

Sermon: Promises for God's People – November 16, 2014 (Scripture is from the ESV)

Location: New Philadelphia Church, Sillim Campus – 4pm service

Introduction

Good afternoon, Sillim! Today's sermon is going to come from a psalm in the Bible that has stood out to me these past couple months and it is a psalm that I desire for our campus to claim. It is Psalm 112. Please open Bibles and read it along with me...

Psalm 112:1-10 – Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments! His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever. Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous. It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice. For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever. He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord. His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries. He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn is exalted in honor. The wicked man sees it and is angry; he gnashes his teeth and melts away; the desire of the wicked will perish!

The title of this sermon is, “**Promises for God's People.**”

This Psalm is an acrostic. After the call to praise, each line begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. A few weeks ago during corporate intercession I encouraged you all that if you aren't sure how to praise God, then just go through the alphabet: “Awesome, big, creator, devoted, excellent, father, etc.” The author of this psalm does just that.

Let's start with verse one and go deep into what God is speaking through this psalm...

Psalm 112:1 – Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments!

“Praise the Lord!” In all our times connecting with God we should always start with praise. “Our Father who is in heaven, holy is your name!” That is the beginning of the Lord's Prayer that Jesus taught to His disciples. By starting our prayers with praise, we are putting ourselves into the right frame of mind. To approach God in a panic or in anxiety or fear or in demand is to come to Him with a completely wrong frame of mind, which shows that our faith in Him is off. If God is truly good and loving, then why are you approaching Him in fear? If God is truly all knowing and everywhere and all powerful, then why are you so anxious? If God is truly glorious and mighty, then why are you so irreverent? Praise puts us in the right place of faith where we can pray in a way that glorifies Him.

Psalm 100:4 – Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!

Psalm 112 is a psalm that is meant for all believers to claim and live by. But if we are in the wrong frame of mind, then God cannot fully bless us. We must always start with praise.

For me, this is especially important when times are desperate. When I find myself feeling extra anxious about raising financial support for the scholarship fund for orphans I oversee or when I find myself discouraged by some disobedient kids at my orphanage or by a church leader who has fallen into rebellion, I have to make sure I approach God first with praise.

Without praise I find myself just pleading with God, almost begging Him, from a place of fear and discouragement. But when I praise Him, not just for who He is but also for what He has done, then I find peace and strength filling my heart. I remember how God has provided so much over the years. I remember how God has worked in other rebellious kids and through other leaders in the church. And as I reflect on God's faithfulness through it all I find myself calming down and finding strength to pray and to really trust God as I pray. Then my prayers are truly powerful and effective, because they are from a place of faith. Praise sets us into a place of faith. Remembering who God is and what He has done sets us into a healthy place of worship.

I want to add one more thing to the power of praise: it applies not just to your relationship with God but also to your relationships here on earth. If you are struggling with your spouse, rather than fighting through it or dwelling on any bitterness or frustration, it is crucial to take a pause and remember your sweet memories with your spouse and why you were attracted to your spouse in the first place. Remembering and praising your spouse will dramatically change and shift your mind into a healthier place. You will be able to work through the conflict in love with a much clearer mind. The same goes for friendships and ministry. Always start with praise.

Once again, "Praise the Lord!" Our connection with God should always start with praise.

Verse one continues with, "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments." The word "blessed" here can also be translated as, "happy." The word "fear" here can also be translated as, "reveres, greatly honors, and obeys." So "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord" can also be translated as, "Happy is the man who reveres, greatly honors, and obeys the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments. Our worship, our fear and reverence and obedience towards God, is connected with both the beginning and the end of this verse: praising the Lord as I just shared and also knowing and delighting in God's commandments: His Word. **When we have a strong balance of praise and delighting in God's Word in our life, we will truly find ourselves worshipping God from a place of joy and happiness.** Christians should be happy, amen?

Greatly delighting in God's commandments means we need to be in God's Word and not reading it like a textbook. My prayer for Sillim and my desire for all believers is that they will go so deep into God's Word and truly live by it. "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against God (Psalm 119:11)." "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Psalm 119:105)." More than earthly food, the Bible is true daily bread. This is what truly sustains us in life.

