

Sermon for September 7, 2025 – The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Psalm 1 EHV

Theme: Happy is the man who delights in the Lord's instruction!

*¹How blessed is the man
who does not walk in the advice of the wicked,
who does not stand on the path with sinners,
and who does not sit in a meeting with mockers.
²But his delight is in the teaching of the LORD,
and on his teaching he meditates day and night.
³He is like a tree planted beside streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season,
and its leaves do not wither.
Everything he does prospers.
⁴Not so the wicked!
No, they are like the chaff which the wind blows away.
⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
⁶Yes, the LORD approves of the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.*

He was a good kid who always listened to his dad. One day, however, everything changed.

While out for a walk, a group of kids his age invited him to join them in doing something they shouldn't be doing. At first, he hesitated. He knew his dad wouldn't approve. But they kept urging him, so he gave in. "Just this once," he thought. As the other kids cheered him on, he felt their approval.

Soon, they asked him to hang out again. This time, he gave in more easily. Before long, he didn't feel guilty about his actions at all. Instead, he enjoyed acceptance from his new friends. They taught him not to care about rules but to do whatever felt good.

The "good kid" became part of the gang. His father warned him about the danger, but he laughed it off. He wanted nothing to do with his family anymore. He just wanted to be with his new friends, enjoying their reckless ways.

Is this story about a teenager joining a gang? No. It's about a Christian enticed away from his heavenly Father by the world. First, dabbling in sin. Then, growing attached. Finally, scoffing at God's Word altogether.

That's the danger Psalm 1 warns us about. The devil, the world, and our sinful flesh are very skilled at enticing us away from God. So how can we resist? By staying deeply rooted in God's Word.

Let us consider that truth with Psalm 1 as our guide under the theme: **Happy is the man who delights in the Lord's instruction.**

Our Psalm begins with the word “blessed,” which refers to a genuine happiness that fills a person with lasting joy. Where can such happiness be found? Not from the sinful world, that’s for sure, as the Psalmist writes:

¹How blessed is the man who does not walk in the advice of the wicked, who does not stand on the path with sinners, and who does not sit in a meeting with mockers.

Notice the progression: walking, standing, sitting. Sin rarely pulls someone away all at once. First comes curiosity. You “walk” in the world’s advice—dabbling and experimenting. At first, you think, “I’ll step back into my relationship with the Lord in the future. I just want to try these things.”

But soon you’re “standing with sinners”—no longer moving away but starting to embrace their way of thinking. God’s Word begins to feel restrictive, even outdated.

Finally comes “sitting with mockers”—not just joining in sin but scoffing at God’s truth. What once seemed unthinkable now feels normal.

That is how people fall away from Christ, which is why Psalm 1 warns us: a Christian’s true happiness is not found in the ways of the world. Instead, the psalmist says:

²But his delight is in the teaching of the LORD, and on his teaching he meditates day and night.

Why do Christians love God’s Word? Because in it we hear both His Law and Gospel, which the LORD gave for our good.

The Law exposes our hearts. It shows us the danger of dabbling in sin and reminds us that we, too, have neglected God’s Word. Who among us can claim we haven’t? Too often, we have given more time to worldly things than to Scripture. Too often, we have walked in the advice of the wicked without even noticing. Yes, the Law reveals our heart’s utter corruptness and drives us to repentance.

But then comes the Gospel: the good news of the Lord’s great love for us in Christ. It tells us that *God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*¹

What did God’s Son do for us? He never walked in the advice of the wicked or enjoyed a meeting with mockers. Instead, He stood firm in His Father’s will – perfectly keeping God’s law in our place. Then He took all our sins upon Himself and carried them to the cross. He died for our neglect of His Word, our sins of compromising with the world, and our rebellion against His will. He rose again to prove we are reconciled to God.

Yes, the Gospel of Jesus is God's "testimony" that *He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*ⁱⁱ That's why we delight in His Word! Why? Because every page points us to Jesus, the Saviour who offers everyone forgiveness, peace, and everlasting life through faith in Him.

Possessing those blessings through faith in Jesus, we now want to thank our LORD. How? By keeping His Law - not as a way to earn eternal life, but out of thanksgiving for everything He has done for us. That is why the Christian finds delight in meditating on God's teaching day and night.

