

Summer Psalms-Psalm 15

*Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
but his delight is in the Law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night. (Psalm 1:1-2 ESV)*

Psalm 15: O Lord, who shall dwell on your holy hill?

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Psalm 15

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Introduction:

Good morning Redeemer City family! Please open up your Bibles to Psalm 15. This morning, we will be finishing our Summer Psalm series.

Now as you are finding that in your bibles, I want you to think about what the most important questions are. Are they those that relate to solving the issue of poverty? Or those that relate to securing peace in war torn Ukraine? Or would they be questions that relate to your family life? To your business? To your bank account? Or to your relationships with friends? Those are good questions but are they the MOST IMPORTANT?

No, the *most important* questions are those which relate directly to who God is and who we are in relation to him. These are the most important questions. And these are unfortunately the most *neglected* questions. A.W. Tozer famously said:

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

If that is true, which I believe it is, then we need to spend more time pausing, reflecting, and meditating on who God is and what that means for us His children. Don't you agree?

Well the good news is that we are not the first to have to be reminded of this. And this morning, Psalm 15 is going to help steer us back to the most important questions. It's going to reorient, redirect, and realign our hearts which are so prone to wander. Do you feel like need that today? I know I do. I need the Holy Spirit to take the Word of God and apply it to my wandering heart and mind.

So with these things in mind, hear now from the holy, timeless, inherent and living Word of God.

Psalm 15:

A Psalm of David.

O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent?

Who shall dwell on your holy hill?

He who walks blamelessly and does what is right
and speaks truth in his heart;

who does not slander with his tongue
and does no evil to his neighbor,

nor takes up a reproach against his friend;

in whose eyes a vile person is despised,

but who honors those who fear the Lord;

who swears to his own hurt and does not change;

who does not put out his money at interest

and does not take a bribe against the innocent.

He who does these things shall never be moved. (Psalm 15 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

We started out by asking what we think are the most important questions to be asked. And judging by this Psalm, how do you think King David would have answered this? He would have said it is this:

O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent?

Who shall dwell on your holy hill? (Psalm 15:1 ESV)

For David, the man after God's own heart, the most important question was this: how could someone be considered worthy to stand in the presence of the almighty God. What would the criteria for that be? And how could anybody *meet* it? How could anyone ever measure up to the

sovereign, holy, creating and sustaining God of the universe? Have you ever wondered that? Has that question ever kept you up at night?

It was the burning question in David's heart and God has provided us this wonderful Psalm to answer this question: who shall dwell on God's holy hill?

Who shall dwell on God's holy hill?

First it is:

1. Those who are blameless

Look with me again to verses 1-2 to see this:

O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent?
Who shall dwell on your holy hill?
He who walks **blamelessly** and does what is right
and speaks truth in his heart (Psalm 15:1-2 ESV)

The only people who can dwell on the Lord's holy hill are those who walk BLAMELESSLY before Him. What does that mean? It means that these people are living perfect lives. The disposition of their hearts towards *both* God and man is *always* pure. They not only love God with all of their heart, soul, mind and strength, but they also love their neighbours as themselves. They are blameless before God and blameless before others.

This is the person whose integrity is questioned by no one. They are not guilty of hypocrisy. The accusation of being twofaced would never stick for they are consistently good. And this person's actions all flow from a pure heart. And David wanted to convey this idea. If you want to be in the presence of God, 'niceness' won't cut it. The *appearance* of blamelessness won't cut it. God sees right THROUGH the appearances. He sees the heart and searches the mind.

We see this very thing throughout the Old Testament. And sadly, it seems like we see it more often that not because Israel FAILED AT IT. The Israelites, and this happened often, were guilty of offering sacrifices and fasting all the while having hearts that were far from God. Their

actions *looked* good, but they came from *impure hearts*. Hear how the Lord rebuked them through the Prophet Isaiah:

Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,
and oppress all your workers.
Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to hit with a wicked fist.
Fasting like yours this day
will not make your voice to be heard on high. (Isaiah 58:3B-4 ESV)

The blameless person that David is picturing is NEVER guilty of this hypocrisy. Their good works are always flowing out of a heart of pure worship to God. Good works are necessary of course. But good and pure hearts must be the driving force behind our good works. David saw this and Jesus confirmed it in the sermon on the mount. He said:

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (Matthew 5:8 ESV)

THIS is the person who is able to stand on the Lord's holy hill. The one who is blameless. The one who has a pure heart before both God and his fellow man. Now why is the bar so high? Because OUR God is Himself BLAMELESS. Because OUR God is so holy. Because OUR God is so far above anything we could imagine. It is no light thing to try and stand before Him.

And before God, all of our hypocrisy, twofaced tendencies, and impure actions bar us from His holy presence.