For me, I began reading the Bible after I committed my life to God in high school. I would read a chapter of the Bible each night before going to sleep. And I got nothing out of it. I don't remember once in high school getting stirred by the Word of God. Part of the reason was that I was reading it right before I went to sleep. That would be like only talking with your spouse just before sleeping when you're really tired and aren't going to remember much from the conversation. That's not love. So right there I was setting myself up to not receive much. The other reason why I didn't get stirred was because I was reading the Bible like a textbook and not expecting God to really speak to me personally. I was reading it more to gain wisdom for life like I would from a self-help book. **There was little relational connection between God and me as I read.**

Things changed for me after I entered college. I joined a Christian fellowship and was put in an accountability group with three other guys. Our leader challenged us to read four chapters a day and we started in the book of Isaiah. I had never read so much of the Bible but I was able to keep up with it because of the accountability. But at the end of the week when we met up to share what we learned, I found I had nothing to say. I had read 24 chapters in the previous six days and gotten nothing out of it. I felt frustrated. But because one of our members hadn't finished all 24 chapters, we were required to read the first 24 chapters again on top of reading the next 24 chapters. Isaiah 1 – 48 in one week.

After coming back to my room I resolved that I would get something out of the Bible. I decided I would journal at least one line of something that stood out to me from each chapter I would read. Because I don't like writing, I decided to type my journal on my computer. I titled the document, "Summaries or Studies of Chapters Read." I read Isaiah 1 and then typed on my computer, "Isaiah 1 – God is angry at Israel." Honestly, that was all I got out of the chapter. And what I found was for the first couple weeks my summaries were really short, just a sentence or two. But as I continued to read, and especially as I learned to ask the Holy Spirit to speak to me before I would read, I found myself having more to journal and getting deeper revelations. A lot of parts in the Bible that had seemed random and confusing to me suddenly began to make sense. As I read through the entire Bible I saw how there were so many connections all through the law, the history, the prophets, and the New Testament. Reading the Bible became exciting to me! I literally looked forward to my time with Him. And I made sure to not read the Bible late at night when I was sleepy, but instead give God a portion of my day when I was most alert. By the time I ended college that Summaries or Studies of Chapters Read document was 390 pages of single-spaced Times New Roman 12 font writing. I had read through the Bible multiple times and was continuing to get more and more. If you had met me when I first entered college and then again when I graduated you would have met two very different people. I had matured so much. **I had so much more life, security, and direction.** God's Word is amazing!

I already taught this to the leadership, but your growth in the Word should span in five steps, illustrated by your five fingers: first hearing the Word, which is your pinky finger, then reading the Word, which is your ring finger, then meditating on the Word, which is your middle finger, then memorizing the Word, which is your index finger, and finally applying the Word, which is your thumb. If you are hearing, reading, meditating, memorizing, and applying the Word of God then your grip on the Word will be strong and Satan won't be able to steal it from you. But if you are only hearing and reading, but not meditating or going deeper, then Satan will be able to easily steal it from you. We must take God's Word seriously! We must greatly delight in His commandments! Hearing, reading, meditating, memorizing, and applying.

Here are some tips for reading the Word: **First, reading the Bible must be done systematically, not randomly.** You can't just open up the Bible to any page and read it and then do the same the next day. You wouldn't do that for any other book, right? Every book in the Bible has themes and insights that cannot be fully received unless you read it through. A lot of the prophetic books in the Bible won't make sense without reading the history books in the Old Testament. Try and find a reading plan and stick to it. Or if you're new to the Bible, choose a Gospel and start with chapter one of it and work through it, day by day. Make sure to read systematically.

Second, always ask the Spirit for insight before you read the Bible. Just like you start prayer with praise, you should start reading the Word by acknowledging the Holy Spirit.

Only the Spirit will give you insight and wisdom. You can be the smartest person in the world and the Bible will still baffle you. Or you can be the most uneducated fisherman or shepherd, but with the Spirit's guidance be able to unlock mystery upon mystery in the Word of God. Rely on the Spirit when you read! Ask the Spirit to speak to you before reading. Reread a chapter if you get nothing out of it and really search for something that will speak to you. Unless it's a chapter just about numbers, I can pretty much guarantee God will have something to reveal to you. And even a lot of those chapters on numbers have some neat revelations, but you have to know the Word well to get them.

