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Series: New Year's
Message: Now Is The Time

Transcribed Message
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On December the 10th, Australia became the first country in the world to ban children 16 and under from all social media platforms. So that 16 years and under, no TikTok, no YouTube, no Instagram, no Facebook, no X, no whatever other social media platforms out there. It's been criticized by a lot of people, praised by some right here among us, even this morning. And I suppose wherever you might land on that, my personal feeling and opinion is that the law didn't go quite far enough. I think what should have been also a provision in this law, I think there should be a provision in this law that says parents are not allowed to be on their phones in the presence of their children for no more than one minute and only when absolutely essential.

Brett McCracken just about a week or so ago wrote a corresponding article. I don't think he even knew about this law, or maybe he did, but anyway, he wrote a good article called "How to Fight Phone Idolatry". It's available in the foyer for those of you that want to risk reading it. But here is what he says: "Merriam-Webster defines idolatry in two ways, the worship of a physical object as a god and immoderate attachment or devotion to something. Using either of these definitions, it's not a stretch to say most of us are idolaters with our phones. We go through our days with near constant attachment to these mobile devices. In every in-between moment of waking life, in line for a coffee, sitting in a waiting room, walking from point A to point B, stopped at a red light, we instinctively pull out our phone, scroll, text, check notifications, aimlessly toggle between apps." Then he says this: "This is the behavior of idolaters. We're immoderately attached to our phones. We treat them like deities who deserve and demand our constant devotion. It's idolatry because these digital deities are the focal points of our attention far more than the king of the universe."

So I want to suggest to you this morning that one of the most important life skills we can develop in 2026 is determining what it is that we're going to focus our life on. What is it that is going to be the focal point in what we're going to pay attention to and

what we're going to give our time to. There's obviously lots of good choices, aren't there? Regarding what that might look like, a lot of good choices, good things. Our jobs, our careers, our families, our marriages, our spouses, our children, our grandchildren. I mean the list goes on and on of good things that we can give time and attention to.

And of course, then there's another whole category of shallow and unnecessary things that we also find ourselves attracted to. But there's only one way I would suggest that 2026 is in fact going to be transformative. And the only way it'll be transformative is if there is one and only one thing that we understand is worthy of our time, our attention, of our focus, and of course that has to be God and God alone.

We're going to jump back into the Gospel of John, Lord willing, next Sunday. This morning, I thought as we come to the end of '25 and look forward to '26, we will go to the psalmist. We go to Psalm 112 this morning, see what it is that the psalmist has to say about these very things that we've spoken of.

We start off by just making some comments about the background to this psalm. And there's two psalms that are linked together. Psalm 111 and 112 are usually just linked together as corresponding psalms, and they are so because of the reasons that are listed here. They begin exactly the same. They begin with, praise the Lord, and call out that together. And then they have the same number of verses. And thirdly, they're called acrostic psalms, and acrostic psalm simply means that every line of the psalm begins with a different Hebrew letter of the alphabet, so it was by design, of course. Psalm 111 is all about the glory of God.

And then Psalm 112 is what that glory of God looks like in the life of a godly person. If Psalm 111 says here's a picture of the glory of God, then Psalm 112 is going to show us how we display that. What does that look like in our life? So, the question that we often ask at Covenant is, what is the chief end for our lives? What is the chief end of man? What is the reason and purpose that we're here on this earth? And again, there's all kinds of answers that people give to that, and I think and I hope and I trust that we understand that there's only one possible answer that will really fulfill the deepest longings of our soul. When we ask the question, what's the chief end of each one of us? What is the ultimate purpose of our life on this earth? It is, I believe, according to the Word of God, that we would glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Think about that. That we would enjoy, that we would glorify God and enjoy Him forever. And there isn't any possible higher calling, focus, or attention that we could give than to say, I want to live my life in such a way that I bring glory to God. Not only do I bring glory to God, but I enjoy my relationship with God. I'm certain that that's what the psalmist would want us to see, and I think it's underscored in this 112th psalm.

