



SERMON RECAP

OCTOBER 26, 2025

Torah Psalms: The Pursuit of Happiness

Series: Spirituality for Justice

Scripture: Psalm 1

At one point in my life I realized that I had a group of friends that I didn't really like. I know this sounds weird, but it is true. I was in a group of people that I never really chose. I played football and basketball, so the people I knew also played football and basketball. That was about all we had in common. They were not nice people, and the more I was around them I realized that I wasn't being myself. I was trying to impress them, or just avoid being the target of their jokes.

I was like the ones in the first part of Psalm 1. I was trying so hard to "take the seat with the scoffers" (NRSV). I realized that walking the path I was on was not good for me. I was taking advice of the wicked instead of being true to myself. I was deeply unhappy, so I made a conscious effort to try and shift my social network.

I leaned into other groups. I found people who liked the things I liked. Within a year I found a new group of friends that boosted my confidence. Literally everything in my life was better. My grades improved. My mental health improved. It was one of the best - and most important things I ever did.

I'd like to say it was because I read Psalm 1. It wasn't, but when I look back now at that time in my life it feels like a perfect illustration of what it means to be truly happy. I didn't find happiness in reading God's Instruction, but I found happiness in being true to who I was created to be.

Psalm 1 is the introduction to our collection of Psalms. It is the first song in the book, and it serves as a reminder of why the book is important in the first place. Delighting in "God's Instruction" is about delighting in the story of God's love for the people God loves. The Hebrew word the CEB version translates to "God's Instruction" is *Torah*. The more traditional translation is "The Law," but the Torah is more than laws.

The Torah contains the Ten Commandments and the Levitical code, yes. It also contains the stories of Creation, the story of God calling Abraham and Sarah. It includes the story of Joseph's rise, fall, rise, and the reconciliation of his family. It includes Moses' call, the liberation of Israel, and God providing bread in the wilderness. The Torah is the story of God's love saving God's people time and again.

When Psalm 1 tells us to delight in the Torah, we are to delight in God's love. "God's Instruction" is simple: "God loves



Claude Monet painted a series of works in Antibes, in the south of France. This one is serving as the focal image of our series and is known simply as "Antibes" (1888).

the people, and will save us over and over again." This is worth delighting in. This is a story worth reciting. This is a story that sends deep roots into the ground. Like a tree planted by the water, one who delights in God's love can withstand the wind of the scoffers. This is what is meant by "Spirituality for Justice," the title of this sermon series.

Spirituality, as it is often defined, is the search for purpose, meaning, and connection to something larger than oneself. For the Christian, it is about more than a search; it is about tapping into the source of power that can transform lives, communities, and the world. Spirituality is about connecting to God, and God is about doing justice. As we have seen from Psalm 82 two weeks ago and enthronement Psalms last week (Psalm 96-99). Establishing God's justice is the purpose of God.

For the Christian, Spirituality is about finding the power to establish God's justice. It is hard, tiring work. The world is full of scoffers and wicked who seem to prosper. But the truly happy person can endure. Those who work for justice are like trees planted by the water. They are not like the tumbleweed who blow in the wind after every trend or in search of status and earthly power.

The truly happy person is the one who taps into the deep wellspring of Spiritual power that is found in God's Instruction. Read the story of God's love for people God loves. Recite the story of God's liberating power. Delight in the story of God providing, God saving, and God restoring. This is who we are. Like trees planted by the water, we will not sit with scoffers. Instead, we will recite God's love, because that is a story worth taking delight in.

NEXT WEEK:

Lamentation Psalms: Hear My Cry, Psalm 5