Third, mark up your Bible. If you are a neat freak and like a clean Bible, then purchase multiple ones. Have at least one Bible that you can underline or highlight verses that stand out to you. Put stars next to passages that especially speak to you. Put a small cross symbol next to prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament. Put music notes next to Christian songs you recognize were inspired by a passage you read. Write a small note next to a verse if you get a specific revelation about the verse or a word in the verse. Mark up your Bible! Because I have marked up my Bibles so much I can open them up and teach from any part of Scripture without having to look that closely. I just look for the stars and places where I wrote a note and I can quickly teach from it. Smartphones are convenient for on the go Bible reading, but you should not be using them for your daily reading time. A Kindle is understandable if you can mark it up and access your notes easily.

Bibles are on sale in the bookstore. If you don't have an ESV, then buy one today. If you have already read through the ESV and marked it up a lot, then check out the New King James or the NASB. Those are great versions as well.

At the end of the year I plan to release a "read the Bible in a year" reading plan and challenge you all to do it with me. But please don't wait until then to be reading the Word of God. Be in it daily. Let God speak to you. This is not a book you read one time and are done with. There are layers and layers of powerful revelation in the Scripture. And the deeper you go the more precious the jewels you will find.

Whew, I just spent more than half of my sermon time in just the first verse. Don't worry, I'm not going to cover every verse in this chapter, but I want to at least hit the first three verses. This is an amazing psalm to claim for our lives. Let's look at verse two...

Psalm 112:2 – His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.

I plan to preach on the power of family at a later date and this verse will definitely be included in that message. This is a powerful promise! **You will leave an inheritance, whether through your own physical children or through your spiritual children.** Your life is far more than just about you. You are a witness to all who are around you. So often we get discouraged by certain people we are discipling or speaking into, when other people around us are getting so much stronger through us.

I have been serving at an orphanage here in Seoul for almost nine years now. When I first arrived there were 88 kids living in the home. The home has shrunk some since then, but there are still way too many kids for me to be able to give a lot of attention to. So instead I just spend focused time on the kids who are in my English classes and specific kids who God is highlighting to me. The rest of the kids I'll smile and greet whenever I see them and give them a hug or a high five or sit with them for a meal here and there, but the amount of

focused time is extremely minimal. There is only so much time in a day and I can't focus on them all. I have to trust the rest to the Lord.

The irony is that some of the kids that I've been teaching for a few years and was led by God to spend a lot of time with have been slow to receive my love and have really challenged me. There have been many times when I've just wanted to give up, feeling discouraged and ineffective. But then some of the kids that I haven't been able to spend as much time with will come up to me and express how much of an impact I've made in their lives. It's bizarre to me. For some of the kids I've just had one or two random conversations with them and the conversations didn't seem monumental to me, but later I would find out that the kid had felt deeply loved and encouraged through them.

What it comes down to is this: God is the author and perfecter of our faith and of everyone else's faith. We are called to love those God leads us to. And we are called to trust in God for the fruit.

The same night Jesus was betrayed He met with His disciples in the upper room and had the Last Supper. If you read Luke 22, Jesus pours out His heart to the disciples about how He will suffer and then announces that one of them will betray Him. Jesus has been with His disciples for three years and has invested deeply into them, so you would think these guys would be on point. Jesus was their small group leader! They must be perfect! But ironically, right after hearing that one of them will betray Jesus their conversation amongst themselves turns to who among them is the greatest. FACE PALM. They are still wrapped up in themselves! They've totally missed Jesus talking about suffering and betrayal and are only worried about their own fame. These disciples would later abandon Jesus when He was arrested and His closest disciple, Peter, would end up denying knowing Jesus three times. What an inheritance Jesus left behind: a bunch of proud, cowardly, disloyal disciples!

