



HG220: God's Promise Of: **Blessing**

Psalm 1:1-6

Home Group Study Notes

25 April 2021 - Revd Christine Williams



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group
with you, along with any previous notes and other
resources which might be helpful for your discussions.*



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

If you were a tree, what kind of tree would you be?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



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Psalm 1:1-6

Home Group Sermon

25 April 2021 - Revd Christine Williams

I love this Psalm. People who know me, know that I say that about a lot of Psalms. But Psalm one is definitely up there in the top ten. I think it's the tree. But we'll come on to that later.

Psalm 1 is wisdom literature. Wisdom literature is found mainly in Proverbs but also in many of the Psalms, Job and other parts of the OT. A lot of proverbs are one-liners or, as in this Psalm, there is a contrast drawn between good and bad life choices; good and bad people. God will bless the one but not the other. It echoes the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 30:15 'I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.' These words came as the children of Israel were entering the Promised Land.

God was giving the land to them as their inheritance and Moses reminded them of the way to live and urged them to choose life. Follow God's ways and obey his laws, he said, listen to his voice and pray to him and all will be well. But it was amazing how quickly the people went off to worship other Gods that the neighbouring tribes worshipped. If you read through the OT you quickly discover that idol worship is one of the big themes that run through the story of God's people.

God had miraculously brought them out of Egypt and through the Red Sea on dry land; he led them through the desert feeding them with manna and quails and finding water for them to drink, and then he conquered many of the cities of the Promised Land like Jericho where the people didn't even have to engage in fighting, and yet they still went off to worship the idols of the neighbouring tribes. The prophets and teachers had to keep reminding the people to worship their God. He is the one and only true God.

When we read the wisdom statements as this one in Psalm 1 we realise that it is an oversimplification. People are never wholly good or totally bad. The Hebrew people were never totally faithful in worshipping their LORD God. They had good moments but those moments seemed never to last for long. Neither were the neighbouring people totally bad people. Ruth and Rahab, for example, were not Israelites but were significant players in the story of Israel.

It was not really a question of ‘we are the good guys and those pagans are the sinners’. Nor was it a question of ‘I am a good person but you are a wicked person’.

The divide between good and bad is not about national boundaries, nor me versus you but it runs straight down the middle of each of us. As St Paul said, ‘the good I want to do I don’t do and the evil I don’t want to do, that is what I do.’ We are all sinners and fall short of God’s glory; even when we are trying to follow God’s ways. The Hebrew people were the ones who had the privilege and the responsibility of knowing the LORD and his Laws and they had seen his power in action but they were unable to live out their responsibility consistently for any length of time. In time they began to look rather like all the other tribes. The wisdom literature of the Old Testament gives us the ideal vision of how things should be with God’s people.

Today, though, we come to read Psalm 1 through the lens of the New Testament. We are people who know Jesus. We know that Jesus came into the world to save all of us sinners. We know that we have been made righteous through his death and resurrection. We know him through the power of the Holy Spirit. We know that through Jesus we are really blessed. Ephesians 1:3 ‘Praise be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.’

Let us look at what Psalm 1 says to people like us who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. How can we be really blessed (or happy as some translations have it)? Psalm 1 starts by describing it in terms of where we walk, stand or sit (in the NIV version). ‘The Blessed by God’ person does not ‘*walk in the counsel of the ungodly*’. We wouldn’t consciously act on the advice of amoral people, would we?

Would we as ‘blessed by God people’ ‘*stand in the way of sinners*.’? We live in a broken world where we are surrounded by people who think it is normal to be prejudiced against this or that group of people. They think it is ok to be spiteful and do selfish things. It is impossible not to stand next to sinners but do we follow the crowd or do we inspire them?

Do we ‘*sit in the seat of scoffers*. This appears milder than the other two examples but it is easy to get the quick laugh at someone else’s expense. It is easy to tease someone in a hurtful way or laugh at a joke that is damaging to someone. It can do an immense amount of damage when we fail to value people.

The question for us then is where do the ‘blessed by God’, where do the happy people, get their ideas from? Who instructs us? Do we get our information and make our decisions based on Facebook or Twitter? Do we get our moral teaching from TV soaps? How do we arrive at the choices we make?

When we are shopping why do we want that particular ‘thing’ or a new ‘this or that’? Who is pulling our strings? Here is a little test. How many people feel the need to get crisps or chocolate after seeing an advertisement on the TV or standing next to sweets at a checkout?

