

Psalm one: stay calm and delight in the Lord -- (voor huisgroepen, zie pag.3)

Are you all enjoying the cooler weather? During this recent heat wave, the best advice has been for people to stay calm and drink a lot of water. We can then do the things we need to do. Ideally, even when we're feeling hot and sticky, we are calm enough to also be nice to people. At the end of the heat wave we still want to have some friends left! We want to be resilient.

Psalm 1

1 Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers,

2 but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.

3 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.

4 Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.

5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

6 For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

Let's imagine a YouTube film of psalm one.

Strong hands are carefully planting a young tree nearby a stream of water. The tree's roots dig down into the soil around the stream.. The water brings the nutrients up through the trunk to the branches, all the way to the leaves. In some seasons, the tree produces fruit. But always, the leaves of the tree stay green and strong. The tree provides shade. Some people have come for a picnic under the tree to enjoy the cool protection from the sun. Someone is crying, someone may be hurt. And some of the leaves located on lower branches are plucked, providing a healing balm. We see now a bigger picture: the sun is beating down on the wider landscape. The tree has become strong enough to endure even in the hottest weather. A scorching wind rises up. In the distant fields, chaff is blowing away, scattered. The tree sways in the wind. It's resilient because it's supple, connected to a great source of water. The film ends

Psalm one is a poem, not an instruction manual. And the heart of it is in the middle part. So we're going to jump in there, to get a grip on the key point. Then we'll build out from there.

The key point is this: delighting in God will lead to your prospering, even in difficult conditions.

We're going to talk more about delighting, and what that means. But let's have a working definition: when we delight in God, We honour with God what he loves.

'Delighters' are so busy enjoying God that they no longer want to take part in what is going on in the first verse. What is that? Let's read it.

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers.

It's just one verse, but it's also full of imagery. Verse 1 shows how attitudes toward God can develop if you don't love him. Some people don't recognize what God cares about. Some people refuse to care about what God cares about. Finally, some people mock God and what he cares about. It's a progression. These 'worldly attitudes' can affect believers too. So we definitely want to know what God cares about! The Bible is full of examples. Here are a couple of important verses.

Genesis 1:31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

John 3:16: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

God loves and values his creation. He loves and values us! We are so important to him that he has paid a great price so that we will live forever with him.

Anything opposing God and his purposes is evil. The psalm shows us that evil has a voice. It mocks God. And that voice is mocking God. Instead of trusting God's values and opinions, mockers create their own opinions.

The Blessed person trusts in God's opinions so much that they have no interest in mocking God and his creation in any way. I long for my life to look more & more like that blessed person in the psalm, but I need help. That's where Jesus comes in. He lived from the place of trusting his father.

Jesus and Zacchaeus: Remember Zacchaeus, the tax collector? (Luke 19). He climbed into the tree, so he could see Jesus pass by in Jericho. Then Jesus stopped, and said to him, hey, I'm coming over to your house today. This was a great honour for Zacchaeus, so he threw a big party for Jesus, and invited all of his friends. During the party he told Jesus that he had undergone a change of heart. He decided to take drastic steps to repay people he had cheated. Jesus rejoiced in this, saying, 'this man too is a son of Abraham.' Zacchaeus had always been a valuable and beloved son of Abraham, but he didn't realize it. Jesus helped Zacchaeus recognize who he truly was.

Standing outside the party, at a distance, were some people who didn't understand this. These people were complaining about Jesus' behaviour. They didn't realize they were mocking God. By their interpretation, Jesus seemed to do all the negative commands of psalm one! First, Jesus stood talking with Zacchaeus; then he walked home with him and then he sat at table with Zach and his criminal buddies. The Pharisees were outraged because they started from their limited definition of sin: they saw it mainly as behaving outside the rules. They began to judge and reject people who didn't fit the rules. Jesus started from a different place: he started from trusting in his Father. From this place he saw the brokenness of humanity. But instead of rejecting us he trusted God's opinion of us. And so, Jesus valued people, no matter what they did. His love heals and restores.

What does it mean to delight in the law of the Lord, and to meditate on it day and night?

