

BELPRES CHURCH

A NEW YEAR, A NEW LIFE

January 5, 2019

Speaker: Rev. John Kim

Disclaimer: This transcript was computer generated and may contain errors.

Father, this new year, we give all of ourselves to you. May we live into the abundant, blessed life you have given us through your only son, Jesus. We ask this in your name. Amen. Well, good morning everyone.

Morning.

Welcome everyone online. My name is John Kim. I'm one of the pastors here on staff and it's great to be here and to share with you a message from the Lord. Now, Happy New Year bell pres? Happy New Year.

All right. For some of you, you're still caught up into Christmas. I understand. Now, if you are an adrenaline seeker like me, every new year is filled with plans to go on an adventure. Now, over the years I've bungee jumped off structures. I've river rafted through class-5 waters. I've hacked my way through jungles. I've crossed deserts. I swam with a school of barracuda, but my favorite adrenaline fix has been to scuba dive and I absolutely love it.

There's nothing like being underwater, just you and the whole ocean. Now, I'll never forget in college taking an advanced scuba training class and the final exam was in a waterhole in West Texas, of all places.

Now we were taught how to navigate using a compass and follow a plotted course. And when we got under, it opened up to an underwater canyon, and it was freaking amazing. And at first I thought this was easy-peasy. The water was so clear. After passing the first checkpoint, my confidence grew. But suddenly the water became cloudy. And to the point where the visibility was

almost zero. I started to get scared, but I kept using my training and about 10 minutes after I made it to the second check point, whew.

And then something happened that I will never forget. My regulator stopped working. No air came through it. I sucked in as hard as I could and no air came out. I freaked out. Now, as with all of my near death experiences, time seemed to stop and all I could hear was my heartbeat pounding in my ears. I couldn't see. I couldn't locate my dive partner. I was a gunner.

Now for some of us 2019 or better yet, this past decade was one we'd wish would go away, whether it's a loss of a loved one, a failed relationship, school not going the way you wanted it to, job uncertainties, financial pressures, or life issues so demanding that you can't even breathe.

Now, if that's you, let me start this new year, this next decade by giving you hope. Hope that God loves you so much that he sent his one and only son, Jesus, to give you a new life, a supernatural-filled life where God's spirit and hope surrounds everything you are, hope to become, hope to achieve, hope that is found here in the book of Psalms.

So let's look at the text for today. It starts off by the word blessing. Blessed is the one that is like this, the Psalmist says. Now the word blessed, Asher or Ashrei in Hebrew, literally means happy or joy. And it's written in the plural, in this Psalm.

So it could be better translated, oh, the joys, or the happiness', or how very joyful is this person. But there's more. The word is rooted in an old Acadian word for walking a straight path. In other words, walking in the right path or the right direction. Have you ever been driving at night and you just can't figure out where you are?

You feel that sense of being lost. It's a terrible feeling. But when you see a sign or a landmark that points you into the Asher or the right direction, you're instantly filled with joy.

This is what the Psalmist is trying to get at. Joy is being in the right path, the right direction. This is true happiness. Now, so many people chase happiness and yet so many never find it. And here's why. Happiness is never found by direct pursuit. Happiness is a byproduct of another pursuit. When you pursue Christ and when you pursue his righteousness, Jesus says, "Happiness follows." He says, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you."

Now look at the opening phrase of the Psalm. "Oh, how blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way of sinners... that sinners take, or sit in the company of mockers." So far everything is negative, right? It's all nos. It's as if he's saying, "Happy is a person who does not, who is not marked by what he does not do, the people he does not hang with, the places he does not go to."

Now before you think, "Boy, the Bible is sure a downer." Understand that the positive comes after

the negative. Just ask an athlete who has to say no to doing certain things, and a certain lifestyle, and to restrict their diet so that they can become a great athlete.

So when it's 10:00 PM and a court of Ben and Jerry's chocolate chip cookie dough is calling your name. No, I mean it sounds really good, but no. So what is a blessed one to say no to? Well, first of all, bad advice. One does not walk in step with the wicked. The idea here is being careful who you listen to. Be careful to what you listen to. There are two quick ways to disaster. Take no one's advice or take everyone's advice. We all know people who won't take anyone's advice. "No, don't tell me what to do. No, I won't ask you for your advice. No, I'll figure this out on my own." Not a healthy place to be.

The second is also damaging. When you take everyone's advice, there's some people who make choices in life based on everyone else's opinion. And you know what? Everyone has an opinion on how you should live, and it's not always the best opinion. It's not always godly counsel. It might be well intentioned. It might be even from your own family and friends, but not necessarily what God is trying to speak and say to you.

