

## NOTES FROM TIM GAMSTON'S SERMON- 7<sup>th</sup> January 2024 am

### TITLE: "Delighting in God" TEXT: Psalm 37

#### Scripture references from the ESV

**Psalm 37:** Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! <sup>2</sup> For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb. <sup>3</sup> Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.

<sup>4</sup> Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. <sup>5</sup> Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. <sup>6</sup> He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.

<sup>7</sup> Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!

<sup>8</sup> Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. <sup>9</sup> For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land. <sup>10</sup> In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there. <sup>11</sup> But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace.

<sup>12</sup> The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes his teeth at him, <sup>13</sup> but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he sees that his day is coming. <sup>14</sup> The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose way is upright; <sup>15</sup> their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.

<sup>16</sup> Better is the little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked. <sup>17</sup> For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the LORD upholds the righteous. <sup>18</sup> The LORD knows the days of the blameless, and their heritage will remain forever; <sup>19</sup> they are not put to shame in evil times; in the days of famine they have abundance.

<sup>20</sup> But the wicked will perish; the enemies of the LORD are like the glory of the pastures; they vanish—like smoke they vanish away.

<sup>21</sup> The wicked borrows but does not pay back, but the righteous is generous and gives; <sup>22</sup> for those blessed by the LORD shall inherit the land, but those cursed by him shall be cut off.

<sup>23</sup> The steps of a man are established by the LORD, when he delights in his way;

<sup>24</sup> though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the LORD upholds his hand. <sup>25</sup> I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread. <sup>26</sup> He is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing.

<sup>27</sup> Turn away from evil and do good; so shall you dwell forever. <sup>28</sup> For the LORD loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. They are preserved forever, but the children of

the wicked shall be cut off.

<sup>29</sup> The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell upon it forever.<sup>30</sup> The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice.<sup>31</sup> The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip.

<sup>32</sup> The wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to put him to death.<sup>33</sup> The LORD will not abandon him to his power or let him be condemned when he is brought to trial.<sup>34</sup> Wait for the LORD and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land; you will look on when the wicked are cut off.

<sup>35</sup> I have seen a wicked, ruthless man, spreading himself like a green laurel tree.

<sup>36</sup> But he passed away, and behold, he was no more; though I sought him, he could not be found.

<sup>37</sup> Mark the blameless and behold the upright, for there is a future for the man of peace.<sup>38</sup> But transgressors shall be altogether destroyed; the future of the wicked shall be cut off.

<sup>39</sup> The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble.<sup>40</sup> The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.

What is the point of reading your Bible, listening to a sermon, praying, getting baptised, gathering with God's people or eating the Lord's Supper? You might think these are just things that Christians have always done, and that we do them out of obedience to God. It is true that we do all of this out of obedience to God, but that response is not wholly satisfying. There is a higher reason why we should continue with all these activities in 2024. It is because

**these are the means given by God to enable us to come to delight in the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**Delighting in God is not optional for God's people.**

It is tempting for believers to be envious of wrongdoers (v1 above). They seem to get ahead because they are willing to lie and cheat. They can appear to be having much more fun by ignoring the values that God sets in his word and we can easily envy them, going against the command of God in that first verse. It is a hard command to obey because our hearts are wired to desire what others have, even when the way they get it is wrong.

This psalm is a song to help us fight against envying wrongdoers, and one of the ways it tells us to do that is by setting our desire on something better – something that will last for the whole of eternity, not just during this life.

**Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart (v4)**

**The way we fight against envy is by delighting ourselves in the Lord Jesus Christ**

This is not optional – it is a command, and one that is repeated in Philippians 4:4

**Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.**

We are to set our affections on Christ, using all our mental faculties to bring our hearts to rejoice in Jesus. We place ourselves under his care, satisfying ourselves in him and what he chooses to give us. The primary reason for doing this is not to fight envy but because God is most glorified by our delight in him. It is through this delight that we are set free from selfish desires and set free to serve others. Our mission statement says we aim to be people who are

**Delighting in God, to the glory of God, for the good of all people.**

**Let us seek to make delight in God our highest priority through 2024**

We need three things to do this.

1. **We need to know that God is delightful.** V4 (above) assumes that God is delightful. Otherwise, this command would make life miserable! How can we know that God is more delightful than anything else we desire? We can see this by looking at the natural world but supremely by looking at Christ.

