

Sermon on Psalm 1 prepared by Jonathan Shradar 7/3/22

Psalm 1

Jesus is the happy hero that rescues us.

Every story plays to a tension. Right and wrong. Good and bad. It's baked into us, this tension.

We know the bad, we experience the hard things of life, and we feel the pain. But we also know the good. Moments when things are right. When kindness prevails. Peace persists.

More often than not; and certainly in our stories, there is a character that challenges the evil - that brings us the good.

A hero.

Superhero Sunday. Some of you have dressed as or to honor your favorite hero. Mine is *Baymax*... always prefer fat heroes that give their lives to save others! We know what it means to be a hero, and we know we like them.

All of this points to a deeper truth, a cosmic tension between what is right and true and that which leads to ruin.

This is the story of all of scripture, this is the story of Jesus.

Summer Psalms. For July and August, we are looking at these collected prayers and songs. They teach us to pray and praise in the midst of this tension, always with an eye toward rescue.

Psalm 1, where we begin, is not a prayer as much as it is a declaration. A marker making clear the tension we find ourselves in and pointing to the hope we need.

The Psalm of two ways. How happy the One listening to and following Yahweh (God), and the wicked.

Contrasting Outcomes of Their Lives. These verses lead readers to reflect on where these two kinds of life are headed, showing that God will make the contrast last forever.

Villains, a hero, and us - where do we fit?

Villains

The wicked. In opposition to the happy One (who we will get to next), we have the wicked, the sinners.

The International Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE) gives this definition of wicked according to the Bible:

"The state of being wicked; a mental disregard for justice, righteousness, truth, honor, virtue; evil in thought and life; depravity; sinfulness; criminality."

"In the Bible, wickedness is associated with worshipping pagan gods, sexual immorality, oppressing the poor, and cruelty in warfare. Even though Scripture teaches that every person is a sinner, few today define themselves as wicked."

In the pathway with sinners. This gets at the choice we have in life. Follow the way of our Creator, or reject it and pursue something else.

These are the wicked.

"The tragic folly and sin of the wicked is that they have neglected the chief thing to be remembered, namely, that there is a God, that they are his creatures and, being his creatures, ought to live for him. They give God no part of their lives, and he is in none of their thoughts." **Charles Spurgeon**

"Scripture teaches that sin began with man's disobedience in the Garden of Eden. Given a choice, Eve, then Adam, took their own way instead of God's. [Did God really say?] That pattern has carried down through the ages. This original sin, inherited from one generation to the next, has infected every human being ever born."

Their advice is corrupt, and not to be followed.

The villains ultimately don't win.

Lord Voldemort keeps being defeated and will eventually be finished when his own spell rebounds on him.

Sauron loses the great battle.

Even when it seems they might get their way, they come to an end.

Thanos is defeated - though the Empire Strikes back, *the Sith* will eventually be no more.

Villains - the wicked lose.

Like chaff; sifting wheat, chaff is the fragments of the wheat head that are light and worth nothing, float in the air, and are carried away. Like crumbs blowing in the wind.

“Wicked will not stand at the judgment.” Humanity before God, submit to him or not, follow his teaching or not?

The way of the wicked leads to ruin.

This is not the good option (why none of you dressed as the villains.)

There are two ways though.

Hero

Happy is the One, blessed is the man... this is the presentation of the hero.

He doesn't walk in the advice of the wicked or stand in the pathway with sinners. He is not among the mockers.

He chooses the better way.

This Psalm tells us that he delights in the instruction of the LORD. Constantly thinking about it. Meditating on it day and night.

And this posture toward life, this way does something, it defines him.

“He is like a tree planted beside flowing streams...” Life with a source of vitality.
“...bears fruit in its season...” living up to his potential;
“Leaf does not wither,” steady, consistent, persevering.
“Whatever he does prospers...” right kind of success - worthwhile.

The image is that of a tree in a dry climate, which nevertheless thrives because of its constant supply of water. A tree bears fruit, not for itself, but for others; thus, when the faithful prospers, it is not for himself, nor is the prospering even necessarily material, but he succeeds in bringing benefit to others.

The LORD knows, watches over the way of the righteous.

Here is where the tension meets us. I want to be the hero. I know it's right. The outcome certainly sounds more appealing.

But do I match the description?

