

GLAD TREES

Psalm 92

Happy Spring everyone! If you didn't know, today is officially the first day of Spring and I can't tell you how excited I am. This week I noticed that some of our flowers starting to come up, the grass is coming up and the golf greens were getting mowed. If you're like me, you get excited about that grass coming up. But you know, there's some vegetation that is always green year-round like the cedar trees and pine trees. Can you imagine if we didn't have spruces and pines that stayed green? And everything turned brown? Even through the harsh winters and droughts, trees like cedars, pines, and palms are evergreen. And the question we will ask based on the Psalm we're studying this morning is, "*Am I more like grass that dies off quickly or more like a glad, evergreen tree that weathers any season?*" God's people should be more like evergreens, growing stronger and living in a state of gladness despite the conditions around them.

So how would you describe your state of mind over the past week? How would others describe your state of mind? Glad? Joyful? I'm guessing no because with everything going on in the world in recent years, and with our nation's rejection of God and morals, people are more depressed than ever, more dissatisfied, more fearful, more angry, and more unhappy.¹ What we'll learn from Psalm 92 is how we can live in a **state of gladness** even when circumstances suggest we shouldn't be.

Just to remind us, the psalms are like the hymn book or music book of the Bible. And just like music is known for, the songs and the lyrics can minister to us in amazing ways, meeting us in our fears, our discouragement, our worries, our difficulties, and they draw us back to God and steady us in Him. I often find myself turning to psalms whenever I need a dose of encouragement.

Prior to verse 1, you'll notice first a short superscription above it. "*A psalm. A song for the Sabbath day.*" This could be categorized mainly as a **praise psalm**, though it has **kingship** and **wisdom** in it too. And it was used in organized worship in ancient Israel on their day of worship (Sabbath/Saturday). As the Church, we typically worship on the Lord's Day, resurrection day, which is Sunday like the early, early church in the Bible. Israel had psalms assigned for each day of the week and this was one they used on the Sabbath day when they gathered together. So it's neat to think of meditating, as a congregation, on the same ancient words that the Hebrews did back then. This is something they would've sang together and had been consoled by just as we are today.

*1 It is good to give thanks to the Lord
And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;
2 To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning
And Your faithfulness by night,
3 With the ten-stringed lute and with the harp,
With resounding music upon the lyre.
4 For You, O Lord, have made me **glad** by what You have done,*

A. CALL TO PRAISE. (VV. 1-3)

The psalmist is calling people to get their instruments and praise God together for who He is and what He does. It is **good** to give praise and thanks. The amplified version says it is **delightful**. It's pleasing.

2 Names for God: Yahweh (7x) & Most High (2x; beginning & end)

Yahweh, identified by "LORD" with all caps in the your Bible is the name that acknowledges God as the **personal, covenant-keeping** God. He is the God of **steadfast lovingkindness** and **faithfulness** towards us. He also called God the **Most High**. This name, like we saw last week in Daniel, carries the idea of God's **sovereignty over all things that exist**. Out of everything that exists in the world, He is the Most High. There is no one and nothing higher than Him. He rules over all. And these 2 names combined remind us that no matter what we go through in life – good or bad or ugly – God's **faithfulness** and **covenant lovingkindness** never ceases towards us. He oversees our circumstances with His lovingkindness & faithfulness. That's why the psalmist is glad!

Glad people trust God's love & faithfulness in good and bad days.

We trust that this kind of God is in control even when the world and our circumstances don't make any sense and don't seem to be in our favor. There's a lot of wicked, unbelieving people in the world who make the lives of believers very difficult and we go through all sorts of trials in life, but ultimately, we know this kind of God is with us in it all and working in all of it for our good (Rom. 8:28). By God's very nature, He can't go back on His covenant love and faithfulness towards us. So *instead of questioning the absence of God's love and faithfulness in trials or evil days, we lift up these attributes in song.*ⁱⁱ Difficult days are reason to get the instruments out and praise Him!

