search of happiness, but those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, that is, for the righteousness of God, the righteous God, will be blessed.”

Let’s look further at the verse in chapter 6.

Matthew 6:31-33 (PowerPoint)

He says, “You will never be happy if you seek happiness in what you drink, what you eat, what you wear, or what you dwell in. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Then you will be blessed in a way that drinking, eating, and clothing can never bring you.”

“Make what ought to be an end an end. Eating, drinking, and clothing are not ends, but only means to the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Do not reverse the order. ” He said.

Why is this world a tragedy and why are our lives a tragedy? Jesus said, “The only reason is that we have made drinking, eating, clothing, and happiness our goal, not the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Or because we are trying to use God for the sake of a kind of blessing that is not the blessing we are trying by achieving by drinking, eating, or wearing clothes.”

We cannot attain happiness by seeking it.

The more we seek happiness, the more it will avoid us and shun us.

The moment we think, “I have found happiness.” that happiness will vanish in a cloud of smoke.

Because it is a bubble, just like a soap bubble, the moment we hold it in our hands, it will become misshapen and eventually burst into pieces and disappear.

Part Four

The Bible says:

“You have been looking for happiness in the wrong way from the beginning. Happiness itself is not happiness, but happiness is always the indirect result of other things.

And it is always the byproduct of something much greater than what is called happiness.”

In short, happiness is dependent on two things.

One is that it depends entirely on how we relate God and to his righteousness.

And the other is that it depends entirely on the state of my soul, of my spirit, not on the circumstances, birth, or conditions in which I am placed.

So, the blessing is not related to what is around us, the events, incidents, and occurrences that happen to us, but it hangs on ourselves (me).

Even though we are in the same prison, one of us drops his eyes to the muddy ground, while the other raises his eyes and looks up at the beauty of the stars in the heavens.

Two condemned prisoners who were crucified in the same way as Jesus. The one, in the midst of the same suffering, held in his heart the paradise of God’s righteousness with Jesus, while the other, in the midst of the same suffering, simply assumed that he was on the worst possible cross, without any conditions or environment that could be called blessed, and he only spoke in a litany of complaints to Jesus, to the people, and to himself.

I believe that it is our relationship with the One whom we call God and who I am in Him that determines whether we are blessed or not.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude by looking at the biblical passages that record the true happiness of the person who, independent of outside conditions and circumstances, tastes and realizes happiness in relation to God and his righteousness.

Acts 16:19-34 (PowerPoint)

The Apostles Paul and Silas, both of whom were only proclaiming Jesus Christ, were more severely policed and persecuted than those who had committed serious crimes, and although they had been flogged repeatedly and were breathing the faint breath, they were mercilessly shackled and even put in the coldest and darkest back cell of the prison, where they slept as if they had fainted.

They awoke in the middle of the night from a deep, dead sleep, still dark, still cold, still in pain all over their bodies, and in conditions and circumstances that could not have been worse, in terms of the harshness and severity of their captivity, Paul and Silas, praying to God, eventually offered Him a song of joy and thanksgiving, a song of praise.

Blessed are they that their hearts, their spirits, and their bodies were filled to overflowing.

They were aware of the fact that they had received unspeakable grace in the form of forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ, salvation from eternal destruction, that is, death, and entrance into the kingdom of heaven, the new heaven and new earth, as sons of God, and because of that fact, their relationship with God, and the happiness of still living for God's righteousness, and they realized the blessedness of being able to live for God's righteousness and hunger and thirst for God's righteousness.

Therefore, even when the external conditions for escaping the worst-case scenario were met, such as a sudden, violent earthquake, the opening of a prison door, and the breaking of chains, they remained there with a nonchalant face, or rather, a peaceful face.

Why?

Because they were fortunate enough not to be affected by external conditions or circumstances.

Rather, they shared their true good fortune with the jailer and his family, who did not yet know of their good fortune, because of the good fortune they possessed in the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

He said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus. Then you and your family will be saved."

Then, the last words of verse 34.

Acts 16:34 (PowerPoint)

He rejoiced wholeheartedly with his whole family that he had believed in God

He tasted of his good fortune, as if he were piling our good fortune on top of his good fortune.

Ladies and gentlemen, our good fortune is not outside of us.

It depends on how inner of us stays connected to God and Jesus Christ.

That is why it is the Word of God.

That is why it is the Word of the Bible.

The only way to be blessed in Jesus, the Word, is to speak the words of the Bible day and night.

I hope that all of us will be blessed to rely on the Word of God.

Let's pray.

Benediction: Psalm 1:1-2