The Bible presents about us and for us. We could approach the Psalm and think, “on my best days this is me.” And we neglect our experience and any of the villainess things about us to have some false sense of security in ourselves.

But the Psalms want us to look further, higher, to someone else. To the real hero.

The more I think about it honestly; the more I see how the wicked live and what they chase after - I realize something terribly startling. I am the villain. We are the villains.

We wonder why we are not happy.

We disregard God and his way. We call the advice of the wicked wisdom. And we naturally find ourselves incapable of standing at the judgment.

It is not a balance of being more good than bad, or just good enough, it is perfection, spotlessness that is required.

The righteous man is our hope, the blessed, happy hero of Psalm 1.

Meet the man. This is Jesus.

He does not live on bread alone but on the word of God. He lives in perfect obedience to the Father's instruction. He takes on the abuse of the mockers on the cross. Covering our sin and giving us his righteousness. Showing us his way. Life, abundance, real prospering.

He does all of this, he is the righteous man, the happy One, to rescue us.

Rescue

“But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been revealed, attested by the Law and the Prophets. 22 The righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe, since there is no distinction. 23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; 24 they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. 25 God presented him as the mercy seat by his blood, through faith, to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his restraint God passed over the sins previously committed. 26 God presented him to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so that he would be just and justify the one who has faith in Jesus.” -- **Romans 3:21-26** (CSB)

John 20:31 “that by believing you may have life in his name.”

By his grace, we are saved. More than that... he loves us in our villainy and calls us his own. He is happy about us.

“You are more wicked than ever dared believe and yet, you are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than you ever dared hope.” **Tim Keller**

This grace, the work of this happy hero goes so much further than we ever imagined.

“...when we have seen our own spiritual ugliness, something unexpected happens, if we will only let it. We look up, thinking that anyone who sees us as we really are will avert his or her gaze and cross the road to avoid us, but we find an

extraordinary sight awaiting us: Christ in all his beauty is walking towards us. When we feel at our most ugly, with torn, foul-smelling clothes and repulsive contortions to our faces, like people who have been cruel all their lives, we see him running in our direction. He is moving towards us, smiling, and calling as soon as we are within earshot, ‘I’ve come to make you beautiful. Let’s start with those rags.’” **Julian Hardyman**

He clothes us in his righteousness. And he increasingly makes us like him. We begin to look like him, act like him, value what he values, love what he loves. We begin to smell like Jesus!

And he has promised to do it.

“I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” -- **Philippians 1:6** (CSB)

“Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely. And may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you is faithful; he will do it.” -- **1 Thessalonians 5:23-24** (CSB)

We become the happy ones, when we cling to our happy hero who rescues us from ruin.

The believer’s life is blessed by the presence and care of Christ, bearing eternally significant fruit by being grafted into the “tree of life” (Ps. 1:3; Rev. 2:7; 22:2).

“That “tree” then, that is, our Lord, from the running streams of water, that is, from the sinful people’s drawing them by the way into the roots of His discipline, will “bring forth fruit,” that is, will establish Churches; “in His season,” that is, after He hath been glorified by His Resurrection and Ascension into heaven. For then, by the sending of the Holy Ghost to the Apostles, and by the confirming of their faith in Him, and their mission to the world, He made the Churches to “bring forth fruit” **Augustine**

Fruit that feeds, that nourishes, that heals.

The world offers paradise with no water. Jesus offers water that builds paradise with him.

“Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.
38 The one who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him.” -- **John 7:37-38** (CSB)

This has been the plan all along, and a happy plan it is. Good news.

This is where the drama of life leads. Two ways; wicked, or rescue. The villains or the hero.

Jesus the hero that wins the day, will you be among the fruit that he bears?

Surrender - Let Jesus give you His righteousness. Surrender your wickedness, admit your sin, and disregard of God.

See - Hear his welcome to you, see his claim over you. In Scripture, see how it points to him and reveals more of his way to you. See him working in your life, in community, and rejoice that you are his.

Keep Seeking - Follow his instruction, know it is right and good. Be known by knowing Jesus. Trusting in his perfection. And his promise to make you like him... he who begins a good work will finish...

His blessedness, his happiness is yours.

Jesus is the happy hero that rescues us.

This is our story. May it keep us, encourage us, and spread from us to others in need of rescue, so that they too would find delight in him.