The other thing I say by way of introduction is the author and a little bit more of the background is not known. We don't have a whole lot of information about either one of these psalms, but it's probably the same author because of the reasons that we mentioned. The fact that you have so many similarities. You have both of them acrostic, both of them beginning the same way, both having the same number of verses. It's probably the same author, and it's probably written in the time after the exile.

If you think of Israel's history and you just go back at Israel's history just to put some markers out there and you say, there's King Saul, and then there's King David, and there's King Solomon. And then because of their idolatry as the people of God, they turned away from God. They turned away from any vision of living life for the glory of God. They had so given themselves over to idolatry that God said, okay, the kingdom is going to be divided. It's going to be taken away from the descendants of David in that sense of God's judgment. And so, in 722, the ten northern nations, the ten northern tribes called Israel get taken off into captivity by Assyria in 722. The two southern tribes called Judah get taken off into captivity in 586 in Babylon. This psalm is likely written after the Babylonian exile. It's in the time of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, of course, Esther takes place in Persia. It's in the time of Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. So, that just gives you a sense of the Old Testament timeline in history, and so it's post-exilic. All of these things have happened to God's people, and the psalmist is reflecting on that and he's going to tell us what it looks like to live right.

Living right. What does it look like? So, let's do that. And I think what we want to see, first of all, is living right means that we're pursuing a God-centered life. We're pursuing a God-centered life, or to put it in just the way we spoke, it is to live a God-glorifying life. What does it look like to live a God-glorifying life? How would you know if you were observing a person, how would you know if they're living a God-glorifying life?

How would you know for yourself whether you're living such a way that you're living in a manner that is glorifying to God?

The psalmist puts before us three things. The first one is that there is a spirit and a heart of praise. Praise is at the beginning of it, isn't it? That's the way the psalm begins, praise the Lord. How does a God-glorifying life give evidence of itself? Well, it begins with praise. Praise the Lord. It begins with a heart of praise. That's the focus of Psalm 111, Psalm 112, and actually Psalm 113 starts the same way even though it's not linked to those in that same manner. It's a declaration of the worthiness of God. And if we just would go back and put the lyrics up of the songs that we just sang, I think that's what we would see. We were declaring the worthiness of God. In a lot of those lines that we were singing to the Lord, we were being occupied with who He is and what He's done, His faithfulness. The central focus of the life of praise is God. We're worshipers of the one true God. Isaiah 45, that's what God Himself said, right? I am the Lord. There isn't any other person like me. That's what God said.

When Jesus was asked by the disciples, Lord, would you teach us how to pray? We want to know how to pray. What did Jesus say? Well, pray in this way. Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be your name. Hallowed. Honor to your name, glory to your name, majesty to your name. recognizing that in the idea of the name of God, there is the person of God, the character of God, that He alone is worthy of our praise.

And then of course, it's a turning from self to the Lord. This heart of praise that is directed to God moves us from being self-centered to being God-centered. That's the great battle of our life, isn't it? It's called sanctification. The more God-centered you become, the less self-centered you become. And the reality is we're all born into this world very self-centered, very selfish, very much focused on what we want, and we live that way unless the Holy Spirit of God is transforming us and changing us and reorienting us to a life of praise that's focused on God.

I know that most of the ladies here are very familiar with the name Jen Hatmaker. A lot of you guys are too. Jen Hatmaker was like at the top of the evangelical world in terms of writing, publishing, speaking, the whole thing. One of the most popular of all people, men or women. And then Jen went through a whole lot of reorientation in her life. I'm not going to go into all of what she went through. Some of it very sad,

unfortunately. But as she went through this journey, she began to become less and less oriented towards her faith and towards God and towards Jesus. She just published not too long ago this memoir called *Awake*. And I was fascinated when I came across another lady who read the book and found that in her story there were a lot of similarities between her and Jen and what had happened to Jen Hatmaker. Many of those same things had happened to her and to her family and to her marriage. There was very much a shared pain in their journey. But she points out that the way that she has moved through this journey and the way Jen has has been very different. She refers to it as a sad memoir when she read it.

