

The Good Life

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[0 : 00] Good morning, it's great to be part of the church with you, singing God's praises and gathering with you all. It's lovely to have the morning church crew and the uni-church crew all in one place at the one time. Now the uni-church crew, you might think this is deja vu, you actually have had a look at Psalm 34 in the past, but we'll see if you remember anything that was said. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, thank you for your word and we pray this morning as we hear it and examine it and lay it up in our lives, that you be pleased to bless us.

We pray in Jesus' name, Amen. So Psalm 34, have a look at it with me. Of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech, so that he drove him out and he went away. I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

My soul makes its boasts in the Lord. Let the humble hear and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together.

I sought the Lord and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant and their faces shall never be ashamed. This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.

The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and delivers them. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.

[1 : 39] Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints. For those who fear him have no lack. The young lions suffer want and hunger, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

Come, oh children, listen to me. I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is there who desires life and loves many days that he may see good?

Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry.

The face of the Lord is against those who do evil to cut off the memory of them from the earth. When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

[2 : 45] He keeps all his bones. Not one of them is broken. Affliction will slay the wicked and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.

The Lord redeems the life of his servants. None of those who take refuge in him will be condemned. Oftentimes, people ask the question, what is the secret to a good life?

And the answers vary. We can diet is one. Apparently, the Greeks have the best diet for a long life. The Japanese seem to live a long time as well. Exercise.

Keep fit. Don't drink too much. Maybe don't smoke. Ask other people what would make a good life and the answers will vary.

Healthy family, financial security, career, affluence, influence, that kind of thing. The advertising industry thrives by making us feel like we miss out on the good life unless we have the product that they're trying to market us to buy.

[3 : 56] So, I wonder what you would say the secret is to a good life. And so, we'll have a look at it in the word military. But why don't you talk to the person next to you? What do you think it is? What things do you think would make the good life?

Off you go, you can talk to the person next to you. The secret to a good life will make the good life. Alright, we'll bear those thoughts in mind as we come and spend some time now in Psalm 34.

Psalm 34 is one that's written in response to a particular time in David's life. It's given to us there in verse 0. Did you see it there in verse 0? Of David when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech so that he drove him out and he went away.

So, it's a strange time. A time when he pretended to be bad, really. We read about the particular incident in 1 Samuel chapter 21, which is part of the account of Saul's and David's sort of ongoing conflict that runs from chapter 18 and 24.

At the time, David's on the run from King Saul who wanted to kill him. And so, David's left in a hurry. He's gone out into the wilderness and found himself desperate, found himself hungry, found himself a fugitive.

[5 : 24] And he's caught up and shut up by the Philistines in Gath and then brought before King Abimelech. And in order to escape, he pretends to be mad, right?

His drools spitting down on his beard and that kind of stuff. He's acting insane and scratching at the walls. You know, you might think, well, that's normal Roy, but that's not quite.

And so, the king says to him, look, he's got enough bad people in the kingdom. Just go, David. And so, David escaped.

All right? And David's riding back, looking at the whole time he's on the run, fearing for his life. And he's riding back, reflecting on that situation. And he had nowhere to call home. He's rejected by the people, his own people, living as a fugitive.

Nowhere safe, really, for him. And yet, God preserved his life and delivered him. And so, he wrote this psalm. It's an acrostic psalm. It goes in the Hebrew alphabet from A to Z, basically.

[6 : 24] And it's the A to Z of a good life. And so, it starts off with God delivering him and ends with God delivering him. He sought the Lord.

God heard his prayers to rescue and he was delivered from his fears. He took refuge in the Lord and he was saved. He said that in verse 4. Which is the beginning of the good life, honestly, to be saved.

Take refuge in the Lord. Psalm 2 sets it all up. The conclusion of Psalm 2 is that it's introduction to the whole psalm in general. Blessed is the person, blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.

That is, the Lord who rules heaven and earth. That's where blessing starts. The good life starts. And those who look to the Lord, we see, are radiant.

You see that there. Like Moses had his radiant face when he comes down from the mountain from being with God. There's joy in his face.

[7 : 22] Their faces will never be ashamed. There's no losing face. You see there, those, verse 5. Those looking to be radiant and their faces shall never be ashamed. There's cries out to God in his poverty.

And God hears him and God turns his ear towards him. God's face turns towards him and he was rescued. God himself rescues him.

