

Hope Church South Haven May 31st, 2026

Nothing hidden: Psalm 1

Two Paths. Two destinations. A God that knows.

We're starting a brand-new series in the PSALMS today called:

Nothing Hidden: An Honest Life Before God.

But before we get to the songs and prayers. The **celebrations and doubts**. The praise and tears that fill this book. We must start at **PSALM 1**. It's the **opening statement**. The **scene-setter** for all the Psalms that follows. Like the opening crawl of a Star Wars movies. **PSALM 1** tells you exactly *what kind of story you're walking into*.

And it opens with one question:

What path are you on?

Because **PSALM 1** makes something clear from the very first verse. There is no neutral ground with God. No middle lane. No COMFORTABLE place where you can **keep one foot in His kingdom** and **one foot in your own**.

- We want Jesus CLOSE enough to help when *life falls apart*. But not so CLOSE that He gets **to tell us how to live**.
- CLOSE enough to comfort. Not CLOSE **enough to confront**.
- CLOSE enough to forgive. Not CLOSE **enough to change us**.
- We want the *benefits of faith* WITHOUT the surrender that faith requires.

PSALM 1 closes that door. We can only choose one of two paths:

- The PATH that **leads to life** or the PATH that leads to destruction.
- The PATH of **righteousness** or wickedness.
- People that do life with God and people that **live their lives without Him**.

Not two personality types. Only two directions.

And here's what the Psalmist wants us to understand:

My direction/my path becomes my destination.

Not overnight. Not all at once. But the small choices I make today **become the person I am tomorrow**. The habits I build become the *path I walk*. The *path I walk* becomes the **place where I end up**.

After Pastor Bruce mentioned Brennan Manning last week, one of his *best-known quotes* came back to me. And it's stuck with me this week because it connects with what **PSALM 1** is warning against:

The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, then walk out the door and deny Him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable.

PSALM 1 leaves no room for that kind of **half-hearted discipleship**.

- No category called **kind of committed**.
- No category called **spiritual but not surrendered**.

It's all or nothing.

We're going to look at three movements in **PSALM 1**:

The path of the righteous – followers of Jesus.

Verse 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...

Psalm 1:1 NIV

The first word of the Psalms is **blessed**. Not lucky. Not comfortable. Not problem-free.

Blessed *describes a life* that is whole and stable and secure. A life aligned with God.

But notice where the blessed life begins. **It begins with refusal**. Someone that follows Jesus

REFUSES to let the wrong voices shape the direction of their life. And the PSALMIST

describes how that shaping happens through a **quiet and almost invisible**

progression:

WALK → STAND → SIT

Sin rarely explodes into our lives all at once. It usually happens quietly. Slowly. One compromise at a time.

⇒ We first walk alongside it – it's not that big of a deal.

⇒ Then we **stand around it** – everybody does it.

⇒ Then we sit down and make ourselves at home – this is just who I am.

The voices we listen to and the places we spend our time are **never neutral**. That's why

Psalm 1 asks a deeply uncomfortable question:

What – or rather who – is shaping you?

Whether we realize it or not, we are **all being disciplined by something**. Social media or politics or entertainment or podcasts or friends or news cycles or the endless scroll or even fear.

And they **preach the same message**:

- ⇒ Build your life around yourself.
- ⇒ Truth is whatever works for you.
- ⇒ Pleasure is the highest good.
- ⇒ God is holding you back.

Whose voice gets the first and last word in your life?

Because whatever consistently shapes your mind will **eventually shape your life**.

Garbage in – garbage out. There is **NOTHING** like **spiritual neutrality or objectivity**.

If God is not shaping you, something else is.

The writer then pivots in verse 2:

But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

Psalm 1:2 NIV

He uses the word: **delight**. Not obligation. Not guilt. Not a religious box to check. The

PSALMIST is reminding us that **life with God is meant to be enjoyed**. Most of us don't start there.

- ⇒ We begin because we know we need it.
- ⇒ We read when we don't feel like reading.
- ⇒ We pray when our minds are distracted.
- ⇒ We keep showing up when our hearts feel dry.

But faithful habits have a **way of changing us**. What *begun as discipline becomes something we enjoy*. What once felt like a duty becomes a lifeline. What once felt like **something we had to do**, becomes something we don't want to live without.

Because in those ordinary moments – opening the Bible and whispering a prayer and reflecting on who God is – we DISCOVER **that God actually meets us there**.

The PSALMIST says that followers of Jesus meditate on God's Word. Day and night.

Meditation in the Bible isn't about emptying my mind. **It's about filling it with God's truth**. Coming back to the same truth again and again until it moves from my head to my heart. Until it shapes my desires. And eventually it **shapes the way I live**.

This brings us to the picture right at the center of the Psalm.

Verse 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.

Psalm 1:3 NIV

The Psalm **doesn't say** the TREE IS PLANTED in easy circumstances. It says the TREE IS PLANTED near its source.

PSALM 1 *never promises* a **storm-free life**. It *never promises* a **pain-free life**.

The writer knows the question is not whether trouble comes. Because trouble always comes.

The question the writer asks is simple. Where am I planted when trouble comes?

- If I'm PLANTED in my circumstances, **trouble** will UPROOT **my peace**.
- If I'm PLANTED **in other people's approval**, criticism will UPROOT my identity.
- If I'm are PLANTED in comfort, **suffering** will UPROOT **my hope**.