Here is what Jen reveals to us in this book. She is deeply in love with herself and the life she's building. She's in what can only be described as a situation with Jesus. This is what Jen says herself: "The one who will never quit me is me. The one who will never lie to me is me. The only one who always loves me is me. The one who always is there to protect me is me. The one who will always choose me is me." There is a word for that, and that word is self-deception because she's not that one. Only Jesus is that one. Only God is that one. This is a picture of someone who has gone through some very hard things and has decided at the end of it all that God isn't worthy of her trust, but she is. And I think the psalmist would take great issue with that and say, No, no, no. It is only God who is trustworthy. God is rearranging our lives so that we focus less on ourselves and more on him. That's the whole transformative journey that he wants, that our focus and our passion would be on him.

Notice, secondly, there's this matter of reverence. There's praise and then there's reverence. That same verse, Praise the Lord, verse 1, Blessed is the man who fears the Lord. So, praise and reverence are going to go hand in hand, aren't they? Blessed is the man who fears the Lord.

Now, what comes to mind when you think of a man who fears the Lord? Somebody who fears the Lord. Is it someone who's always serious? Is it someone who's always somber? Is it someone maybe who's frowning a lot because they're very reverential? Well, I hope not because that surely is not what the psalmist has in view. You remember that caricature, that statement that was made of the Puritans? Someone defined a Puritan as someone who lives life with the haunting fear that someone

somewhere might be having fun. That wasn't the Puritans, by the way. The Puritans loved to laugh. They enjoyed life. But, of course, the way the world often views those who live a godly life, it might appear that way, but that wasn't the case. And that certainly isn't what the psalmist has in mind. In fact, the psalmist says of this person who is reverent that they are blessed. It's the plural word, blessednesses. So, he wants us to underscore and see that this place of blessing, to fear the Lord, is simply to take God seriously. You know, it's often said, don't take yourself so seriously, but take God seriously, right? That's a person who's living a life that is based on reverence for God and who He is. It's the understanding of the weightiness of God. And it goes so beautifully with this idea of praise as well. To fear the Lord is simply to take Him seriously. To fear the Lord is to view God as weighty. To fear the Lord is to be in wonder.

Listen to the 99th Psalm. "The Lord reigns. Let the people tremble. He sits enthroned upon the cherubim. Let the earth quake. The Lord is great in Zion. He is exalted over all the peoples. Let them praise your great and awesome name. Holy is He." That's somebody who is walking in reverence for the mightiness and the awesomeness of God.

And notice thirdly, there's delight. So, there's praise, there's reverence, there's delight. Praise the Lord. Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in His commandments. I think there's just an interconnection here, isn't there? You praise the Lord, that praise leads to a sense of reverence because of who God is. That reverence leads, the psalmist says, to delight in the things that God has made known about Himself. And then that delight leads to praise, which leads to reverence. So, you have this cycle and this obvious pattern.

So, I ask again, what does it look like to be delighting in the Lord? If you're delighting in the Lord, what would that look like? You don't have to look very far because turn a page or two over and you come to the 119th psalm, this psalm that's filled with declarations about the Word of God. In verse 16, he says, I will delight in your statutes. I will not forget your Word. Psalm 1, blessed is the man, blessed is the woman who doesn't walk in the counsel of the ungodly or stand in the way of sinners or sit in

the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in that law he meditates day and night. That's what it looks like to delight in the Lord.

Remember what Spurgeon said about John Bunyan. John Bunyan, by the way, was a Puritan. And Spurgeon said of Bunyan, the man is a walking Bible. Cut him and he bleeds biblene. So, if you want to bleed biblene, then you have to be delighting in the Word, don't you? You have to be getting the Word.