Glad people lift up God's attributes in song, focusing on His promises – not the problems.

And notice this is what the psalmist is occupied with not just for a single moment or for an hour on Sunday. It's not a brief, emotional high. Praise is something that wells up within him and overflows throughout the week from **morning until night, every day**. Again, this doesn't mean he doesn't have bad days or wears a fake smile or even that he's always singing. It means that **because He knows this Most High, covenant-keeping God, his soul can rest and be glad**. And his gathering with God's people on the Sabbath is the result of and testifying to of God's faithful love throughout the week. Come Sunday, it's time to reflect on that corporately together.

Glad people contemplate God all day, every day (individually & corporately).

So think of it this way: this is not an obligation for him or for God's people. They aren't just putting in their hour on Sunday morning and hoping God makes life easier for them if they go to church. As Pastor Doug Birkey said yesterday at the Men's Breakfast, it's not "*just a one day Sunday kind of relationship with God.*" It's a relationship with God all week and gathering on Sunday to praise

God together. The praise is the natural overflow of those who love God and want to sing about what He has done for them. If going to church is something we dread but feel like we have to do, or it's something we can get in and out of the habit of, something is wrong. It means we've left our first love or we've turned a relationship with God into a cold and dead religious work.

When I was at Lowe's earlier this week getting some things for our church remodel project, the older woman working the check stand pointed to some folks at another check stand – no doubt religious folks by the way they were dressed – and she said, “*You know, I've never understood how you get sucked into cults like that.*” And I said, “*Well, I think it's in the human nature to want to try and be good enough for God through some set of rules.*” She thought about it and as I was walking out the door she replied, “*I live by own rules.*” I wish I had more time to talk to her because I would've told her, “*You know, I'm a pastor and I don't live by rules. Christianity is not some cold, performance-based religious system. I live by grace through faith in Christ. My obedience to God is an overflow of love as a result of God's lovingkindness and faithfulness to me in Christ. The love of Christ compels me.*” That's the heart of this psalmist. His praise is a result of **who God is** and **what He has done**. And what God does is in accordance with who He is.

B. THE WORKS OF GOD. (VV. 4-5)

*4 For You, O Lord, have made me **glad** by what You have done,
I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands.*

*5 How great are Your works, O Lord!
Your thoughts are very deep.*

So the psalmist further clarifies that his living in a state of gladness is due to God's faithfulness and lovingkindness expressed in “*the works of [God's] hands.*” He knows there is a God who has lovingly and faithfully worked in his life. If you're familiar with the Old Testament usage of “the works of His hands” you'll start to think of 2 main works of God: **God's acts of creation and redemption/salvation** (Exod. 34:10; Josh. 24:31; Ps. 8:6; 19:1).

Glad people know God is their Creator & Redeemer.

Like the psalmist, glad people know they are not an accidental product of evolutionary chances, but that a sovereign God created them. That God has intricately and uniquely created them for a relationship with God Himself. On top of that, glad people can look around at the world God has created and sees God's continual care and provision and charity in it. They see more than an accident. They see God's artwork and kindness. The birds singing. The flowers blooming. The sunrises and sunsets. God rested on the Sabbath from His creating the universe and Israel was rejoicing in His creation on the Sabbath. God created for 7 days and it's interesting to say the least that the name Yahweh is mentioned 7 times in this Sabbath psalm.

God's works also remind us of **God's salvation/redemption**. For Israel, this would mean recalling their history of God's saving them from their enemies. He rescued them from Egypt. The psalmist

is contemplating deliverance and forgiveness and celebrating it all! Today, we celebrate his deliverance and forgiveness of our sins in Christ!

In the last half of verse 5 there, he says, “*Your thoughts are very deep.*” Based on what we read in some of the following verses where he describes how in this world evil is sometimes allowed to flourish, I think this expression is a way of admitting and resting in the fact that **God’s ways and plans are mysterious, but they’re never wrong and never late.** The psalmist trust the complex plans of God even when by all means he shouldn’t, or can’t see how they’re working for good yet.