Now, the second thing, a happy person says no to is bad relationships. The next phrase says, "Or stand in the way that sinners take." A better translation is or stand in the same path of sinners. So first you're walking and now you're standing. The word stand means to linger, to stay a while, to loiter.

Now, let me put it this way. If you walk in the footsteps of bad advice, you will soon stand among those who give it. This is where it gets scary because now your peers are a part of who you are becoming. Apostle Paul says in 1st Corinthians 15:33, "Do not be misled. Bad company corrupts good character."

Some would say, what about loving others as Jesus did? Didn't Jesus consider himself a friend of tax collectors and sinners? He hung out with the unrighteous, but the distinction was that Jesus did not just hang out with them in order to be like them, he hung out with them in hopes that he could raise them up by his life, by his example, by his love, so that they would want to become like him. Christians who move the world are those who don't let the world move them.

Now, the third thing we say no to is bad influence. See for yourself, blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that the sinners take, or here it is, or in the company of mockers. The idea here is one who sits in community of haughty and prideful people, who have no regard for the things of God.

Notice what's happening. The slowing down from walking at first to coming to a standstill and eventually you take a seat. And this is a position of influence. Let me say to you that Apostle Peter took this route. Peter once was walking, following and pursuing Christ. And when Jesus got arrested, Peter that night found himself in a court yard standing among people who are not sympathetic to

the cause of Christ. And eventually what did he do? He sat down and he denied that he even knew who Jesus was. Walking, standing and sitting.

So happy is the person who is described by what he says no to. Now in verse two, the happy person is described by what they delight in, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord who meditates on his law day and night. So the Psalmist moves from all the don'ts to all the dos. And notice what his attitude toward the Bible is. His delight is in the law of the Lord. Does not say his responsibility is to read his Bible every day.

One translation says he finds his greatest pleasure in the law of the Lord. He looks forward to it. Why? Because the book is a means to an end and the end is an encounter with the living God of the universe who created me and you and wants to be in relationship with us.

So, I want to know the word of God so I can get to know the God of the word. I want to know him, and the Bible does that for me. Now, let me give you an example. This year my wife and I will be celebrating 25 years of marriage. Yes. Can you believe we made it this far?

Now, for those of you who made it this far, if you have any ideas what I should do, email me, but just remember, I'm on a tight budget called cheap. Now, my wife can't be with me all the time, especially when I'm away on global trips. But I can carry pictures of her on my phone. And whenever I miss her, I pull out my phone and she's right there with me. And if I'm being honest with you, I send her blowing kisses emojis to her all the time.

Now, the pictures are not the real thing, it's a substitute of the real thing but it reminds me of her. And so does the Bible to us. It reminds us of him. It speaks to us, it gets us in touch with his presence. And we encounter him in supernatural and powerful ways.

Now, here's what's even more amazing. I want you to consider this, King David, when he wrote Psalm 1 and he talked about how happy is a person who delights in the law of the Lord. Did you know that the only Bible that he had at the time was a Pentateuch? The first five books of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

His delight was in those books. Now, how many of you would say "Yes, my favorite book in the Bible is Numbers or Deuteronomy?" But here David says his delight is just that. Now, today we have 66 books of the Bible. We have a treasure of God's words for us. I love David's own words in Psalm 19, "They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold. They are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb."

God's word tastes like honey. It's so good and so sweet. Now, on my last trip back from Asia, I sat next to a person who was glued to his iPad. He was playing Sudoku. Now, he must have spent eight hours playing the puzzles and finally I asked him, "Man, you must love those puzzles." And he goes, "Yeah, I love them." He's hooked on them, he said. He plays them every chance he gets.

It's the first thing he does when he packs his bag for a trip. And it made me think, do I love and delight in God's word as much as Mr. Sudoku.

Now the Psalmist goes on to say that he meditates on his law, day and night. So what does meditation mean? Now, we're not talking about transcendental meditation where one disregards the mind and disassociate with society. Biblical meditation is exactly the opposite. It means you consciously engage the mind and you focus on revealed truth. In this case, the word of God, the Bible.

Now the Hebrew word for meditate is hagah, which means to coo, to mutter, to read in an undertone, or to talk to oneself about. Now the root meaning of this word is a noise when an animal chews its food. Now, can you imagine it? You and I do this sometimes. Now I do this all the time when I eat barbecue. I mean, I take a rib and I'm like, hmm. Hmm. Now you're talking to yourself, right? It's so good. Hmm. Hmm. Hmm.

And you're reacting to what you're eating. And by the way, that picture was my own barbecue I smoked. Very proud of that. Now, this picture of meditation is that you just don't read the scriptures, but you feed on the scriptures. You slow down long enough to hear each word, to emphasize a different word, to say it out loud back to yourself, to get an impression. You slow down.