And God guards his people, protects his people, brings his people to glory. And that's what's led him to praise God in verses 1 to 3. David's praise there, I will bless the Lord at all times.

His praise shall continually be on my mouth. What is on his lips is praise to God, which he calls all who hear him to do as well.

Praise is simply telling someone how good they are. That's what praise is. It can be telling the person themselves how good they are. You know, they're a wonderful person.

[8 : 25] Or it can be telling somebody else about someone, telling them how good that particular person is. Boasting about someone else. And David boasts in the Lord, verses 1 and 2.

He calls on others to join him in telling how good God is to other people, those who have come to praise the Lord, will want the whole world to praise him as well.

That's the nature of things. If you come to God and know how good he is, you want the rest of the world to come and know how good God is as well. And as David writes, he's calling people to praise God.

Because those who have tasted the Lord is good, will want others to taste it as well. See then, verse 8. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.

You know what it's like. That's what David's calling people to do. You've just tasted something really, really nice. Right?

[9 : 25] I'm sure the Christian time's coming. It's like with the blokes we had beef brisket at a barbecue the other night. It was fantastic. Or it might be a wonderful prawn salad.

Or it might be the fantastic best pavlova in the world that Karen makes. And you drool over it. And it's so nice. You can't help but want others to have it as well.

Right? It was just like the sunset going down, you know, over the ocean on the western side there. You know, the sun's going down behind the clouds, you know, where you can see the...

And just for a minute or two, there's this wonderful sort of picture painted in the sky. And you go, I just want others to enjoy that as well. So good.

You want others to taste it as well. Now, if you want to receive the good life, it's found here. Taste and see. Try him. Check him out. Come follow him.

[10 : 27] The Lord God is good. If you want to be blessed, then take refuge in the Lord. If you want to have the abundant life, the best life, a prosperous and good life, one that lacks nothing good, then this is how you get it.

You get it by taking refuge in the Lord. The great lie of Satan, right, is that God doesn't want to give you a good life.

That is the great lie of Satan. Started off in the garden, right? Started off in the garden when he lied to Eve, telling her that God was withholding her having everything good, not having a fulfilling life.

You're missing out, Eve. You really need to try and taste this. This would be great. Living God's way is boring. Living God's way is unfulfilling. Living God's way is withholding good things from you.

It's second rate. It's really not good. The truth is that God's way is really good, particularly good, actually the best way.

[11 : 38] And those who fear the Lord and love the Lord lack nothing. You see there in verse 9. Look at it. Oh, fear the Lord, you saints, for those who fear him have no lack.

Those who honour, those who trust, those who obey the Lord lack nothing. I wonder if we believe that. And just to make sure we hear it, we're told again in verse 10, look, the young lion suffers want and hunger, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

The strong, the mighty, that is the young lions, they may lack the essential things of life. They might go hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

Now, Christmas is coming up and you might, kids, think, oh man, I just hope there's something good under that tree for me. But you know, if you love the Lord Jesus, you lack no good thing.

You've got it all already. You have. You've got it all already. And the way to start the good life is to repent from seeking it without God.

[13 : 05] That's the way to get it. And to submit to the Lord and come under his rightful rule. You want to have the good Lord, the good life, taste and see that the Lord is good.

Come to him, take refuge in him and fear him rightly. Verse 9. That's what it's saying here. So you're going to ask the question, what does it mean to fear God? What does it mean to fear the Lord?

And that's exactly what the rest of the psalm goes on to say. Verse 12. What man is there who desires life and loves many days that he may see good?

It's not a hard question really. Every man, every woman, every child, every person longs to have a long life and a good life, that their days might be full of good.

And here is what it means then to fear. It's to live respectfully before God. Verse 13. And here it spells it out for us, right? Keep your tongue from evil, your lips from speaking deceit.

[14 : 17] Turn away from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it. Just unpack a few of those things there. Keep your tongue from evil, your lips from speaking deceit.

That is, no lying. No lying. We're told that the devil is the father of lies in John chapter 8.

That's his character. Deceit is making things seem what they are not. That's deceit. Where there are lies and deceit, there is diminished trust.

And society can't function when there's no trust. Groups of people cannot function without trust. Families can't function without trust. And lies and deceit will destroy it.

Oftentimes we tell lies and want to deceive people because we fear men, not God. You want the good life? Turn away from evil and do good. Verse 14.

