

The Churchgoers Psalm

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, the book of Psalms and Psalm 1.
- The book of Psalms and Psalm 1. I want us to look at the whole psalm, but if we just read again the first two verses. But it says, Blessed is the man, or woman, 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.
- In 2022, church attendance is at an all-time low. In the past decade, the national census has repeatedly indicated that church attendance is in decline, but that was before the pandemic.
- After the pandemic, or since the pandemic, church attendance has plummeted, with many worshipers choosing the easy option of sitting at home and watching online.
- And sadly, church attendance has been replaced by church apathy. And having spoken to many ministers, not only in their own presbytery, but beyond our presbytery, do you know, they have never been so discouraged and so disappointed by church attendance.
- [1 : 4 7] Of course, there are situations and circumstances that prevent people from coming to church. And we know of these situations. We know of these circumstances. We know of these people. And for them, the live stream, it's a blessing.
- It's a benefit. But there are also, as you know, many members and many adherents. And it's not COVID that's keeping them away. It's their lack of commitment.
- It's their consumerist and casual Christianity that's keeping them away. To the point that this morning, there will be more watchers than worshipers in Barba's Free Church.
- There will be more watchers than worshipers. And when it comes to the attendance, even at the evening service, that has become almost non-existent. And the midweek meeting, it doesn't even get a look in.
- Therefore, my friend, whether here or at home this morning, I want to plead with you. I want to plead with you because live streaming services was a blessing and a benefit in the past.
- [2 : 5 6] But don't allow it to become a barrier or a boundary in the present. Don't allow live stream to make you lazy and live in lockdown on the Lord's Day.
- Don't allow the live stream to make you lazy and live in lockdown on the Lord's Day. And I say all this because Psalm 1 is the churchgoer's psalm.
- Psalm 1 is the churchgoer's psalm. That's why it's there right at the beginning of the Psalter. Psalm 1 is the churchgoer's psalm. And I want us to think about this psalm this morning under three very simple headings.
- So, boys and girls, you're listening. Two people, two paths, two places. Two people, two paths, two places.

They're our headings this morning. Two people, two paths, two places. So, first of all, in verses 1 and 2, we see two people. It says, Blessed is the man or woman who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers.

[4 : 08] But his or her delight is in the law of the Lord. And on his law, he or she meditates day and night. Now, as you know, as a congregation, we love the psalms.

We sing the psalms. But what Psalm 1 reminds us is that when the Lord looks at us, there are only two types of people in church.

And our Bible confirms that. The Bible says that, man, we all look at one another on the outward appearance. But the Lord looks at us on our heart.

And so, when the Lord looks at us in our heart, he sees that there are only two types of people here this morning or at home this morning. And these two types of people, they're two different people, and they're on two different paths, and they're heading towards two different places.

Because, my friend, the Bible clearly sets before us the fact that we are either in Christ or out of Christ. We're a Christian or not a Christian. We're saved or unsaved.

[5 : 15] We're found or lost. We're blessed, as Psalm 1 says, or cursed. You're either on the narrow path that leads to eternal life in heaven, or you're on the broad road that leads to eternal destruction, damnation, and death in hell.

And, you know, the Bible, it never shies away from the truth. Because the Bible is the absolute truth. And as the absolute truth, Psalm 1 presents to us the churchgoers, Psalm.

Because it presents to us two people, two paths, and two places. But the thing about Psalm 1 is that it wasn't the first Psalm written.

Boys and girls, the first Psalm to be written was Psalm 90, which is what we were singing earlier. Psalm 90 is the prayer of Moses. It's the oldest Psalm in the Psalter.

It's three and a half thousand years old. And yet the amazing thing about Psalm 90 is the oldest Psalm in the Psalter is that it has and it contains the most relevant truth.

[6 : 22] That the God we are worshiping this morning, it tells us that he is from everlasting to everlasting. He has no beginning and he has no end. And a thousand years are just like a day to him.

But as we mentioned at the second half of Psalm 90, it tells us that our life, our life is like a tale that is told. Our days are short.

Our years are short. They're only about three score and ten. The seventy are eighty. Which is why Moses prayed in Psalm 90, the oldest Psalm, Lord, teach us.

Lord, teach us to number our days that we may apply our heart unto wisdom. Lord, teach me to listen to what your word says.