But we know that wasn't the end to the disciples. Jesus would forgive and restore them and then they would get hit by the Spirit so strongly that they all became world changers. Their story goes to show that we can't put our trust in man or what we see. We put our trust in God. Even if our small group members are struggling, we can't condemn ourselves or give up on them. We have to continue to entrust them to the Lord in prayer. He is the author and perfecter. He loves them far more than we do. He is faithful!

Love those God assigns to you, whether in your family, your workplace, or your church. Know that as you walk with God **you will leave a mighty inheritance and blessing here on earth.** *That is God's promise to you.*

Let's look at verse 3...

Psalm 112:3 – Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever.

Money is perhaps the thing that requires the most faith for believers. Some Christians fear it so they forsake it and choose to live poor, not believing for more wealth and even fearing the thought of having more. Other Christians love it and get consumed by it, choosing money over God's call and losing their fire for God. And many other Christians get overwhelmed by it, falling into debt and becoming a slave to it.

A true person of faith should not be controlled by money in any way. There should be no fear of money. There should be no greed or coveting of money. There should be no submission to

money. **Money should simply be another tool for glorifying God and advancing His kingdom.**

The Bible says that wealth and riches should be in a righteous man's house, and that such a man's righteousness, or integrity, should endure forever. In other words, true followers should expect wealth and also expect the grace needed to not be overwhelmed by the temptations and evils that can come with wealth. Abraham, the father of faith, was an example of this. His descendants Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph all stewarded great wealth and were never overcome by it.

My desire for Sillim is that this campus will have a right view towards money. My hope is that this congregation will be debt free and have great resources for the kingdom of God. My hope is that as people succeed here they will not just have great wealth but great influence. But in order to steward such great wealth and influence, our character and our view of money must be deeply refined by the Lord.

We as Christians are called not to be wells that take in God's blessings until we are full and satisfied and then pour out, we are instead called to be pipes: Freely we receive, freely we give. Everything we receive: love, joy, peace, family, etc., we are called to give freely. In the end every good and perfect gift comes from God. If we prove selfish in our love, our time, and our resources, then we have put a cap on how much we can receive from God. He will only give to us what we can steward selflessly and lovingly. This goes for money as well. There is not one dollar that you can claim full ownership over. All wealth belongs to God. He gives and He takes away. The quicker we can understand that, the more relaxed we will be.

I heard a story from a pastor of how he received a nice watch as a gift. He wore it while doing mission work in a poor area and felt God telling him to give the watch to one of the pastors there. He did so with joy. A little while later after returning home another friend gave him an even nicer watch as a gift. He praised God in thanks for it. But later while ministering in another area he was again led by God to give it away. And he did so with joy. After some time he then received an even nicer watch than the previous two. This third one was really nice, and he rejoiced upon receiving it. Such a special gift! Surely God had rewarded him for his obedience. But wouldn't you know it, later on while ministering God again pressed on him to give it away. The pastor objected and said to God, "Don't you know how nice and precious this watch is? I can't give this away." He felt God relent and so he held on to it. Later He heard God speak, "**Now I know the limit of what you can steward.**"

Here are some simple tips on stewarding your wealth: **First, begin asking God for wisdom with your money and entrust it all to Him. The first step of entrusting your money to Him is tithing** to your local church. We at New Philly recommend 10%, which was the amount Abraham gave and other mighty people in the faith gave. Tithing is not just to be done to support your local church where you're being spiritually fed, but to also demonstrate that your wealth belongs to God. If you cannot tithe, then you cannot expect any financial breakthrough. Tithing is where it starts. If your faith is weak, then seek discipleship in a community group and ask for accountability. Begin tithing a smaller amount at first if you have to, and be prayerful as you do it. Express to God your desire to trust Him and ask for His blessings and grace in your life. I guarantee as you are faithful in giving you will soon see breakthroughs happen and the grip of money will lose its hold on you. Malachi 3 speaks of a curse on the people of God for not entrusting their money to the Lord and particularly for not tithing and providing for God's workers. Malachi 3 is the only place in the Bible where

God challenges us to test Him, and that test is in entrusting their money to the Lord by giving tithes and offerings. God promises such a blessing, an outpouring from heaven, for those who will give by faith. This blessing and curse passage is so strong and has proven to be so true that New Philly takes it deeply to heart. We don't want anyone attending our church to be living under a curse. We want the full blessing of God for our family. Amen!

