

APRIL 29, 2021

Psalm 1: 1-3:

Happy are those who
do not follow the advice of the wicked,
or take the path that sinners tread,
or sit in the seat of scoffers;
but their delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on God's law they meditate day and night.
They are like trees planted in streams of water,
which yield their fruit in its season,
and their leaves do not wither.
In all they do, they prosper.

What makes you happy? It's easy to misread this first psalm in the bible. If our goal is "happiness" itself, then refusing the ways of wickedness, sin and scoffing, and meditating with delight on the law of the Lord are simply a means to the goal of happiness. And happiness is akin to a fruitful tree with leaves that do not wither. Happiness is prosperity. Happiness is success. Like a fruitful tree, success is visible, tangible and socially recognizable or it is not success.

But what if making happiness the goal will not get you happiness? What if true happiness is a by-product of something else and not necessarily about a prosperity that is tangible and a success people can see? What if "delight" in the law of the Lord is the prize itself, and what if freedom from the grinding drive to outward success leads to a different kind of 'prosperity' and 'fruitfulness', one far more lasting and satisfying?

It's not about more or less, but different. "Delight" in what matters most is a gift. Illumination, clarity and a redirection of focus and energy is a gift. A passion for doing right before God and loving our neighbour in a way that fills us with self-love because we feel loved by God, is a gift. Psalm 1 begins the whole collection by directing our passion and focus where it truly needs to be and against popular opinion. Happiness that's real and lasting will not come from a trouble-free life, a life of ease, tangible prosperity and success. Happiness will come when our delight, our focus and our passion in life are directed in the right ways and rooted in the right cause. It's all about primal relationship with our creator and creation. It's all about goodness, justice, love.

Where is your passion? Where is your dis-ease? Where is the "happy-place" in your soul? When do you feel most alive, most aligned with the universe and your creator? How is the divine law of love working itself out in your life, its foci and priorities?

PRAYER: We need to get right with you, O God, so that we can see clearly to get right with our neighbour, with creation and with life. Inspire us to delight in doing right and meditating on justice and truth. May our hearts open to love and to the happiness that comes when we love rightly; Amen.