So, Psalm 90 was the first Psalm that was written. Psalm 126 was the last Psalm to be written. That's the other Psalm we were singing this morning.

[7 : 20] And Psalm 126 is the Psalm all about sowing the seed of God's Word, where it's to be sown and cast in the congregation. And it's to be sown even in tears.

It's to be sown with that plea and that prayer that it will yield a joyful harvest of souls being saved and won to Christ. So, Psalm 90 is the oldest.

Psalm 126 is the youngest Psalm. But Psalm 1, Psalm 1 was strategically placed as the first Psalm in the Psalter to present to us what is the reality of life.

There are only two people. There are only two paths. There are only two places. In fact, Psalms 1 and 2 act as the gatekeepers to the book of Psalms.

And they direct us not only how to worship God, but they also call us. They call us to consider self and to consider the Savior. Psalm 1 calls us to consider self.

[8 : 24] It calls us to think about where we are at. Because there's only two people, two paths, and two places. But Psalm 2, which we're going to look at this evening, so I hope you'll come this evening.

Psalm 2 calls us to consider the Savior. Where we're told at the end of Psalm 2, kiss the Son. Kiss the Son by surrendering and submitting your life to King Jesus.

And so, Psalms 1 and 2, they're like gatekeepers to the book of Psalms. But Psalm 1 is the churchgoer Psalm. Because there's only two types of people in church.

There's those who are in Christ, those who are out of Christ. Those who are saved and those who are unsaved. Those who are found, those who are lost. Those who are blessed and those who are cursed.

And that's what the Psalmist says in verse 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.

[9 : 25] But his delight is in the law of the Lord. And on his law, he meditates day and night. The Psalmist, he contrasts two people who come to church.

And he says that one is blessed and the other is cursed. But you know, what differentiates and what divides them is their posture.

What differentiates them and divides them is their posture. Because the word blessed, the first word in this Psalm, blessed, it literally means to kneel.

And it gives to us, that word blessed, it gives to us the image and illustration of a king standing up from his throne. And he's standing before a servant. And the servant is kneeling before the king.

He's kneeling in surrender and submission to the king. And that's what the Psalmist is saying. He's saying that the blessed man or woman, they have assumed and adopted the posture and the position of kneeling before King Jesus in surrender and submission.

[10 : 32] Because King Jesus, he's the King of kings. He's the Lord of lords. And as he stands up from his throne, the sinner is kneeling in humble submission and surrender before King Jesus.

And they're kneeling with their head bowed and their hand outstretched. And their hand is outstretched in order to receive from the gracious, loving, and merciful hand of King Jesus something that they don't deserve.

They're receiving from King Jesus something they don't deserve. And what he gives to them is blessing. He blesses them. That's what the word blessing means. It means to graciously receive something you don't deserve.

King Jesus, he bestows blessing by coming to him in surrender and submission. By coming to him on your knees, he blesses you.

Because blessing only comes from the gracious hand of King Jesus. And of course, the blessings and the benefits which King Jesus bestows upon sinners such as we are, the blessings and the benefits are full forgiveness, complete cleansing, perfect pardon, and the promise of the happiness of heaven.

[11 : 54] My friend, this is the churchgoer, Sam. But it's asking you, what kind of churchgoer are you? What kind of churchgoer are you?

Are you in Christ? Or today are you still out of Christ? Are you saved? Are you unsaved? Are you found? Can you say, I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now I see?

Are you someone who is blessed? Or are you cursed? What kind of churchgoer are you? But you might say to me, well, Murdo, Murdo, it's private.

It's personal. I don't want to speak about these things. But you know, my friend, it's public. That's what we're saying to the children. It's public. You believe and you confess with your mouth.

Because faith and forgiveness, they have fruit. Faith and forgiveness have fruit. You know, there's always evidence that explains our life and our lifestyle.

[12 : 55] Because the Sabbath says, the cursed man, we're told, the cursed man or woman delights in sin. They delight in sin.

He walks, we're told, or she walks in the counsel of the wicked. He or she stands in the way of sinners. He or she sits in the seat of scoffers.

The cursed man or woman is known by the company they keep. And what's more is that there's this progression. When you read through verse 1, you see there's this progression in their lifestyle.

Because the cursed man or woman, they walk, they stand, and then they sit. They walk, they stand, they sit.