The word "meditate" carries the idea of mulling over God's word through repetition - trying to memorize and take it to heart.

Picture it this way: a man reads a section of God's Word in the morning and considers how it both applies to him and points to Christ. Throughout the day, he applies God's Word to his experiences, using it to guide his interactions with others. When opportunities arise, he talks about God's promises with his family, friends, and acquaintances. Finally, when it's time to go to bed, he submits his day to the Lord in prayer, trusting in God's promise to forgive his sins, bless his work, and continue to watch over him as he sleeps.

Concerning such a believer, the Psalmist writes:

³He is like a tree planted beside streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, and its leaves do not wither. Everything he does prospers.

Picture a mighty oak by a stream. Its roots sink deep into the soil, drawing strength from the constant flow of water. Storms may shake it, but it stands firm.

So it is with all believers who draw their life from the Gospel. Rooted in Christ, you cannot help but bear fruit—words of kindness, deeds of love, and a life that reflects your Saviour. People notice and they praise God for you. Even when trials come, you remain grounded, because the Lord Himself sustains you.

Understand, however, that the prosperity God promises is not earthly riches or an easy life. He promises something far greater: His presence with you, protection from evil, and His Spirit guaranteeing to bring you safely to His heavenly kingdom.ⁱⁱⁱ

⁴Not so the wicked! No, they are like the chaff which the wind blows away.

Chaff is worthless and lifeless — blown away at harvest. So too are the wicked. By not having Christ, they have no life^{iv} and will be blown away by God's Spirit on the Last Day.

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

Unless they repent, those who exchanged faith in the Gospel to pursue the selfish ways of this wicked world will share the same fate as those who never believed: separation from God and His holy ones in hell.

⁶ *For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*

The righteous are not those who never sin, but those who cling to Christ in faith.^v The LORD promise to watch over all such people - guarding their steps and preserving their life by the power of His Word in which they've been rooted.

But that invites the question: how do we keep ourselves rooted deeply in God's Word so as not to be enticed away by the world?

In answer to that question, one of my seminary professors once wrote:

“Christians cannot expect to resist the values of the unbelieving world if they devote one hour of the week to meditating on God’s Word and the other 167 hours to providing for the needs of their bodies and enjoying worldly entertainment. If we wish to have our whole lives shaped by God’s Word, we need more than our Sunday worship hour. We need regular Bible study with fellow Christians. We need to recognize the importance of regular family devotions and personal Bible study. We need to cultivate the habit of remembering and applying the truths of God’s Word when we are confronted with temptations or faced with decisions in daily life. God’s children will find their greatest joy and satisfaction in studying his Word and thinking about it day and night.”^{vi}

Sadly, we are all guilty of prioritizing worldly things over God's Word. In doing so, we may find ourselves inadvertently walking in the advice of the wicked without realizing it. May the recognition of this sin lead us to pray: “Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

And mercy is exactly what the LORD has shown you. Jesus suffered and died for your sin of neglecting His Word. Not only that, but He promises to send His Spirit to help you root your life in His Gospel. Here are some practical ways you can do that:

First, try getting up a little earlier on Sunday morning so you can attend Bible Class. Trust me, you will find a treasure of delightful passages to meditate on as we study the Catechism this year. If you don't have a lot of time to study during the week, try reading a short devotion from our Meditations booklet every day, or mull over the Bible passage I send out over email.

Every day of your life, you have many opportunities to connect with God's Word and apply it to yourself. Use those opportunities for your soul's protection and delight.

Yes, the world is full of temptations trying to pull you away from Christ. On your own, you cannot resist. But Jesus has redeemed you, and His Spirit sustains you through His Word.

Therefore, happy is the man who delights in the Lord's instruction—because in it he finds Jesus. And when you have Jesus, you have forgiveness, life, and everything you need. Amen.

ⁱ John 3:16 EHV

ⁱⁱ 1 John 5:11 EHV

ⁱⁱⁱ 2 Timothy 4:18 EHV

^{iv} Cf. 1 John 5:12

^v Cf. Romans 1:17 EHV

^{vi} People's Bible Psalms 1-72, page 42