The natural world shows us that God is delightful. We all have special places that bring us delight, perhaps because of beautiful scenery, happy family memories or significant life events. Behind that beauty and the joys of family life is the eternal God. Psalm 90 tells us: **Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

**<sup>2</sup> Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.**

**Behind all our earthly joys is the eternal God**

- There are beautiful places because a God of beauty created those places
- There is love and joy in families because a God of love intended families to exist

- There are significant life events because a sovereign God governs all events on earth

All of these things that fill us with delight are evidence of the fact that God is delightful. He is even more delightful in that he is the creator, source and sustainer of everything that we find delightful.

- If these created things fill us with delight how much more then is the creator God able to delight us!

However, we have failed to push through all that we see around us to actually see the beauty, love and sovereignty of the God who is the ultimate reality behind this natural world.

2. **We need to really see the glory of God.** Satan has blinded people to the ultimate reality in the universe. **The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.** (2 Cor 4:4). However, God's response to this is to shine a light in our hearts: **For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.** (2Cor 4:6).

There was a time when we did not think about God and he was not precious to us, but then

### **The light of God's glory shone in our hearts**

We knew this was happening as we started to see God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

- We came to see that Jesus Christ is God come in the flesh and he became beautiful and precious to us
- We were overwhelmed by his love, his kindness, his goodness, his power and his majesty
- We found ourselves turning to him in confidence that he would save us from sin, give us eternal life, care

for us through life and satisfy us for all eternity.

**Everything in creation and the natural world became signposts to that greater glory:**

## The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

- Has that happened for you?

Without this miracle of God shining his glory into our hearts, we shall **never** come to delight ourselves in him. We might come to church and do all the things that Christians normally do, but there will never be any joy in it, or any delight in God. It will just be routine.

### Is Jesus Christ a delight to you?

- If he is not, but you truly want him to be, then ask God to shine his glory into your heart.
- If he is already a delight to you, then how can you grow in that delight or rekindle it if you have lost it?

### 3. We need to make use of the means of grace. We are back to where we started!

The reason why we read the Bible, listen to sermons, pray and meet with God's people is because they are means of grace by which we come to experience God. Essentially, grace is God himself coming to us and making himself known to us in every situation we face, including the envy we experience towards those who appear to have everything.

The means God has given us to experience the grace of his presence in our lives is:

- His word – the Bible
- His ear – prayer
- His people – fellowship together

The point of doing all that Christians do is **not** so we become better students of God's word, better people of prayer or better church members, important though those things are.

### The ultimate goal is to know and love Jesus Christ better.

We build strong relationships with those around us by spending time with them, and talking and listening to them. The same is true with the Lord. Our relationship grows into a delight in God when we take time to meditate over what God is saying to us in his word, and spend time praying the kind of prayer that breaks through to God. We also need community, so that we meet with others who so delight in God that they

love to sing praises, eat the Lord's supper, hear the Bible read and preached, and pray together.

Being around those who are passionate about Jesus is infectious! Our hearts are lifted when we are among people who are delighting in Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us not to neglect meeting together. We are to make the gatherings of God's people (prayer meetings, home groups and other opportunities for worship as well as Sunday gatherings) a priority.

This year, let us seek to be a people who will live out our mission statement:

**Delighting in God to the glory of God, for the good of all people**

Let us not envy wrongdoers because they are getting on better than us in this world. Let us be a people who can truly sing '**Take the world but give me Jesus**' (full lyrics below). That will only happen as we recognise that God is delightful, as we come to see the glory of God and as we make use of the means of grace.

Supremely, it will happen as we meditate on the apparent contradictory excellencies of Christ:

- infinite highness and infinite condescension -demonstrated in the incarnation
- Infinite justice and infinite grace
- Infinite glory and lowest humility
- Infinite majesty and transcendent meekness
- Deepest reverence towards God and equality with God
- Infinite worthiness of good and greatest patience when suffering evil
- Exceeding spirit of obedience alongside supreme dominion over heaven and earth
- Absolute sovereignty and perfect resignation
- Self sufficiency and entire trust and reliance on God

The highest being in the universe, the eternal God who created all physical matter, and who is spirit without physical form, came down to earth as a man. He was born into the humblest of homes and suffered the cruellest death in order to receive the

punishment for our sin that his own justice demanded. As we spend time thinking about the wonder of those truths, we will not envy those who do not have Christ. Instead, our hearts will soar in delight for Christ and God will be glorified in our lives.

We will be set free to serve and love others.

We will truly be a people who are  
Delighting in God to the glory of God, for the good of all people.

Take the world but give me Jesus  
All its joys are but a name  
But His love abideth ever  
Through eternal years the same

Take the world but give me Jesus  
Sweetest comfort of my soul  
With my Saviour watching o'er me  
I can sing though billows roll

Take the world but give me Jesus  
In His cross my trust shall be  
Till with clearer brighter vision  
Face to face my Lord I see