I would put this challenge to you. Here we are, last Sunday of '25. Maybe some of you are coming to the end of your Bible reading for this year. '26 isn't too far off. Right there in your bulletin, there's a QR code that will introduce you to all kinds of different Bible reading plans. Pick one that will fit your pace, your situation, and take advantage of delighting in the Word of God. Inviting God's Word into your life every day. If truly you're delighting in something, you would want to experience that every day, wouldn't you? And so, that's what I think the psalmist would be calling us here. He would say to us, pray that God would put within us a delight and a love for His Word. If we would confess and say, I don't really feel that, well, then pray that. Ask God to give you that. Ask Him to give you that delight in His Word.

And what's the greatest evidence of delighting in God's Word? What's the greatest evidence of the fact that we delight in God's Word? It is that we obey it, that we obey it. So, we're not hearers of the Word only, are we? We're doers of the Word. You can't say you delight in the Word of God and then just do your own thing. No, to delight in is to obey.

Now, let's look at the outcomes. So, there's this picture of this godly man, this godly woman, and there's praise, and there's reverence, and there's delight. That's just in the first verse. Now look with me at verses 2 through 9, and we see the outcome, the outcome of a God-centered life. What are the benefits that flow from a life of praise, a life of reverence, and a life of delight? The very first one, verse 2, The first thing you see is this lasting legacy, this lasting legacy. I mean, this is a picture of a family that has given itself to these characteristics of what it looks like to live life well, to live, as the psalmist says, to live right. It is a picture of parents and maybe grandparents impacting their children and their grandchildren with a God-centered life and a God-centered focus, and the results of that are huge.

If there's one thing that our children know, they know when we're being real and when we're being a phony. They know when we're being real, and they know when we're just putting on a show. They know what it looks like when mom and dad come to church on Sunday, but the rest of the week, there's no connection to anything else in their life, in their relationship, in their actions, their language that connects them to anything of the reality of what that Sunday experience was supposed to be about. It doesn't have anything to do with perfection. Thankfully! No parent is perfect. Only God is perfect, and as someone has said, He has a lot of imperfect children that He deals with all the time. But we're not talking about perfection. We're simply talking about the influence of a mom and a dad and a grandparent who walk with God, who live with a sense of praise and reverence and delight. The neat thing is, it's biological, but it's also spiritual, so we have a whole bunch of people at Covenant who pour into the lives of our children, and this impact and this influence is there for them.

My dad died in 2010. My mom died in 2022. They did their part. They had seven children, and their seven children had 19 grandchildren, and now their 19 grandchildren have had 72 great-grandchildren. So, within just that legacy of a matter of decades, the influence of godly parents, and many of you can have a very similar story to that, it is impactful. It's powerful. That's what He's saying. You choose to live your life this way. You have the opportunity to have a lasting legacy in the lives of your children and grandchildren. It is our "For the Future" verse, isn't it? Psalm 145 and verse 4, one generation shall commend your works to another and shall declare your mighty acts.

Secondly, there's God's blessing. Verse 3, wealth and riches are in His house, and His righteousness endures forever. Now, you look at that, and can go, man, this is health, wealth, prosperity right here. This is God's promise, right? Wealth and riches are in His house, and I can assure you, without being able to draw up a specific example, I can assure you that there are a lot of health, wealth, prosperity preachers that know very well Psalm 112 and verse 3. And it's true under the Old Covenant, God did promise that there would be material blessings to His people as they walked in obedience. That was just part of God's covenant blessing in the Old Testament. We're not living under the Old Covenant.

We live under the New Covenant. And the New Covenant, the emphasis is far more on spiritual blessing. There is no covenant promise of God under the New Covenant to bless us with riches and material things. If He does so, it's just His grace. But there is the promise that Paul speaks of in Ephesians 1, that we're blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. So, it is certainly there for us. Do you want to be a rich person? You want to be a rich person in the fullest sense of that word before God? Then you invest in things that are essential, right? Things that are eternal. Righteousness, he says, endures forever. Wow, that's a long-term investment.

Thirdly, there's insight, there's integrity, there's generosity, and there's stability. Look at verses 4 through 6. 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. Look at this picture. In these verses, you just think and meditate on what He has said.