1 What is delighting in the law of the Lord? First, The 'law of the Lord'. God gave the law to the Israelites to help them get to know him. They had been afraid to have a personal relationship like Moses had. They could not trust. We delight in the law, because the giver of the law is good. At the right time, God sent his son. Jesus fully reveals the father and fulfils the law. We now delight in Jesus.

The word delight is a very emotional word. If we delight in something, we give ourselves over to it. An everyday example: on a hot afternoon you delight in a great big scoop of your favourite ice cream. You sit down with your friends and enjoy every bite. You turn to each other and ask, is yours as good? Fantastic. God wants us to know him and delight in him. That has never changed. But to do that, we must be able to trust him. And that's the problem that never changed until Jesus came: Humanity finds itself unable trust him—in fact, we blame him for all kinds of things. It's like we don't dare to even go into his ice-cream salon. We settle for other things to satisfy us— and then we're angry with him because we're not satisfied. This leads to the hopelessness we see in the psalm. People are frustrated. They see their lives flying away like chaff in the wind. How do we solve the crisis of trust? When we learn to know Christ he begins to build in us the capacity to trust. He is the true psalm-one man. Jesus was able to fully trust his heavenly father—even as he endured the most difficult circumstances any human can face—rejection, hatred, injustice— even death on a cross. He did not wither. No, he rose! And now he lives in us. Even in the midst of difficulties Jesus doesn't just trust but

also delights in God. Jesus helps us see that God's intentions for us are good: for life, for our wellbeing.

2. What is meditating day and night? Even though I've prayed and studied the Bible a lot this week, I must confess something: I have meditated this week also on other things than on His word, day and night. During the recent heat wave I found myself meditating on ways to keep the house cool. We got a new sunshade to hang by the front of the house. I spent one morning tracking the sunshine coming in thorough the front windows. I was trying to make sure the sunshade was placed just right. Every ten minutes I noted down how the shade was doing. While I feel silly telling you how I wanted to 'optimise' my sunshade, it does have a point. Sometimes I go too far trying to optimising things-- the sunshade, my errands, whatever. 'Going too far' means I'm having trouble with priorities. If my plan has become supremely important to me, I notice that I begin to devalue things that God cares about. 'cars should get out of the way' and 'certain People should get in line with my schedule'. Ouch...stepping over the line. When it's 'all about me', I'm clearly out of balance with the Lord. I can do one of two things: first, I can beat myself up about it, and try harder to be nice. This I have found to be fairly useless; it's not biblical, either. The Second option is day and night to accept God's open invitation to draw near to him to get some of his joy: the Joy of the Lord. So what do I think is meditating day and night? It's running to your friendship with God, at all moments of the day—being sure that he welcomes you.

How can we, as Jesus-followers, be inspired by this Psalm?

1. Your place as a Jesus-follower is being in this world, filled with the life of Christ. Even so, living in this world means we will face difficulties of all kinds. He promises us his loving presence—even in the midst of heat waves. So Take heart: he is with you.

Huisgroepen: Praat samen over wat het betekent voor een ieder van jullie om in de wereld samen met Jezus te zijn. Bid samen voor elkaar en voor de mensen om je heen die Jezus nog niet kennen (collegas, burens bv)— dat God Zich openbaart aan ons en aan hen, en dat we er open voor staan.

2. Jesus gives us the strength to trust God so that we can leave mocking behind. Through the faith of Jesus in us we can value people as God's dearly loved ones, and we can—day and night—live in our identity as beloved son or daughter.

Huisgroepen: lees psalm 139 samen, en dank God voor zijn nabijheid en zegen

3. Our lives will then become resilient— the leaves of Jesus, bringing healing to the world. This is what God cares about, that we join with him in restoring his creation:

Revelations 22:1&2, disciple John speaking:

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Huisgroepen: Dank God voor zijn plan voor de wereld;

4. Andere Bijbel teksten: handelingen 9 heeft het bekeringsverhaal van Saulus; Lukas 19 gaat over Zacchaeus, psalm 139: How wonderful are your thoughts toward me, O God!