Second, after getting the tithe down, ask God for wisdom in budgeting the rest of your finances. If you have credit card debt or other debt with a high interest rate, then concentrate a lot of your income on it. If you have college debt with a low interest rate that is zero if you pay a certain balance, then at least set aside money to hit that specific balance each month. **Do not let interest rates choke you.** We are called to be free in this world. Debt puts us under whoever we are indebted to. God wants it paid off. God wants you fully free. Be faithfully paying off the debt and also ask God for extra grace with it. I know many people whose college debt was suddenly and unexpectedly paid off through a third party. Remember, all wealth belongs to God. He will bless us as we are faithful and as we are looking to Him. Often people want that quick answer to their prayers and all their money problems suddenly taken care of. While that can happen sometimes, usually God is more interested in our character development and our obedience to Him. Keep faithful. Let God strengthen your resolve.

Next, be saving money. I recommend saving 10% long term and 10% short term. The short term can be for big expenditures like moving or a new laptop or something else big that comes up. The long term savings should never be touched. The long term savings should be viewed as an inheritance for your future children or for the nations. If you're living in Korea long term, it can be put into your key money for an apartment. **If at any time you find yourself trusting in your savings rather than trusting in God you are setting yourself up for a test you don't want to take.** Entrust your money fully to the Lord. He will provide for you! He will give you unexpected raises and new job offers you would have never expected. He will bless you!

God is looking all around the earth for people who will steward money wisely for His kingdom. **So many of Jesus' parables were regarding wise stewarding of money and businesses.** God wants this nation changed. God wants the orphans and homeless and widows cared for. God wants his missionaries provided for. God wants New Philly to have a new building in Hongdae that will have a training center and a house of prayer that will bless the nations. God wants all these things, but they all require wealth. God is not going to give us wealth if we are still acting like teenagers and foolishly squandering it. God will also not give to us if we haven't learned to discern His voice. While we are called to be pipes, freely receiving and freely giving, we aren't called to be hoses. **Religion will compel you to give to everybody:** every homeless person, every mission fund, every need in the body of Christ. Religion is a hose that can't be turned off. Once again, Jesus is the author and perfecter of faith, not us. To say that we have to provide for everyone is the same as saying we are God. It's foolishness! We need to learn to discern the voice of God. Jesus didn't go around healing and praying for every single person in the world. He was led by the Spirit. At one point he went to a certain pool where cripples and sick people were everywhere, and He chose to heal just one man. Religion couldn't touch Jesus. He was led by the Spirit, not compelled or forced by guilt or fear or pride.

Verse three says that wealth and riches are in his house and his righteousness endures forever. Do not let the poverty spirit touch you. Do not fear money. **Newsflash: money is not the root of all evil.** 1Timothy 6:10 says, "The **love of money** is a root of all kinds of evil." We

are called to be content with what we have, but that does not mean we should forfeit the privilege and calling to steward much and bless much. If we are truly walking with the Lord, then we can trust that our righteousness, our integrity, will endure forever. Money has no hold on us. Our security is not in our paycheck, it's in our loving Father.

Before I close this message I want us to read Psalm 112 once again.

Psalm 112:1-10 – Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments! His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever. Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous. It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice. For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever. He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord. His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries. He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn is exalted in honor. The wicked man sees it and is angry; he gnashes his teeth and melts away; the desire of the wicked will perish!

So to recap, from verse one we see how the power of praise and the power of delighting in the Word of God connect to our worship and obedience to God. From verse two we see God's promise that no matter the present circumstances, we leave a mighty inheritance and blessing here on earth. And from verse three we see that sons of God should possess much wealth and influence for the glory of God and the advancing of His kingdom, and that God promises that as we walk with Him we will never lose our integrity.

There are so many more promises in this chapter that I want to share on, but instead of preaching for hours and hours I want to encourage you to meditate on this chapter alone with the Lord and let Him speak to you. I could preach separate sermons on almost every verse, including the last one about the wicked man.

May Psalm 112 mark this church. May we live by the Word of God and His truth. May we see all His promises unfold in our lives. Amen!

PRAY