Well, the light dawns. Light dawns. I think it's a picture of discernment. I think it's a picture of understanding. Remember in 1 Chronicles 32 describing the people who understood the times in which they live? That should be us, right? We should be discerning. It's like light in the darkness. He is gracious and generous, living life with an open hand. What a picture to display generosity with what God has given to us and then never moved. This person, there's stability there. Verse 6 again, for the righteous will never be moved. He will be remembered forever. It's Psalm 125 in verse 1, those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but endures forever. That's a picture of stability, isn't it? To be like a mountain that's not going to move.

And then notice lastly, in verses 7 through 9, there's faith, not fear. 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. This is the testimony of one with inner strength, with inner resolve. There is a peace and a calm in their heart. I think it's a peace and calm because He's going to say in Psalm 115

verse 3, our God is in the heavens. And He does as He pleases, understanding just the sovereign purposes of God.

If you look at that verse 7 again, He is not afraid of bad news. I don't know how many of you saw this news report this last week. Former United States Senator Ben Sasse, he was a senator from Nebraska in Washington. Then he left the Senate and he went to Florida, the University of Florida president. He made known on X this past week that he's been diagnosed with stage 4 pancreatic cancer. He says, it's a death sentence. He says: "This is a tough note to write. But since a bunch of you have started to suspect something, I'll cut to the chase. Last week, I was diagnosed with stage 4 pancreatic cancer and I'm going to die. Advanced pancreatic cancer is nasty stuff. It's a death sentence. But I already had a death sentence before the last two weeks, as we all do. Those who know ourselves to need a physician look forward to enduring beauty and eventual fulfillment. That is, we hope in a real deliverer, a rescuing God, born at a real time in a real place. But the eternal city with foundations and without cancer is not yet."

Now, that just is a picture to us, isn't it? In 2026, bad news is going to come. It could be on a global scale, it could be on a national scale, could be on a local scale, could be on a personal scale. But that's just the nature of life, isn't it? In a fallen, broken world, bad news comes to us. The psalmist says to us in that seventh verse, he is not afraid, she is not afraid of bad news. Their heart is firm, trusting in the Lord. Because it's a heart of praise, it's a heart of reverence, it's a heart of delighting in the truth of what God has made known to us.

What difference does it make? What difference does it make? This is what we take away this morning. Verse 10, the wicked man sees it and is angry. He gnashes his teeth and melts away. The desire of the wicked will perish. That's the contrast. He's just spent all previous verses talking about the godly life and what it means to live life well and what it means to live life right. And he comes to that 10th verse and he says, this is the opposite of everything I've just said. This is the opposite picture of what it looks like.

And I say to you, what difference does it make? It makes all the difference in this world, and it makes all the difference in the world to come. What it is that you give your focus to? What is it that you give your life to? What it is that you decide that you're going

to serve is going to make all the difference in the world in this life and it's going to make all the difference in the world in the life to come. And that's what God is calling us to.

We make choices every day. We're making choices as to what we're going to serve and what we're not going to serve, what we're going to lift up as an idol in our life and give time and attention to, and things that we're going to deliberately say no to. And those choices, those decisions call us to once again be reminded that there are only two things that are going to last forever, people and the Word of God. People and the Word of God. Let's make wise investments.

Let's pray. Gracious Father, thank you so much for your love, your grace, your mercy, your kindness to us. Lord, we're reminded that we all live with the sentence of death. We all live understanding that in this fallen, broken world that that is inevitable unless you come back again. But Father, you've also told us that while we face the prospect of physical death, that we never have to face the prospect of spiritual and eternal death, separation from you for all of time. And Lord, we know that the way that you have made that clear and available to us is in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus came to this earth, lived the perfect life, and died a terrible death so that our sins could be forgiven and that we could have eternal life. I pray that you would open any heart this morning to believe and trust in Jesus alone and to receive this gift of eternal life. We pray in Christ's name, amen.