



[Pastor Steven Billings](#)

Sermon for Epiphany 5
February 5, 2023

His Righteousness Endures Forever

Psalm 112:1-9

¹ Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments! ² His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. ³ Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever. ⁴ Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous. ⁵ It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice. ⁶ For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever. ⁷ He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD. ⁸ His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries. ⁹ He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn is exalted in honor.

What does it mean to fear the Lord?

My father was a kind man. I would say that I feared his wrath, but not because I worried that I might suffer physical cruelty on account of it. I was more concerned with seeing his disappointment than incurring scrapes and bruises. My best friend during Middle School years, to the contrary, constantly feared corporal injury at the hand of his father. Strangely, though, between the two of us, my friend was far more likely to risk angering his father. Despite the likelihood of bodily harm, my friend regularly pushed the boundaries of his father's wrath, as the marks on his face would indicate the next day at school. I knew my father loved me and only wanted what was best for me. My friend had no such assurance, and therefore had no compulsion to escape that which he considered inevitable.

When it comes to God, our Father, I think the same principle applies. We will better honor Him and obey Him when we understand that He loves us and wants the best for us than we will simply out of anxiety over what He might do to us by way of punishment. Luther recognized this and included it in his explanations of the Commandments. What does he provide as the reasons for our keeping God's Law? "We should fear and love God so that . . ." we would do or not do whatever the particular Commandment prescribes. So, it's not just the doing or not doing of a thing, but also our fear and love toward God that constitutes the keeping of His Commandments. This fearing and loving cannot happen if we view our Father merely as an almighty tyrant, for then we would obey Him only out of terror, which is, really, not to obey Him at all.

This is why the Psalmist says that the one who fears the Lord is blessed. He's blessed because he's in a loving relationship with his Father, not one who lives in servile fear of punishment.

As we dig deeper into Psalm 112, it's important for us to understand that this Psalm



[Pastor Steven Billings](#)

Sermon for Epiphany 5

February 5, 2023

is *descriptive*, not *prescriptive*. This is not a list of things that must be in order for a man to be considered blessed. The psalmist does not say, for instance, that a man's offspring must be mighty in the land if he's to be considered blessed, or that there must be wealth and riches in his house. These things may likely be found in the house of one who fears the Lord, but it's that fear of the Lord that makes him blessed. All the rest merely follows as a result.

I might also add that this list is not exhaustive – there are certainly other blessings God may choose to bestow on His faithful children – nor is it compulsory – not everything mentioned here must be in evidence for someone to be considered blessed – nor is it exclusive – just because someone is powerful or rich doesn't necessarily mean that they're so blessed by God.

What kinds of things, then, are descriptive of a blessed man?

First of all, the blessed man is one who delights in the Lord's Commandments. Following the will of God is not something he does begrudgingly, or even resignedly, but joyfully, unapologetically. He doesn't say, "I relent to do the will of God"; he says, "I *love* to keep the will of God! I'd rather do God's will than anything else in all the world."

Secondly, his offspring will be mighty in the land. This resonates with the promise given to Abraham: "Your descendants will be as the sand on the seashore and the stars of the heavens." In other words, "Your descendants will be so great it will be impossible to count them all." I would suggest that this can be understood in a number of different ways, not the least of which is the legacy of faithfulness that follows the life of one who is blessed by God. I am a Christian today, due, in no small degree, to the faithfulness of my Christian parents. I'm sure the same could be said for many of you.

But it may also be that you have a strong family in other respects because your ancestors were God-fearers. The person who is blessed by God is often surrounded by loved ones when their life comes to an end. I have seen this as a great blessing to God's faithful people over the years. The comfort of family, the mighty legacy of the Faith, ranks high in the list of God's blessings to His faithful people.

Thirdly, wealth and riches will be in the house of the faithful. Of course, this is often a matter of definition, isn't it? What is wealth? What are riches? What one person considers wealth may not be so to someone else. Some define it much more narrowly than others. For some, the acquisition of material things is required for them to feel rich and wealthy. For others, it's the simpler things of life. William Penn once said, "Those who set too narrow a definition of what constitutes wealth never really enjoy what they have."¹ Jesus said, "What profit is it to a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?" Many in our country consider themselves economically challenged, yet they would seem to have the wealth of kings in other parts of the world. Paul writes to Timothy: "Godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into this world, and we cannot take anything out of it." God help us all to see the great wealth with which He has blessed us!

Fourthly, the righteousness of the one blessed by God endures forever. How truly



[Pastor Steven Billings](#)

Sermon for Epiphany 5

February 5, 2023

blessed we are when we understand that our blessedness extends beyond life in this world into the life that goes on forever with Christ in heaven!

