

Psalm 37 Delight Yourself in the Lord

When Kirk started this series from the Psalms he asked each of the elders to take a turn. I immediately thought of Ps 37:4 **Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.** This verse played a key role back at time in the distant past before Janet and I had children.

We had been married a few years and wanted to start a family, but we were struggling with infertility. It's one of those things people don't talk about much. One year at a work Christmas party we were at a Table with 4 other couples. Paul Dykshoorn was there with his wife Kathy who was pregnant with Ryan. My cubicle mate was there with his wife, also named Kathy, also pregnant. Then there was two other couples whose husbands I worked with. The one announced that he and his wife were expecting. So I then turned to the other and jokingly said "are you guys expecting also?". They sheepishly replied, "well it's pretty recent so we weren't going to say anything yet, but yeah we are."

For about 3 or 4 years after that we felt that pain of wanting a family, being surrounded by friends having babies, but not having the ability to go down that road. We tried to live according to this idea though – delight yourself in the Lord – he knows our hearts, he is a good father, we just need to trust him.

After a while, we started down the adoption road and were selected for a placement. We knew the approximate due date and were told to be ready so that when the baby was born we could run to PA and receive this child from the hospital and take him home! The due date came and went and the phone call never came. Then we got the call that in the hospital the birth mom changed her mind and wanted to parent her child.

We were crushed. It's like having a late-term miscarriage in terms of the emotions. Janet was in prayer at one point venting her emotions and maybe throwing a Kleenex box or two at the wall. God reminded her that we need to delight in the Lord even then, even when we are hurting and can't make sense of the path forward.

As those who know our story know, God did eventually bless us with two boys through adoption and gave us a full and wonderful journey as parents. There are still some struggles and painful things that we wrestle with God in prayer to this day. But God's goodness is undeniable.

I will share a bit more about my recent encounter with this Psalm in a few minutes.

Like many psalms, there is a parallel structure to this one going back and forth between a negative truth and a positive one.

Keep the long-view in mind

1Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers!

2For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb.

How many of us have struggled with the question of why do those not following the ways of God rise to the top? Why do the ungodly have yachts and private jets and I'm driving a car that is 11 years old with 170,000 miles on it? I want what I want and I want it now!

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3 *Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.*

4 *Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.*

5 *Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.*

6 *He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.*

7 *Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him;*

We see our circumstances very close up and it is easy to be overwhelmed. That's when we need to go outside and look at the stars. Janet and I went out to see the Northern Lights the other night. Now, the picture is enhanced by using "night mode" so it really wasn't this brilliant to the naked eye, but when you see the glory of creation you realize how amazing it is. You recognize the power of God and all that HE. It helps us see how it is better to suffer now to gain a lasting reward later.

I want to skip down to verse 16 also:

16 Better is the little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked.

Why is this? Because the little is accompanied by God's peace.

Ecc 4:6 Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.

Heb 12:11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

My first point this morning is we need to keep the long-view in mind.

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- *Though the ungodly may prosper now, their end is coming*
 - *God sees us and will support us if we patiently wait, and trust, and act according to God's purposes*
 - *The peace we have with righteousness is better than the stuff of the world*
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And we can rest assured that God will not forget about us.

Ps 37:18 The Lord knows the days of the blameless, and their heritage will remain forever;

19 they are not put to shame in evil times; in the days of famine they have abundance.

Skipping down to verse 25:

25 I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread.

26 He is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing.

What does it mean to delight yourself in the Lord?

A key point for us to wrestle with is what does it mean to delight ourselves in the Lord?

Clearly, a key part of delighting in the Lord is **not being jealous of others success**. Learning to be content with what God has assigned us and not envying those who are doing better than us. That doesn't mean we can't work hard to better our lives. But we should do so with joy and thankfulness.

- We are to trust in the Lord and do good (v3)
- Commit our way to the Lord (v5)

But what else is involved in delighting in the Lord?

Ps 147:11 No, the LORD's delight is in those who fear him, those who put their hope in his unfailing love.

Now we don't like to talk about fearing God because it brings up all kinds of wrong ideas. Like we are afraid to step out of line because we'll get hit with a bolt of lightning or something. But biblically fearing the Lord is a good thing.

Even Jesus was prophesied to walk in the fear of the Lord

Isa 11:2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD-- 3 and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

Jesus walked in the *delight* of the fear of the Lord.

In John 8:28 Jesus says "I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. 29 The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him."

So Jesus, even though he himself is fully God, when he took on human nature and walked the earth, didn't speak on his own accord; he didn't do his own will. He said and did what his Father instructed and did what pleased his Father. This was pleasing to the Lord. And as a result, Jesus experienced the pleasure and delight of walking in the fear of the Lord.

Point #2 - The essence of delighting in the Lord is having the Lord's heart and doing what is important to him.

Recently, as I was praying about my work situation I was reminding God that he had put it on my heart to do good in the city of Alliance. I was seeing the positive things God is doing in this community with our congregation, with the Alliance Pregnancy Center, with other community organizations who were rising up to do good things here. I was convinced that the startup company I am a part of was going to be a part of that. At the moment, it is not looking like that will happen.

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So I said to God, “if you want me to do something good here in Alliance you need to provide the way forward for this business to thrive.”

Well...

I was quickly reminded of this Psalm and that what I was expressing was not trust, or delight. He showed me

***23** The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him;*

***24** though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand.*

And it was like, “dang it God, could you let me be right once in a while.”

While I’ve been waiting for God to do something specifically for my business to get back on track for almost a year now, I realized that perhaps it was God who was waiting on me.

He brought me back to verses 5 and 6.

***5** Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.*

***6** He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.*

Commit and trust first, then he will act. That part about the noonday reminded me of Isa 58.