C. THE FATE OF THE WICKED. (VV. 6-8)

*6 A senseless man has no knowledge,
Nor does a stupid man understand this:
7 That when the wicked sprouted up like grass
And all who did iniquity flourished,
It was only that they might be destroyed forevermore.*

The word **wicked** here could reference anyone who doesn’t know God or has rejected God. Someone **stupid** or **foolish** in the Bible isn’t necessarily referencing someone who lacks intelligence. In reality, they may be very smart but they’re stupid to the things of God. They **aren’t sensitive to His loving & faithful works**, even though they are surrounded by it all the time. It’s like a scientist who observes creation through a microscope or telescope and sees how incredibly complex it is but still gives credit to a mindless evolutionary theory. This person is biblically stupid. Stupid people look at a car and say, “*Wow, what craftsmanship!*” but then look at the human eye or a sunset and give it no such thought. That’s biblical stupidity.

The word here for **senseless** could be translated **brutish** or **beastly**. According to Genesis 1, man was created distinct from the beasts in God’s image and made to rule over the beast. But this psalm is saying that people without God aren’t operating much different than the beasts operate. They don’t live the way they were created too in a relationship with God. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, “*But a natural [animal] man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*” This is why people need to trust Christ and be born again – the Spirit illumines, or helps us understand, who God is and what He does. As believers, we might take pictures of a rainbow and thank God for His covenant faithfulness in it but not the stupid man (Gen. 9:8-17). Man without God never glorifies God for the rainbow! In fact, it may make him boast of things that brought the global flood in the first place. He is like the beast who doesn’t see God’s covenant promise in it or God’s artwork. There’s no awe!

Glad people know the wicked will be destroyed.

Senseless men can make life very difficult for God’s people but verses 6-7 give us another brutally honest principle that God’s people can rejoice in (Rev. 18:20). The wicked won’t make life difficult forever. God allows them to flourish in their sinful ways for some time but ultimately,

they will be destroyed while God's people live on. The wicked are **like the grass**, who after a short time of flourishing die off quickly or are mowed down in God's judgment. Their transience is then **contrasted with the eternal God in verse 8, which is the center and crescendo of the psalm.**

D. THE ETERNAL, MOST HIGH GOD. (V. 8)

8 But You, O Lord, are on high forever.

Remember the emphasis in verse 1 on the Most High God? It's back. **This Most High God reigns on high forever.** So no matter what goes on in this world, He reigns through His universal kingdom. **This is foundationally what causes the state of gladness in the psalmist's heart.** From a human perspective, the wicked may look like they're ruling, but God is ruling over all and their time is short.

Glad people know the Most High reigns forever.

You know, this life is one drop in the ocean of eternity. If you want to live for this life only, you're stupid, biblically speaking. But if you live for God and what is eternal, you are wise even if it doesn't make life easier. For the wicked, this short life in a fallen world is as good as it gets. But if you know the Most High, you have gladness in this fallen world and it only gets better in the next. I don't know about you, but I don't want to get to the end of my life and realize I lived for temporal things. I want to live now for that which lasts forever.

Glad people live for the eternal.

Now for the stuff I get excited about when I study the Bible. If we were writing this psalm we would put the crescendo at the end. But the psalmist put it right in the middle. The reason is because this psalm was written for an **oral culture**. They didn't have Bibles. There was no printing press. So what they would do is pass on teachings and traditions orally. They would memorize through repetition and patterns. And one of the writing techniques that aids memorization is **chiasm**. This psalm has **chiastic structure** to it. So far we've seen A, B, C, D... but now we're going to go C, B, A. So the A's express similar thoughts. Same with the B's and C's. But D is the climax of the flow of thought. Once you see that structure, it's easier to understand the psalm and remember it.