David continues to answer the question 'who shall dwell on the hill of the Lord?' It is those who are blameless and secondly, it is:

2. Those whose speech is pure

Look with me to verses 2-3 to see this:

He who walks blamelessly and does what is right
and speaks truth in his heart;
who does not slander with his tongue
and does no evil to his neighbor,
nor takes up a reproach against his friend (Psalm 15:2-3 ESV)

Those who dwell on the Lord's holy hill are those whose speech is pure. They are slow to speak. They think before they speak. They know WHEN to speak, and just as importantly, they know when NOT to speak. One commentator puts it this way:

They speak the truth from the heart. They do not deceive; what they say represents what they truly think. But they do not necessarily say everything that is on their mind either.¹

Do you see that? They are people who *always* speak the truth from the bottom of their hearts. They are *always* sincere in what they say and they wouldn't dream of speaking ill of anyone.

They have NEVER gossiped. They have NEVER complained. They have NEVER slandered. They have NEVER made a dirty joke. And they have NEVER used their tongue as a sword to bring someone down. Matthew Henry, a famous Bible commentator put it this way. This person:

Knows the worth of a good name, and therefore he backbites not, defames no man, speaks evil of no man, makes not others faults the subject of his common talk, much less of his sport and ridicule, nor speaks of them with pleasure, nor at all but for edification.²

That is a high bar is it not? And why do you think God draws us to this particular quality? Why is having pure speech so important to God? It's because your words reflect what's in your heart. Remember what Jesus said?

But what comes out of the mouth **proceeds from the heart**, and this defiles a person. (Matthew 15:18 ESV)

Your speech reflects what's inside your heart. If there is gossip in your heart, eventually its going to come out in your speech. If there is jealousy and envy in your heart, at some point you will be slandering and bashing your co-worker. Haven't you experienced this? Haven't you driven home from work shaking your head that you couldn't hold your tongue during lunch break? Haven't you repented many times of gossiping in the name of sharing a prayer request? We have all failed time and time again with our speech. We have all fallen short of this haven't we?

¹ Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary, TOTCS*, (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2014), digital version.

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Bible*, accessed via Olive Tree Bible Software.

This ideal worshipper that David speaks of is marked by *no* such speech. Their speech is pure, thoughtful, and builds up.

And thirdly, who shall dwell on the Lord's holy hill?

3. Those who love what God loves

Look with me to verse 4 to see this:

in whose eyes a vile person is despised,
but who honors those who fear the Lord (Psalm 15:4a ESV)

David's language is strong because his point is an important one. Those who shall dwell on the Lord's holy hill are those who LOVE the truth and HATE wickedness. The righteous person is unafraid to call a vile act just that: a vile act. Again, this is strong language, but we have New Testament parallel passages just like it. Look with me to Ephesians 5:11-12:

Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. (Ephesians 5:11-12 ESV)

Here Paul was telling the Church to HATE the wicked and evil deeds done by those who profess to love and follow Jesus. To dwell in the presence of the Lord demands a singular devotion to the truth which means hating all that contradicts it.

Reading this Psalm, you can picture David alluding to a wicked Israelite who was robbing the already poor, taking advantage of the desperate, willing to flatter, deceive, take advantage of others or bend the truth in order to get ahead. Instead of attempting to follow the God of Israel, this person gave them self over to the very things that God hates. Instead of being devoted to the truth, this person was devoted to wickedness. What is the only proper response to seeing this kind of evil? For David it was simple, the wickedness had to be condemned. Derrick Kidner puts it this way:

What looks at first sight Pharisaical in 4a is in fact no more than loyalty. This man is not comparing himself with others, but giving his vote: **declaring what he admires and where he stands.**³

That's helpful isn't it? This person is no fence-sitter. Their convictions don't move as the culture moves. They are bound and firm because they are rooted in the WORD OF GOD. What God approves, they approve. What God desires, they desire. And just as important, what God hates, they hate.

He doesn't sit on his couch and give his attention to "entertainment" that laughs at sin. He doesn't sit back quietly in the face of injustice. He doesn't edit the Bible to try to conform God's preferences to his. He loves what God loves, and he hates what God hates. As Paul says:

It (love) does not rejoice at wrong doing, but rejoices with the truth. (1 Corinthians 13:6 ESV)

The person who shall dwell on the Lord's holy hill is one who loves and rejoices with the truth. They love what God loves and hate what He hates.

And fourthly, who shall dwell on God's holy hill?

4. Those who keep their word

Look with me to verse 4 to see this. Who shall dwell on the Lord's holy hill? The person:

in whose eyes a vile person is despised,
but who honors those who fear the Lord;
who swears to his own hurt and does not change (Psalm 15:4 ESV)

This blameless, pure in speech, lover of truth, is also one who keeps their word. They keeps their promises EVEN when it costs them. When things go bad, whether it be a business deal, an agreement between friends, this person always follows through on what they said they would do. EVEN when they are on the losing side of the deal.

³ Derrick Kidner, *Psalms 1-72-An Introduction and Commentary, TOTCS*, (1973), digital version.