[15 : 24] Evil in the first instance is living in defiance of God, saying no to God. Genuine repentance is what's required in turning from evil and doing good.

You see it there in the second half of verse 14. Seek peace and pursue it. Peace doesn't come easily.

It doesn't come naturally. You have to chase it. And peace with God comes by turning from evil and doing good.

It comes by repentance. And doggedly going the way of peace, chasing after it, putting sin to death the rest of our life. Lying is the natural language of the devil.

And lies are evil. That is the devil's character not to be our character. And we need to put evil to death. There's so much evil in our world, isn't there?

[16 : 28] We are just hearing of the horrors of the Assad regime now. Evil is hidden by more and more evil. Evil is done in the darkness.

But when it comes into the light, when sin is exposed, it needs to be removed from every corner and every cranny of life.

And we need to turn away from evil and turn towards God. Now, I am not sure what evil you might be harbouring in your life.

It may be that you are. But it certainly will not bring about good. It will not bring about the good life. But as we live the good life, what kind of experience are we going to expect?

And that's what's going on in verse 15 to 22. Have a look at it with me in verse 15. Experiencing the good life. First of all, favour with God. The good news is that those who have been delivered are living in the fear of the Lord, will experience the favour of God.

[17 : 35] And you see it there. The Lord looks towards us. He doesn't look away from us. He's not ashamed of his children, his righteous children.

When the Lord turns his face towards someone, it's him bringing his blessing upon them. In turning his face towards us, we receive his favour, his blessing.

He listens to our prayers. He hears our cries. His ears are open to what we're saying to him. That is a great place to be when God is actually listening to us.

His face is shining upon us. It's why in relationships, having someone cut you off is so damaging. Having someone turn their back on you is very painful.

Which is why we're encouraged to keep turning towards people in relationships. So that the relationships can be kept strong, strengthened and built.

[18 : 42] The God who made the universe is inclined towards his people. To those who fear him, honour him, obey him and trust him.

But not so the evildoer. Those who do not fear God, those who do not honour him, those who do not turn from evil, the evil one has nothing good to look forward to.

God turns his face away. God shuts his ears. Does not listen. I can't imagine how awful it would be to have God against you.

That would be a horrible situation to be in life. To have God against you. Not inclined to give you good things.

You're certainly not going to enjoy the good life. I was speaking to a policeman the other day and he's talking about his job. And his job is various, but he told me about a situation he faces all too often with people that he has to take in from drink driving.

[19 : 47] They are so drunk that he can't let them go after they've been processed in the police station.

So they need to be released into some responsible adult's care. Otherwise they cannot leave the police station. So they'd have to call someone.

And all too often these people don't have one person in the world responsible adult that they know that they can call to help them.

Not one. So they have to spend the night in the watch house utterly alone without a friend in the world. That's far from the good life, isn't it?

That's the life of misery. If God is against you, life in this world is stacked against you. And worse than that, 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 says that those who do not obey the Lord Jesus Christ will be condemned by God and shut out of his presence of his glory.

[21 : 01] God will turn his face away from them forever. God will withhold any blessing from them forever.

But when the righteous call out to him, he hears them, verse 17. When the righteous cry out for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. He is near to the brokenhearted and saves the one who is crushed in spirit there in verse 18.

King David feared God and King David knew it firsthand that God had heard his prayer and rescued him and delivered him.

And so he can tell us this with confidence. However, that's not the whole story, right? There's deliverance though through affliction.

Deliverance comes through affliction. You see there in verse 19, let me tell you something that might surprise you. You've probably heard it before but we need to keep reminding ourselves of it.

[22 : 12] Once told though, you should never forget it, verse 19. Many are the afflictions of the righteous. I'll say it again, it's there in verse 19.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous. strange as it may seem, those who have tasted that the Lord is good can expect afflictions.

Those who have submitted to Jesus as Lord should expect afflictions. Those who have turned away from evil and pursue peace will face many afflictions.

King David did. Jesus is clear about it in Mark chapter 10 who is the great David. Mark chapter 10 verse 29 to 31 Jesus said, truly I say to you, there's no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel that is they're the righteous ones who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions and in the age to come eternal life but many who are first will be last and the last first.

Jesus says it and I think the apostle Peter had been reading Psalm 34 in his quiet times and reflecting on a lot when he wrote his book that we've just been finishing off here at Morning Church.