C. THE FATE OF THE WICKED (AGAIN). (V. 9)

*9 For, behold, Your enemies, O Lord,
For, behold, Your enemies will perish;
All who do iniquity will be scattered.*

The psalmist again reflects on the temporal nature of the wicked. They may look like they're winning today and righteous may look like they're losing today but in the end, God wins and so do His people.

Glad people know that in the end, they win because God wins.

B. THE WORKS OF GOD (AGAIN). (VV. 10-11)

10 But You have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox;

I have been anointed with fresh oil.

11 And my eye has looked exultantly upon my foes,

My ears hear of the evildoers who rise up against me.

In contrast to the wicked perishing, the psalmist gives 2 positive and personal reflection regarding how God has worked in him. God has made his **horn** like a **wild ox**. Basically, when you think of horns, think of **ruling power** and **position**. Nobody messes with the wild ox. One day, no one will touch God's people. They will reign with Him (Rev. 2:26-27) and are empowered by that thought now. As for the **oil**, think of someone **victoriously appointed**, or someone **refreshed**. We could say...

Glad people have been empowered and refreshed by knowing the eternal God.

12 The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree,

He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

13 Planted in the house of the Lord,

They will flourish in the courts of our God.

14 They will still yield fruit in old age;

They shall be full of sap and very green,

This is as awesome metaphor for us since we have this vision of “**Deep roots. Bearing fruit.**” here at Chadron Berean. You didn't know there were so many root and fruit metaphors in the Bible, did you? There's a lot! But the righteous man will flourish, it says, **like a palm tree and a Lebanese cedar**. Some things that both of these trees have in common is that they are **1) Evergreen**. They never lose their green color, not even in winter. Palm trees are often planted in the desert and stay green. **2) Strong**. Palm trees grow tall, strong and majestic. Lebanon's cedars were known for being huge, strong trees, that didn't decay easily. **3) Longevity & maturity**. These trees outlived many others. **4) Refreshing**. Palms provide shade in the desert and produce enjoyable fruits like dates or coconuts. One man said, “*there is no more charming and majestic sight than the palm of the oasis, this prince among the trees of the plain, with its proudly raised diadem of leaves, its attitude peering forth into the distance and gazing full into the face of the sun, its perennial verdure, and its vital force, which constantly renews itself from the root—a picture of life in the midst of the world of death.*”

So unlike the grass which sprouts one day and dies the next, these trees last and bring refreshment. The question we're left with is: ***What do you want to be? Grass which withers? Or majestic, powerful trees?***

Glad people are like a tree.

As the psalmist looks at God's “courtyard” – **the gathering of God's people – he sees an oasis of palms in the desert and a grove of strong, cedars spreading their branches**. People who

with time will only become more majestic. They are not here on day and gone the next. They keep growing and thriving. I guess Bob Ross was right when he talked about painting happy little trees. That's something of what this psalmist is saying. Happy little trees planted in the Lord grow stronger and bear fruit. They're in a state of gladness even if planted in the desert.

A. CALL TO PRAISE (AGAIN). (V. 15)

*15 To declare that the Lord is upright;
He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.*

The word **declare** tells us we should lift our voices and praise God for who He is and what He has done and what He will do. Because He is upright, and a straight shooter who cannot go back on His covenant love and faithfulness, we should rejoice. He is our Rock.

Glad people praise God for who He is and what He does.

As you consider all of the junk going on in this world – remember that the Most High God reigns forever over all – and that it's good to be a tree. And seek to introduce people to the eternal God who can give their life eternal meaning and significance.

ⁱ Bryan Clark, *I'm Glad I'm a Tree* sermon.

ⁱⁱ Beth Tanner and Rolf A. Jacobson, "Book Four of the Psalter: Psalms 90–106," in *The Book of Psalms*, ed. E. J. Young, R. K. Harrison, and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 704.