

"You Come Too"  
Psalm 1; Matthew 7:21-27; Jeremiah 17:5-8  
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I. Introduction

His life had been a journey looking for purpose, answers, meaning.....something to fill a hole inside. He had explored the direction of his passions, indulging every feeling, and had numerous sexual relationships....and still felt empty. He had studied and followed various philosophers, and came away empty. He was currently teaching rhetoric in Milan, Italy.....still looking, probing, asking, wondering.....still empty.

Sitting in a garden he heard the voice of a child.....a sweet voice in a song singing, "Pick it up and read, pick it up and read." At first they thought it might be a children's song. But as he listened closely he began to wonder if it might be more. The idea came to him that it might be the voice of God, commanding him to pick up the Bible and read. And so he did. He picked up a Bible and let it fall open. He read the first verses he saw, Romans 13:13-14: "Not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual excess and lust, not in quarreling and jealousy. Rather, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh."

Reading the passage he felt his heart flood with light....with meaning.....with purpose. He dramatically turned from his current life, and became a Christian. The man's name is Augustine, one of the most important theologians in the 2000 year history of the Christian Church.

Reflecting of his experience, he would later write this famous sentence of prayer: "You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." An empty restlessness finally found peace and purpose.

The Bible is more than history and philosophy and moral sayings. It is the report of different people's experiences with God over time, and through the reading and sharing of it we come to discover the revelation of God's self, and the restless, empty heart finds home.

II. Text

Today we begin our new sermon series on the Psalms. And as we begin, Psalm 1, the introduction to the whole book of Psalms, invites us to the blessing of God's revelation if we study and delight in the Word of God that is to follow.

**Read Psalm 1.**

III. Brief Exegesis

The Psalm begins with the promise of a blessing; "Blessed is the person who doesn't do this, but instead does this." The blessed person, the writer says, will not

practice a disregard toward the Bible, which gets progressively worse. It starts with “walking in the counsel of the wicked,” which means considering the advice of evildoers. Next is “standing in the way of sinners,” which means conforming to the example of sinners. Finally, there’s “sitting in the seat of scoffers,” which means arrogantly mocking the way, the people and the revelation of God. The blessed person never “starts down that path,” but instead delights in God’s word.....delights in the revelation of God’s self and God’s will for the creation.....and studies it, meditates on it, discusses it, lives it.....and finds his or her life changed.

The blessed person who studies God’s word in scripture is like a tree in an arid land, planted by a stream. Roots go down and into the water. When there is dryness and dust everywhere, the tree has leaf, and fruit, and life. A few weeks ago Jeanne and I visited my parents in Yuma, Arizona. August is not the best time to visit Yuma. It is hot there.....about 105-110 degrees in August. Sometimes it’s hotter. It’s a desert there; sand, dust, and dry rock. My dad has put in desert landscaping around their home. It’s appropriate for the area. There’s no grass and flowers. Rather it’s stone and brick, cactus and small bushes with long thorns. And then there’s the orange tree.....one orange tree amidst the thorns and stone. It’s lush and green; “leaves that don’t wither,” and “fruit to be yielded in its season.” The fruit “to be yielded” is one orange this year.....one green fruit that will turn orange, and more to come next year. How is an orange tree possible in heat and sand of Yuma? Do you know what the secret is? The secret is water.....a “stream of water.” We’d call it a little sprinkler system that my dad built, that waters the orange tree at night, making green leaves and fruit possible. In arid world, it’s a sign of life....green leaf and orange fruit in a land of dust and rock. The blessed person of Psalm 1 is like that.

But not the evildoers.....not the sinners.....not the scoffers of God’s way and God’s word. Instead, they are like chaff, driven away by the wind. The day will come. Judgment will fall. The wind will blow. And they will be forgotten. In days long ago sheaves of grain would be laid on the threshing floor, usually on the top of a hill, and an ox pulling a stone wheel would go over it. The hooves of the ox and the hard stone of the wheel would cause the grain to be broken from the stalk and husk. The farmer would then take a threshing shovel, scoop up the grain and chaff, and throw it in the air. The heavier grain would fall to the threshing floor, while the lighter, worthless chaff would be blow away by the wind....gone and forgotten. Such will be the way and life of those who choose other ways.....ways of life opposed to God’s word and God’s way. Gone and forgotten.