[24 : 03] He quotes Psalm 34 in 1 Peter chapter 2 let me read it to you he says he tells us to put away all malice and to seek hypocrisy and evil and all slander like newborn infants long for the pure spiritual milk that by it you may grow up into your salvation if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good and all through his book in 1 Peter he's talking about suffering the suffering of Jesus and the suffering of his people and you'll remember recently from 1 Peter chapter 4 listen to 1 Peter chapter 4 verses 12 to 14 beloved do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you and test you as though something strange happening to you but rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed if you're insulted the name of Christ you're blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you but particularly particularly listen to chapter 3 verse 8 to 18 and I'll put it up on the screen behind me so you can see it for Peter quotes

Psalm 34 and he says this 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 8 finally finally all of you have unity of mind sympathy brotherly love a tender heart and humble mind do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling but on the contrary bless for to this you will call that you may attain a blessing for whoever desires to love life and see good days let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit let him turn away from evil and do good let him seek peace and pursue it for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are open to their prayer but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good listen to this but even if you should suffer for righteousness sake you'll be blessed have no fear of them nor be troubled but in your hearts on a Christ the Lord is holy always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that's in you yet do this with gentleness and respect having a good conscience so that when you are slandered those who revile your good behaviour in Christ may be put to shame for it's better to suffer for doing good if that should be God's will than for doing evil for Christ also suffered once for sins the righteous for the unrighteous that he might bring us to God now we know that the truly righteous one there's no more righteous than the Lord

Jesus Christ the King of the Jews the Messiah the King of the Kingdom of God the truly righteous one was afflicted wasn't he he was reviled he was abandoned by his friends he was shamefully treated he was scorned by men he was hunted down by those who wanted him dead not because he was wicked not because he was evil but precisely because he was righteous and he kept his tongue from evil he kept his lips from lies and he entrusted himself to the Father the Lord God and was ultimately delivered from the domain of death Psalm 34 verse 20 have a look at it with me not one of his bones was broken that's what

John tells us in John chapter 19 he was pierced for our sins he did endure the wrath of God in my place for my sin but look at this verse 21 affliction will slay the wicked and those who hate the righteous will be condemned those who hate righteousness will be condemned by God affliction will destroy the wicked it will take all that they have but for the righteous Psalm 34 verse 22 you can't there's clear distinctions there's no middle ground here Psalm 34 verse 22 the Lord redeems the life of his servants none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned affliction for allegiance to Jesus is the expectation in this world for the righteous but we'll be redeemed we have been brought back we will be rescued we will be saved and so the pattern is suffering now glory to come glory to follow and so we can live confidently in the midst of afflictions knowing that the Lord

God redeems the Lord buys back the Lord rescues those who trust in him for deliverance we will not be condemned and so we're reminded of Romans chapter 8 verse 1 there is no condemnation for those who in Christ Jesus those who hate the righteous one Jesus and his righteous ones are condemned verse 21 but none of those who take refuge in him the Lord Jesus the righteous ones will be condemned now it may be here this morning that there are people who are longing for the good life you've had enough of living in the mess of this world the sordidness of this world and hearing God's word today you're wanting to leave it behind and find life which truly be found in surrendering it to the one who redeems the repentant wicked as well the risen

[30 : 18] Lord Jesus Christ Christ and know the joy of his blessing and having his face shine upon you and his ears open to your cries so there's the A to Z of the good life the Lord is the one who delivered David from death he's the one who delivered Jesus through death and he's the one who delivers all who take refuge in him from condemnation those of us who have tasted and taken refuge in the Lord can't help ourselves we should be we are we need to be the people who overflow in praise of our God those of us who have been delivered from a belling against God have tasted that he is good and we will want everybody around about us to know it as well and to taste it as well that the Lord is truly good but remember like David

God's righteous king like Jesus God's eternal perfect righteous king many are the afflictions of the righteous and yet the Lord would deliver his righteous ones out of them all and so that is the good life let's pray now Father in heaven thank you that you provide for all that we need thank you you give us everything that we could possibly long for rescue from being condemned by you and having you listen to us and hear our prayers and ultimately one day bring us into glory help us to keep trusting you help us to turn from evil help us to be those who speak to you in prayer and thank you that you listen to us thank you that you shine your face upon us and help us to be those people who seek peace and pursue it we ask it in

Jesus name amen man end in man he ab Syd