They become more comfortable in the company they keep. Because their hearts are hardening to the gospel. But, says the psalmist, the blessed man, the blessed woman doesn't do that.

[13 : 55] They don't delight in sin. No, we're told in verse 2, they delight in the law of the Lord. They delight in Scripture. They delight in salvation. They delight in the Savior.

That's what he says. But his delight is in the law of the Lord. And on his law, he meditates day and night. The blessed man or woman seeks the company of the king.

He seeks the company of the king more and more. And that's why they want to be in God's house. They want to be under God's Word. They want to be with God's people.

They want to be in the place where blessing is to be found. Under the Word of God. With the people of God. Hearing the very voice of God. They're known by the company they keep.

They're known by the company they keep. And Psalm 1, it's presenting this contrast. And it's asking us, what kind of churchgoer are you? What kind of churchgoer are you?

[14 : 54] Because there are only two people who come to church. But as the psalmist goes on, he says, there are only two paths presented in church. Which is what we see secondly.

So two people, two paths. Two paths. He says, verse 3, And so Psalm 1 is the churchgoer Psalm because it presents to us the two people who come to church.

And these two people, as we said, they're on two paths. Because there are only two paths presented to us in the Bible. There's no middle ground.

There's no fence to sit on. There are only two paths. And Jesus describes these two paths very, very clearly in his Sermon on the Mount.

In fact, what's fascinating when you read the Sermon on the Mount is that Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount in the same way as Psalm 1 begins. Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with the first word, blessed.

[16 : 14] Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Jesus emphasizes all these beatitudes, that the blessed man or woman will enter the kingdom of heaven.

But when you read through the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus goes on to set before his hearers those two paths. And he exhorts his hearers and he encourages his hearers to enter by the narrow gate.

For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction. And those who enter by it are many. But narrow is the gate, he says, and difficult is the way which leads to life and few there be that find it.

So Jesus presents to us just two paths. The narrow path and the broad road. And you know, every time I think of these two paths that are presented to us in the Bible, I have in my mind the image and the illustration of a sheep track and a motorway.

A sheep track. So you go at the macher, a sheep track. You go down the M8. You have the motorway. As you know, a sheep track, it's very narrow. Very, very narrow.

[17 : 26] And when you follow the sheep track, whether out in the macher or around the cliffs, it's very difficult. It's a difficult path to walk. It's a very narrow path to walk. And Jesus says that's what the Christian life is like.

It's a narrow path. It's a sheep path. It's for sheep following the shepherd. But it's a path that is often rough and rugged. It's a path full of resistance and sometimes rejection, even sometimes ridicule for being a Christian.

And yet, says Jesus, this path is a path of righteousness. It's a path which leads to life. But the broad road or the broad path, it's not even a path at all.

It's a broad road. It's a motorway. And there's a number of lanes on it. A number of lanes on it. And they're all going in the same direction towards the same destination of destruction.

And the thing about the broad road, says Jesus, is that it's smooth. It's straight.

[18 : 31] And it's simple. It's easy. It's effortless. And almost everyone is on it. It's the path of the majority rather than the path of the minority.

And, you know, I always find that the most solemn and sobering thing in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus tells us so clearly.

And, you know, that's the thing about Jesus. He never held back. And he said that there will be more people in hell than in heaven. And we might question, well, how can that be?

But Jesus said it. There will be more people in hell than in heaven. Because Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, Wide is the gate that leads on to the broad road to destruction.

And many enter by it. But the narrow gate that leads on to the narrow path, Few there be that find it. And, you know, it's such a solemn and sobering statement.

[19 : 33] There will be more people in hell than in heaven. But that's why we have this psalm. That's why we have the churchgoers psalm. And that's why we're being asked the question this morning, What kind of churchgoer are you?

What path are you on? Because there are only two paths. There's no middle ground. There's no fence to sit on. You can't go on halting between two opinions all your life.

Because the blessed man or woman, She or she walks the narrow path that leads to life. And what the psalmist says about that man or that woman who's blessed, It says verse 3, They're like a tree.

Like a tree planted beside a river. A tree planted beside a river. And if you've ever seen a tree planted beside a river, You'll know three things about it. It's stable.