The PSALMIST is reminding us that when I'm PLANTED **near the source of life**, the storms may bend me, a branch or two may break off, but it will not UPROOT me.

And he writes that the **healthy trees don't just survive**. They become a blessing. It bears fruit – in **season**. NOT **immediately**. NOT **on our timeline**. They provide strength and stability and *shade for others*.

Have you ever noticed how people are drawn to faithful Christians?

Not because their lives have been easy. Not because they have all the answers.

But because there is a **steadiness about them**. A **settled confidence**. A **quiet strength**.

People feel safe around people who are anchored in Christ.

Story – **Anton & Zenta**...

I remember when Lynette and I first got married. Just a week after we got engaged, her dad's cancer came back. This time it was terminal. For a while, we honestly didn't know if he would make it to the wedding. There were hospital stays, blood transfusions, and a lot of difficult conversations.

By God's grace, he was there. He walked her down the aisle. He danced the father-daughter dance.

Three months later, he passed away.

At the same time, we were trying to navigate a new marriage and a new job and all the emotions that come with grief and loss. It was a heavy season.

And one of the things I remember most is the people God placed around us. They who showed up. They listened. They prayed. They reminded us we weren't carrying it alone.

Looking back, I can honestly say they helped steady us. They helped steady our marriage during a season when it would have been easy to feel overwhelmed.

That's the picture Psalm 1 gives us. Not a perfect life. A life planted at the source. A life that is a blessing to others.

The path of those who turn their backs on God.

Verse 4:

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

Psalm 1:4 NIV

In the ancient world, after GRAIN was harvested, it would be **tossed into the air**. The GRAIN **fell to the ground** and the CHAFF was carried off by the wind.

What a contrast.

⇒ A TREE is planted. CHAFF is **blown away**.

⇒ A TREE **stands firm**. CHAFF drifts wherever the wind takes it.

⇒ A TREE endures. CHAFF **disappears**.

That's the image Psalm 1 places before us. And here's *what makes it sobering*. **A life**

disconnected from God can look impressive for a season.

- You can have money and influence and popularity and success.
- You can build a life that others admire.
- You can become the person everyone else wants to be.

And DISCOVER when life gets heavy, that it cannot hold the weight of what you're carrying. Discover that when loss comes. When suffering comes. When death comes. **It isn't enough to hold you up.**

This crazy messy beautiful life WILL reveal where you are planted.

- Verse 5 says:

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

Psalm 1:5 NIV

PSALM 1 is honest enough to talk about judgment. Not because God enjoys condemnation. But because **God takes truth seriously**.

As **Ravi Zacharias** once put it:

Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay.

Our choices matter. **The direction of our lives matters.**

That's why **PSALM 1** pulls back the curtain. Not to CONDEMN us. Not to SHAME us. **But to wake us up**. To help us honestly see where we are. And where we are heading.

The good news of **PSALM 1** is that God is not looking for perfect people. The good news is that:

- ⇒ God welcomes people who have drifted.
- ⇒ God welcomes people who have wandered.
- ⇒ God welcomes people who need to come home again.

Wherever you find yourself today, God's grace is still inviting you back to the source.

The God who knows.

Verse 6:

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

Psalm 1:6 NIV

The PSALM ends with a **comfort** and a warning.

- **THE COMFORT** – The Lord watches over.

That phrase means *more* than awareness. *More* than information.

It speaks of **care** and **attention** and **presence** and **love**.

God does not only know about His people.

He **knows** them. He **walks with** them. He **watches over** them.

⇒ He sees the quiet obedience that nobody else notices.

⇒ He sees the hidden prayers.

⇒ He sees the exhaustion and the perseverance and the tears.

Nothing about my life is hidden from Him. And some of you need to hear that

today.

⇒ You're trying to stay faithful in a difficult marriage.

⇒ You're carrying grief.

⇒ You're battling a health issue.

⇒ You're worried about your children.

⇒ You're navigating uncertainty about the future.

⇒ You're simply tired.

And sometimes it feels like nobody sees.

PSALM 1 says: God knows. Not *one prayer disappears unheard*. Not *one act of*

faithfulness is wasted. Not *one tear falls unnoticed*.

The Lord knows.

- **THE WARNING** – the destination of people turning their backs on God is destruction.

The writer reminds us that anything disconnected from God won't last forever.

- ⇒ Success without God will not save you.
- ⇒ Comfort without God will not sustain you.
- ⇒ A life lived without God will eventually collapse under its own weight.

And that honest warning brings us to Jesus.

We've all listened to the wrong voices. We've all drifted. We've all **planted ourselves in lesser things**.

But Jesus never drifted. Jesus never compromised. Jesus **remained faithful** through every TEMPTATION and every STORM and every TRIAL. **He went to the cross** for people like you and me.

The good news of Jesus is not God standing at a distance telling us to **try harder**. The good news is God coming near to rescue wandering people.

- ⇒ Jesus doesn't simply show us the path of life. **He is the path of life**.
- ⇒ Jesus doesn't simply point us to living water. **He is the living water**.

And because of His life and death and resurrection, there is grace for every person **who turns back to Him.**

⇒ The *drifter*.

⇒ The *wanderer*.

⇒ The *one who's been far from the source* for a long time.

⇒ The one who looks fine on the outside and is falling apart on the inside.

His arms are open.

Psalm 1 leaves us with the same question it opened with:

What path are you on? Where are you planted?