So can I suggest to you when you read the scriptures, when you read your online Bible on your phone, when you have your devotion time that you slow down and you consider it carefully and more slowly. Meditation is the link between theory and action. Now, you ask yourself these three questions, what does it tell me about God? What does it say about me and what does it want me to do? Now, look at verse three. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither-whatever they do prospers.

You notice what it doesn't say. It doesn't say that person is like a twig, or a two by four, or a log, but it is something that is alive and growing. Something that is flourishing. You know that growth is a natural part of life. You expect growth to happen if there's a living thing. If you have a seed you plant it in the ground and you water it and you expect to see results, you expect growth.

When a baby is born, you expect a baby to grow up to eventually take its first steps. That's the normal, natural expectation of parents. Now, when you see a Christian who is a follower of Christ, someone who's been born again, who has a spiritual life, and there's just sort of always at the same level and you think to yourself, "Something's wrong here."

There ought to be growth, right? But setbacks and adversity are always in our lives. But I love this quote by Charles Stanley, "Adversity is not simply a tool. It is God's most effective tool for the advancement of our spiritual lives. The circumstances and events that we see as setbacks, and oftentimes the very things that launch us into periods of intense spiritual growth. Once we begin to understand this and accept it as spiritual fact of life, adversity becomes easier to bear.

So the tree depicts progress and it also depicts permanence. For you'll notice it says that person is like a tree planted by streams of water. Can you picture a tree with its roots going deep down into the soil, deriving its nutrients, anchoring itself, and becoming a permanent fixture of the landscape?

Now, let me encourage you to join Pastor Scott [Dadly 00:18:24] this upcoming Wednesday. He is personally inviting us to join him as he starts this new series called all in. And on Wednesday nights Pastor Scott wants us to come out to family dinner to join him and then to join the rest of the story group where you will learn about getting more out of your faith and living the life Jesus came to give us.

It's a time where we become like trees planted by streams of water. Now look at the end of the verse, whatever they do prospers. What an amazing life. The word prosper means full grown or mature. Here's a picture of a life that's aligned with God and thus a life that is in balance, personal life, spiritual life, family life, business life, leisure life, all in balance.

Now, it doesn't mean that there'll never be problems, but because a person is connected to God and in that connection, in that blessing, everything they seem to touch is just blessed. They're joyful throughout a lifetime. I've always loved the story about a little boy who went into the pet store to pick out a dog. And he puts his face up to the window and there's his puppy wagging its tail.

And he goes, "Daddy, I want the one with the happy ending." Don't we all want the life with the happy ending? A life marked by growth, a life marked by fulfillment, meaning and refreshment in God's touch of blessing and prosperity and maturity upon it? So I'm out of air at the bottom of this waterhole in the middle of West Texas.

Now, what's interesting is that this is the second time this has happened to me. Can you believe it? The first time was when I was first learning how to scuba dive in my beginner class. You see, we're taught to problem shoot when something could go wrong underwater. So I started to check my regulator, my air pressure gauge, I'd plenty of air left. I checked my buoyancy compensator and then I checked the connection from where the regulator connects back to the air take. All of it checked okay.

And then I checked the air valve and then I realized it was shut. It was closed. So then I twisted it open and air came rushing back into my regulator and I was able to breathe. I took deep breaths. Whew. Now when this happened to me before, I found out that my scuba instructor had purposely turned off the valve that gave air to my regulator. He was behind me and I couldn't see him. And I remember how shocked I was when he told me he did it.

But I also remember him saying, "John, I train everyone to deal with unexpected problems like your valve being closed. And I was right behind you so that if you had any problems, I would have been there for you." You have all the training you need. When life throws a curve ball at you, we're not

helpless. God has given us everything we need to live life abundantly. We have his love letter to us.

Blessed is the one who delights in the law of the Lord. So, no matter what you're going through or what you've been through, what problems you're experiencing right now, no matter how much life seems to take your breath away, the triune God is there for you. Father, son, Holy spirit loves you, created you, and the son gave his life up for you so that you would have a new life, be a new creation, rise above the fray, conquer battles, reflect his goodness to the world that you would be filled with his power, his spirit to live all in for him.

Amen. Amen.

Father, this new year, this new decade, grant us the supernatural life you've promised to us through your son, Jesus. May our lives be like a forest of trees, bringing blessing both here in our community and throughout the world, in Jesus' name, amen.

Discussion Questions: Read Psalm 1:1-3

1. Blessed can be translated as "Happy." How does the world define happiness? How do you define happiness? How would God define happiness?
2. What does a blessed person NOT do?
3. By contrast what does the blessed person do?
4. What illustration does the Psalmist use to describe a blessed person? What is its significance?
5. In what ways does Jesus life shed light on Psalm 1:1-3?