It's strong. And it's secure. It's stable. It's strong. And it's secure. It doesn't wilt. It doesn't wane. And it doesn't wither. Because its roots go deep into the depths of the river.

[20 : 38] And draw up that life-giving water. It's stable. It's strong. And it's secure. You know, that's how Jesus describes every blessed man or woman.

He says, Whosoever believes in me, Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. In other words, The blessed man or woman will be stable and strong and secure in Christ, Because they have a root.

And they have fruit. They have a root. And they have fruit. They bear fruit, he says, In their season. It yields fruit in its season.

Its leaf does not wither. They bear fruit in their season. Whether the season is the renewing strength of spring. Or the hot summer of temptation. Or the changing circumstances of autumn.

Or the cold winters of darkness and death. Whatever the circumstances, Whatever the season, The blessed man or woman, we're told, Will continue to have a root.

[21 : 42] And will continue to bear fruit. Their leaf does not wilt, Wither or wane. Because they're stable, Strong, And secure. But, says the psalmist, The wicked are not so.

The wicked are not so. I mean, you know, we might not like being called wicked. But that's how the Bible describes the sinner out of Christ. The wicked are not so.

The cursed man or woman on the broad road, Down the broad path to destruction. They are not so. And you know, you come to question four, To verse four, And you ask the question, Well, does the church, The cursed churchgoer, Have roots?

And the answer that's given is, Not so. Not so. Are they drawing and drinking from the river of life? Not so.

Do they have stability from Scripture? Not so. Do they have strength from the Savior? Not so. Do they have security in their salvation?

[22 : 53] Not so. Not so. Not so. The wicked are not so. Because, why? They're just like the chaff. That the wind drives away.

A modern equivalent would be, When you're emptying your grass bucket, Having mowed the lawn, And there's wind just pushing the grass, Into wherever you're dumping it.

It's going everywhere. The wind just drives them away. They blow about in the wind of society. They go with the flow of the world. They conform to the chaos and the confusion, That reigns in everyday life.

They follow every fad and fashion of the day. They're like the chaff, Which the wind drives away. And you know, my friend, You know, I always go back to, The Pilgrim's Progress.

We studied it a number of months ago. But you know, it's no wonder, Evangelist pointed Christian, To the narrow gate. In John Bunyan's classic, If you haven't read it, read it.

[23 : 55] It's called, The Pilgrim's Progress. As Christian fled the city of destruction, With a book in his hand, And a burden on his back, He met this man called Evangelist.

And Evangelist asked Christian, Why are you crying? And Christian says, Sir, I read in the book in my hand, That I am condemned to die, And after that, Come to judgment.

But Evangelist says to him, Flee from the wrath to come. And Christian asks, Where must I flee? And Evangelist, He points in the distance, And he says, Do you see that narrow gate?

Go directly there. And when you see the gate, Knock. And when you knock, You will be told what to do.

And so when Christian, When you read in the story, When Christian reaches the narrow gate, He sees above the door, The words of Jesus, Knock, And it shall be opened unto you. And so what does Christian do?

[24 : 54] He pounds the door. He pounds and pounds the door, Until it opens. And that's what Jesus says to us, In the Sermon on the Mount.

Ask, And it shall be given. Seek, And you shall find. Knock, And the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, Receives. The one who seeks, Finds.

The one who knocks, It will be opened to them. My friends, Psalm 1, Is the churchgoer's psalm. But what kind of churchgoer are you?

What kind of churchgoer are you? Because there are two people, And two paths, And they're heading towards two places.

Two people, Two paths, Two places. That's what we see lastly. Two places. Look at verse 5. 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.

[26 : 01] So Psalm 1, It's the churchgoer's psalm. It confronts us with two people, Two paths, And two places. Two places. Eternal life in heaven, Or eternal death in hell.

And you know, The thing is, There is no one who preached more about heaven and hell Than Jesus Christ. Jesus was the most loving man that ever lived.

He loved so much that he died. And yet Jesus repeatedly told sinners That there are two people, Two paths, And two places.

And you know, You even see that when you consider the life and ministry of Jesus. You consider all the things that Jesus said, All the parables that Jesus spoke. He preached about, Right at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, The wise and the foolish builders.

He preached about the wheat and the tares. Jesus preached about the sheep and the goats. Jesus always preached the same message, That there are two people in this world, There are two paths that they are on, And there are two places they are going.