***6** “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?*

***7** Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?*

***8** Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness ^a will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.*

***9** Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.*

All I can say is forgive me Lord. Forgive my blindness and short-sightedness.

Now verse 10 in Isaiah 58 really hits hard.

***10** if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday.*

Alternate translations of this verse say “spend yourselves” or “extend your soul” to the hungry and the afflicted or oppressed. All of these indicate more than a mere passing attempt to “remember the poor” as the Apostle Paul mentions in Galatians. What do we make of this? How do we reconcile our actions to line up with such a calling?

We must always remember that God loves a cheerful giver. We must remember that we are saved only and always by grace. Only by the work of the Holy Spirit can we produce true fruit that lasts. So I’m not trying to gin up a works trip on you. Yet we also need to let the scripture be a mirror that we hold up to our lives so we can see where we lack and make changes if necessary.

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And look at verse 11, the rewards of being the kind of person that pours out to the hungry:

11 And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.

This gives me so much hope! To know that no matter how dry life around us gets, the LORD will strengthen you, guide you, and provide a continual flow of refreshing water by his Holy Spirit.

Going back though, we have to do the IF before we see the THEN.

I'm sorry Lord, forgive my blindness. Awaken my heart again Lord to see the world through your eyes.

Point #3 - The essence of delighting in the Lord is having the Lord's heart and doing what is important to him.

My final point this morning from Psalm 37 is

There are some good things we won't see on this side of eternity.

There are several references in Ps 37 to inheriting the land.

9... but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.

11 But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace.

22 for those blessed by the Lord shall inherit the land,

34 Wait for the Lord and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land; you will look on when the wicked are cut off.

Some may look at this regarding the physical property of the Land of Israel, but I think that is short-sighted. Jesus quotes verse 11 in his Sermon on the Mount. As is the case with much of the teachings on the kingdom of God, there is both a NOW and a NOT YET aspect to it.

We need to expect hardships and difficulties in this life. God's goodness and abundance does pursue us, all the days of our lives, but it doesn't always catch us.

Sometimes we miss out because of our bad choices.

Sometimes we miss out because God has something better for us than the things of this earth. Hebrews 11 talks about some of the great characters of the faith and inserts this caveat.

Heb 11:13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for

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a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

It then goes on to talk about great heroes of the faith, how the walls of Jericho fell and how they defeated giants, quenched flames, routed armies, received their dead back to life. Then others were ... Tortured? Flogged? Put to death by stoning? Sawn in two?

Then it concludes with this:

***39** These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, **40** since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.*

Even as we experience the victories of our faith in this life, God has planned for something better for us.

This is an amazing promise and one that we need to always keep in the front of our minds. Our existence here in this life is not all we live for. Even in the best of times in this life we still rest in the fact that much better things lie ahead for us in the coming kingdom of God.

Concluding now in Psalm 37

39 The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble.

40 The Lord helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.

To summarize:

- Though the ungodly may prosper now, their end is coming
- God sees us and will support us if we patiently wait, and trust, and act according to God's purposes
- The peace we have with righteousness is better than the stuff of the world
- The essence of delighting in the Lord is having the Lord's heart and doing what is important to him
- Even as we experience the victories of our faith in this life, God has planned for something better for us

Prep work...

1. We have to always keep the big picture in mind.
2. What does it mean to delight in the Lord?

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3. There are some good things we won't have on this side of eternity. It is OK because we can trust God is in control.

Now, Not Yet

Live to delight in the Lord.

<p>1Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! 2For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb.</p>	<p>3Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. 4Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. 5Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act. 6He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. 7Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! 8Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.</p>
<p>9For the evildoers shall be cut off,</p>	<p>but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.</p>
<p>10In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there.</p>	<p>11But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace. (Mat 5:5 <u>Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.</u>)</p>
<p>12The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes his teeth at him, 13but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he sees that his day is coming. 14The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose way is upright; 15their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.</p>	<p>16Better is the little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked.</p>
<p>17For the arms of the wicked shall be broken,</p>	<p>but the Lord upholds the righteous. 18The Lord knows the days of the blameless, and their heritage will remain forever; 19they are not put to shame in evil times;</p>

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	in the days of famine they have abundance.
<p>20But the wicked will perish; the enemies of the Lord are like the glory of the pastures; they vanish—like smoke they vanish away.</p> <p>21The wicked borrows but does not pay back,</p>	<p>but the righteous is generous and gives; 22for those blessed by the Lord^e shall inherit the land,</p>
<p>but those cursed by him shall be cut off.</p>	<p>23The steps of a man are established by the Lord, when he delights in his way; 24though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord upholds his hand.</p> <p>25I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread. 26He is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing.</p> <p>27Turn away from evil and do good; so shall you dwell forever. 28For the Lord loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. They are preserved forever,</p>
<p>but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.</p>	<p>29The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell upon it forever.</p> <p>30The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice. 31The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip.</p>
<p>32The wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to put him to death.</p>	<p>33The Lord will not abandon him to his power or let him be condemned when he is brought to trial.</p> <p>34Wait for the Lord and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land; you will look on when the wicked are cut off.</p>
<p>35I have seen a wicked, ruthless man, spreading himself like a green laurel tree.^d 36But he passed away,^e and behold, he was no more; though I sought him, he could not be found.</p>	<p>37Mark the blameless and behold the upright, for there is a future for the man of peace.</p>
<p>38But transgressors shall be altogether destroyed; the future of the wicked shall be</p>	<p>39The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; he is their stronghold in the time of</p>

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<p>cut off.</p>	<p>trouble. 40The Lord helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.</p>
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