That is how easily it is to be swayed; how fickle our minds are. If it is as easy to fall for crisps or chocolate how easily can we be persuaded about other more important things? Who we listen to is the key. Who do we walk with? Who do we stand alongside? Where do we sit? Don’t get me wrong. I’m not advocating separating ourselves away from non-believers; far from it. But are we influencing them or are they influencing us?

The blessed by God person is someone who is immersed in the desire to follow God’s ways. They listen to his voice and dig into his word in the Bible to discover him more. It is a matter of focus. It is a joy to know God is our father. It is a cause for rejoicing that we have been saved through the death and resurrection of Jesus. To follow him is a delight because he knows us through and through and he loves us anyway. He has our best interests at heart. His law, his way of living, is not onerous because it is a law of love. It is all about where we walk, stand and sit.

In Psalm 1 it’s the image of the tree that I love. I always think of a particular tree I know. It’s in Pleshey not far from the Diocesan retreat house. There is a public garden by the remains of the Pleshey castle moat and there is a huge weeping willow by the lake. It is beautiful. It is a really Happy Tree. 4 things about the tree all beginning with R:

Right Place

It is in exactly the right spot! If you have ever been to Beth Chatto’s garden near Colchester you will know that her mantra was, ‘the right plant in the right place’. To get the best from your garden you have to plant sun-loving plants in the sun and shade in the shade; bog plants in water and succulents in free draining soil. That is how you get your garden to thrive. The weeping willow in Pleshey is in exactly the right place for a willow and it is thriving. The question we each need to think about is are we in the right place? Are you doing the right thing at work or in the life of the church? Are you living in the right town and mixing with the right people? Where does God want you to be? We all need to check that out with him on a regular basis. Have you checked with God recently?

We will flourish in body mind and soul when we are living the way God wants us to live. It may not be easy but it will be RIGHT. We will know that it is the right thing to be doing. To get the best out of anyone they have to be in the right place, with the right people, in the right job and with the power of Jesus living in them. That is true for every single person who has ever lived. It is when we grow best and find contentment.

Rooted

The blessed by God person knows what he or she believes and knows where her hope lies. Eph 3:17-19. For the Christian that means knowing that Christ lives in me. There is a confidence for whatever the future brings because He is in charge. We need to know our faith and we will need to really immerse ourselves in him; study scripture and pray to keep up to date with our loving Father. We cannot depend on roots from a few years ago. Are our roots still fully functional? Are we properly rooted?

Resilient

A tree planted by a river will not suffer water loss easily. Even in the fiercest draught the roots will still find any water there is. The leaves will not wither and there will still be fruit. It is in the draught that the tree's rootedness and resilience show. It is when we are under pressure and life is hard that we have to pray more, but it is then that we really find out how strong God's arms are. Resilience has been important in the challenging situations we have been experiencing in the past year. Do you feel resilient? How resilient are you? For example, how would you cope if we had to have further lockdowns and restrictions? How are you keeping in step with God? How are you being fed on a daily basis?

Response

Psalm 1 is a joyful Psalm. God is good. He wants us to flourish. As verse 6 says, 'The Lord watches over the ways of the righteous.' He wants his people to find joy in his service. He wants us to be able to stand when trials come. He supports his faithful people who want to follow his ways. There is real pleasure in being blessed by God.

Prayer

Help us Lord to desire what you desire and do what you want us to do. Help us Lord to grow in love for you and find ourselves closer to you each day. Help each of us to know that we in the right place where you want us to be. Help us to have roots that go deep into your love. Help us to be resilient in times of trouble and help us to respond with joy to all that you give to us day by day through Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Emmanuel Church Text for 2021

*“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul,
firm and secure.”*

Hebrews 6:19



Looking Upwards (40 mins)

Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1. How do you decide who to vote for?

2. How can we know God's will for our lives?

3. How did you come to follow the career you have/or had? How and when did you decide to move house the last time? Do you feel that you are in 'the right place'?

4. What do you do to maintain your personal contact with God? Share good practical habits that help you to be rooted.

5. Resilience affects us spiritually, physically, and emotionally. How can we improve our spiritual, physical and emotional resilience?

6. Praise God for his goodness. Respond to the goodness of God in prayer and worship.



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Inwards (15 mins) *Caring For Each Other*

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins) *Concern For Others*

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

Emmanuel Church, Laindon Road, Billericay, Essex. CM12 9LD

P 01277 632120 E Emmanueloffice@billericaychurches.org W Emmanuel-church.info
FB Emmanuel Church Billericay T EmmanuelCM12 YT Emmanuel Church Billericay

Part Of The Billericay & Little Burstead Team Ministry