Restlessness or peace.....blessing or cursing.....meditating or mocking.....a tree by a stream or chaff driven by the wind, such is the choice the Psalm presents to us. The passage from the prophet Jeremiah proclaims the same stark contrasts of

blessing and cursing. And I think Jesus has this same type of contrast in mind as he concludes his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7; wise or foolish, doing his word or not, building on rock or sand. It all starts with delight in God's Word in scripture....or not.

#### IV. Reflections

Reformed, or Presbyterian, Christians have a long history of being people serious about scripture and theology. We have been the thinkers.....the ones who studied and read.....the ones who talked about the deep ways of faith and God in this, real world. We are the ones who still believe that the clearest revelation of God is in Jesus Christ, and the second is in scripture. We are the ones who are known as belonging to a tradition that is "reformed, and always reforming, according to the Word of God." We are the ones who have engaged with the insights of Bible and science, and have not been afraid of truth. We are the ones who still require all pastors to know Hebrew and Greek, because the Old Testament is written in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek. And we are ones who don't have final authority in bishops, councils or traditions, because we believe final authority rests in faithful people, led by the Holy Spirit, seeking God's Word in scripture.

But we are in danger of losing our way. We are people who know less and less of God's Word in scripture. We are forgetting the stories of our faith. There has been too much "walking, standing and sitting" and too little "delight and meditation." We have three Sunday School classes for adults....attend. We need teachers for our children to learn the stories of the Christian faith ....help. This fall I'm teaching a six session overview of the whole Old Testament on Wednesday evenings.....participate. Rev. Maloney is organizing a program to read through the whole Bible in a year....it can be done.....commit. Blessed is the person who delights in law of the Lord.

The woman is in her 80's, and one of the small "s" saints of the church. A lifetime of faith now "bears its fruit in its season." Her husband passed away a few years ago. Her children have moved away to jobs, and she knows her grandchildren through pictures. Her hips are bad, and her eyes have grown a little dim. But she is full of laughter and life. She has her regular seat at church. She calls and cares for her friends. When I visit I sit on the couch, and she sits in her chair. I ask questions to find out how she's doing. She says she going to need to move soon. The house is too much. An assisted living situation will work fine, and it will give her worried kids peace. She says it's her gift to them. Soon I find the conversation turning; she wants to know how I'm doing. She asks about my wife, and about my kids, and about any trips coming up. Sitting there I wonder what her secret might be. How is it that she has not become overwhelmed with her loses, and still cares so much for others? How is it that she is one of the small "s" saints who have blessed my life? And then I see it. It's there by her

chair, on a little table. It's her well worn Bible, with the Daily Bread devotion on top of it, read every day. And I realize it's just that simple: a lifetime of delight in the Word of the Lord. She is a tree planted by streams of water. There is fruit and green leaf.

Jeanne and I are still reading the poems of Robert Frost together. A few nights ago we read "The Pasture." It is a short poem, and in it Frost gives the patient reader a lot to ponder.

"I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;  
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away  
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):  
I sha'n't be gone long. You come too.

I'm going out to fetch the little calf  
That's standing by the mother. It's so young  
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.  
I sha'n't be gone long. You come too."

Standing on its own this poem is an invitation by Frost to come along and enjoy the wonder and joy of simple things; a pasture spring, the way water clears, a young calf and its mother. It's an invitation to share in his joy, and see, understand and live differently.

But this poem is also the first poem in a collection of poems entitled "You Come Too." Frost put this poem first. As such it is also the introductory poem to the whole collection, like Psalm 1 is the introductory Psalm to the whole book of Psalms. In this context the poem is an invitation to all that follows. In this collection of poetry Frost is going on a journey, but he "sha'n't be gone long." He will share joy and wonder and mystery.....take a little time....."You come too."

Blessed is the person who delights in the Word of the Lord.....like a tree planted by streams of water.....there's leaf, and fruit and life. The writer of the Psalm is going on a journey, and we're invited to come along. It's the joy and wonder and the mystery of the revelation of the holy God in scripture. "Pick it up, pick it up, pick it up and read." "You come too."