[27 : 10] And Jesus preached the message of Psalm 1, Time and time again, Because as the psalmist says, There in verse 5, Jesus knows, That the wicked will not stand in the judgment.

Jesus knows that the wicked will not stand in the judgment. That doesn't mean that they won't appear at the judgment seat of Christ. They will appear. Because we all must appear.

I must appear. You must appear. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account. But, says the psalmist, The cursed churchgoer will not stand.

They will not stand as righteous in God's sight. They will stand condemned in their own sin. They will stand condemned in their own sin.

But there's more, he says. The cursed man or woman will not only stand at the judgment seat of Christ. They will also be separated at the judgment seat of Christ.

[28 : 15] They may come from the same family. And walk through the same church door. And sing the same psalms. And read the same Bible.

And hear the same sermon in church. But you know, my friend, on that great judgment day, There will be a great separation. A great separation.

A separation between families. A separation between friends. A separation between congregations. A separation between communities. A separation between workplaces and work colleagues.

There will be a great separation. That's what Jesus says. Because he says, For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.

All their pursuits will perish. All their plans will perish. All their passions will perish. The way of the wicked, we're told, will perish.

[29 : 20] But my friend, hear me when I say this. If you've drifted, listen for one second. The glory of the gospel is that God so loved the world That he gave his only begotten son That whosoever believes in him will not perish.

Will not perish, but have eternal life. The offer is free. The offer is full. It's full forgiveness.

Complete cleansing. It's all an offer to you. Freely on offer to you. And you know, my unconverted friend, Whether here or at home this morning, You know, on the day of judgment, And I say this lovingly and with all sincerity, On the day of judgment, You can never turn to me And say that I never told you.

You can never say to me that I never warned you. You can never say to me that I never pleaded with you. Because you know my love of you.

You know my longing for you. You know that I want you to seek the Lord. You know that I want you to be saved. So my friend, I'm asking you this morning, Stop halting between two opinions.

[30 : 52] Because there is no middle ground. There is no fence to sit on. There are just two people. And two paths. And two places.

Two people. Two paths. Two places. Psalm 1. It's the churchgoer's psalm. But what kind of churchgoer are you?

What kind of churchgoer are you? Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, We give thanks to Thee for Thy Word.

Thy Word that speaks to us so clearly And so powerfully. And we pray that we would listen to it. That we would take heed to it. That this would not just be an hour That we might pass in our lives.

But an hour that might change our lives. O Lord, we pray that That we would all seek the Lord While He's to be found And call upon Him while He is near.

[32 : 02] Because now is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation. Lord, bless Thy truth to our souls, we pray. Watch over us, we ask. And bless us, we plead.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. And for His sake. Amen. We're going to sing, in conclusion, We're going to sing Psalm 1.

Psalm 1. In the Scottish Psalter. It's on page 200. Psalm 1. And we're going to sing the whole Psalm.

Maybe before we sing, I'll ask the questions. Before I forget, I'm prone to forgetting. So, boys and girls, Are you listening? What is the first Psalm that was written in the Bible?

Psalm 90. Psalm 90, yeah. What was the last Psalm that was written? 120. 26, yeah. What are today's headings?

[33 : 08] Two. Two. And two. Places. Two people, two paths, two places. Well done. So you get your sweets at the door.

So if you don't get them, remind David, okay? Psalm 1. We'll sing the whole Psalm. That man of perfect blessedness, Who walketh not astray, In counsel of ungodly men, Nor stands in sinner's way, Nor sitteth in the scorner's chair, But placeth his delight Upon God's law, And meditates on his law day and night.

We'll sing the whole Psalm To God's praise. That man of perfect blessedness, Through all good, Not astray, In counsel of ungodly men, Nor stands in sinner's way, way.

Nor sitteth in the squattership a place of his delight.

Upon God's love and meditate on his low day a night.

[34 : 46] He shall be like a dream and rules, implanted by a river, which in this season is its fruit, and its least faded never.

And all he does shall prosper well, the wicked are not stow, but not stone, but like they are unto the shaft which with rise to and grow.

grow. In judgment and force shall most stand such as the godly are, nor in the assembly of the just, shall wicked men appear.

appear. For by the way of God depend unto the Lord is known, where us the way of wicked men shall quite be over throne.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.