The psalmist goes on to say that light dawns in the darkness for the upright. Job, while suffering greatly in body and soul, was comforted by the fact of his own faithfulness. When accused by his friends to have committed some sin that caused his suffering, he could honestly say that his conscience was clear. Someone once said that you can't buy a clear conscience. How very true! For Job, and for countless others, such faithfulness has been a great beacon of hope because it really points to the faithfulness of Christ. Why can you have a clear conscience? Because Christ has paid your debt of sin. Not only this, He sends you the gift of His Spirit, who enables you to be faithful. Whatever faithfulness I've been able to maintain is entirely due to Christ's empowerment, and is to His credit and not to my own. It's a gift for which I am and shall be forever grateful.

Now, how does the blessed believer live out his or her blessedness? Being is the fountainhead of doing; we do based on who we are. So, what does the blessed person do?

First of all, he is gracious, merciful, and righteous. We have received grace in abundance, therefore we are gracious toward others. To be gracious is to extend to others the undeserved kindness we ourselves have received. We certainly haven't earned or merited the blessings God gives us. Why do we expect others to earn our favor when God doesn't expect that of us?

To be merciful is to withhold the wrath and punishment others do deserve. We have certainly deserved God's wrath, but He doesn't punish us for our failures, does He. He is merciful. So we ought to act similarly towards our neighbor. We can be awfully demanding people, expecting from others that which we ourselves are unable to do.

To be righteous is to live rightly, to do the right thing in all circumstances.

So, the man blessed by God is gracious, merciful, and righteous.

Secondly, the one blessed by God deals generously and lends, giving freely to those in need.

Thirdly, the blessed man conducts his affairs with justice. He is fair in all his dealings.

These are actions taken by one who fears the Lord and is blessed by Him.

A few final observations from the psalmist round out his description of a man blessed by God.

Such a person will never be moved. God will enable him to stand his ground, unshaken by the onslaught of the enemy. He will be remembered forever. You will always remember those in your life whom you knew to be blessed by God. You tell stories about them, you share your memories of them with those who've never met them, and they, too, share your respect and honor of them because of your testimony.



[Pastor Steven Billings](#)

Sermon for Epiphany 5

February 5, 2023

The blessed of God are not afraid of bad news, their heart firmly trusts in the Lord. They will not be afraid and will one day look in triumph on those who have oppressed them. They are lifted up in honor.

Now, I'm going to go out on a limb and guess that there are very few people in your life who have exemplified the characteristics of the person blessed by God as described in this psalm. Oh, there may be those who exhibit some of these characteristics, but usually even those were not in evidence all the time.

So, what does this mean? Does it mean that you've never known someone so blessed? Or is there something else at play here?

Luther used to say that every aspect of the Christian life – including the psalms – relates to Christ. What about this psalm? Does Psalm 112 relate to Christ? Let's see.

Did Jesus fear the Lord as a child who wishes to please the Father who loves Him? Did He delight in His Father's Commandments? In His own words: "I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father" (John 14:31).

What of His offspring? Are they mighty in the land? His followers are everywhere, in nearly every corner of the world, even in places where Christians have suffered greatly on account of their faith in Him. And the Church continues to expand, especially in Africa, where there is an explosion of faithful believing Christians.

How about wealth and riches? Folks, He owns *everything!* The entire universe is His.

Does His righteousness endure forever? Peter writes: "There will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:11). And Paul says: "His invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made" (Romans 1:20). Christ's righteousness endures forever; His kingdom endures forever, because *He* endures forever.

Is He is gracious, merciful, and righteous? Yes. Titus 3:5 – "He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy." Does He deal generously with us? Yes. 2 Corinthians 8:9 – "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich." Does He conduct his affairs with justice? Yes. "His work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he" (Deuteronomy 32:4). Has he looked in triumph on His adversaries? Not only has He triumphed over sin, death, and hell, but He shares that victory with us:

"I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on



[Pastor Steven Billings](#)

Sermon for Epiphany 5
February 5, 2023

immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Finally, is His horn is exalted in honor? St. Paul writes: "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9–11).

Well, beloved, I believe we can easily say that, yes, this psalm relates to Christ. In fact, it's really about Him in the first place. Without Him and His perfect relationship with the Father, we wouldn't have the grace of God toward us, for that is what Jesus has gained for us in His perfect life, passion, and resurrection. He is what we could never be. He's done what we could never do. And He's gifted all of that to us in never ending supply. Glory be to God! In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

1. His actual words were: "They narrow their own Freedom and Comforts, that make so much requisite to enjoy them."