David says these people swear to their own hurt. John Calvin put it this way:

The faithful will rather submit to suffer loss than break their word.⁴

The person who can stand before their holy God is one who always keeps their word and commitments not only to God but to those around them.

I can imagine David thinking of the Israelite who had made a vow to God or a promise to one of his neighbors, who had come under hard times. Maybe food was scarce and their land was infertile so they were faced with a decision: do I go back on my word? Do I turn a blind eye in order to get myself out of this mess? Do I go back on my word in order to get ahead?

Have you ever been in this situation? I am sure all of us have in some sense. When the allure of a promotion, or a big sale, or to evade some consequences that we deserved, the temptation to go back on our words has and always will be there. But our God is a faithful God and He demands that same faithfulness from His people. This blameless person, in keeping their word even to their own hurt, is mirroring their faithful God who NEVER breaks His word.

Fifthly and lastly, who shall dwell on God's holy hill? It is:

5. Those who are generous

Look with me to verses 5 to see this. David says the person who shall dwell on God's holy hill is someone:

who does not put out his money at interest
and does not take a bribe against the innocent.
He who does these things shall never be moved. (Psalm 15:5 ESV)

Not only does this person GIVE in a generous manner, but he will not stoop to GAIN in an unworthy manner. Money talks, but for this righteous person that David is envisioning, their

⁴ John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, accessed via Olive Tree Bible Software.

handling of money is never led by greed. It is never led by an unhealthy craving to get ahead by any means possible. They lend fairly, they pay in full and on time, and they don't close their eyes to injustice in the name of padding their bank account.

Again we can ask, why does God draw our attention to money? Why does it matter what we do with our money? It's because money, just like our words, reflect what's going on inside of our hearts. Jesus put it this way:

For where your treasure is, there your **heart** will be also. (Matthew 6:21 ESV)

If your bank account is what is most important to you, then that is exactly where your heart is. And Jesus went on to say these important words:

No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve God and money.** (Matthew 6:24 ESV)

The one who can stand before God is one who has settled in their heart that God is first and always will be. Their financial decisions will be dictated not by what is quickest or easiest, but what is pure and right before their holy God. God cares about how we conduct our finances, whether it be personal or whether it be our business. He also cares about the poor, the vulnerable, or anyone who could be hurt or taken advantage of by our actions. It is one thing to be a shrewd business man, it is another to lie, cut corners, or deceive in order to get ahead. God demands that His children be marked by generosity.

And it is these people, those who are blameless, those whose speech is pure, who love the truth, who keep their word no matter what, and are who are generous who will stand on the hill of the Lord. And it is they who will never be moved. Thanks be to God.

So who shall sojourn in the Lord's tent? Who shall dwell on His holy Hill? Who can stand in the presence of the Holy and Almighty God?

Can you? Can I? Aren't we all tempted to believe the lie that our good deeds will be enough? That our good deeds will meet the standard that God demands? It's a lie and deception that we are too quick to *want* to believe. But what does God say? What is the bar that He sets and demands?

It's PERFECTION. And it's nothing less than PERFECTION.

And that presents a massive problem as NONE of us will ever measure up to that perfection. None of us will ever walk a full day let alone a life time with thoughts and actions that are utterly pure and blameless before God.

He is holy! He is perfect! He cannot be in the presence of sin, and that standard excludes every single one of us. We have all fallen short of the bar of sinless perfection.

But thanks be to God that there is One who hit the mark. There is one who we can definitively say lived in such a way that He could enter and stay in God's presence. And that was Jesus.

He was blameless from His first breath to His last. There wasn't a moment when His heart wasn't inclined and fully bent on bringing glory to His heavenly Father. The religious leaders tried to label him a liar, a rebel, a sinner, the prince of demons, but none of it ever held up because Jesus was the blameless One.

He never spoke a word that wasn't true. Every word that He spoke was sincere even when he was accused of wrong. You and I couldn't go a day without speaking an sinful word, but Jesus lived a LIFE with not ONE CARELESS WORD.

He loved what God loved, and he hated what God hated. He showed compassion to the leper, but he flipped the table of the moneychanger. He forgave the repentant prostitute, but he rebuked the hypocritical pharisee.

And Jesus was faithful to His Word. He came to live, to die, and to rise again for our sins and that is just what He did. When tempted by Satan to take an easier road, or facing the temptation in the garden of Gethsemane to bow out, Jesus remained utterly faithful to the very end. He came to save and that is what He did.

And He was the ultimate picture of the generous one. He left His heavenly, glorious throne and gave up Himself in order to give US riches beyond anything we can imagine.

This Jesus is the ONLY ONE who could ever dwell on the Lord's holy hill. And that is EXACTLY where he is today. After his resurrection, he ascended to the Father and he is - right now – seated on his heavenly throne. There is a MAN in heaven! And through that man, we now have access to the presence of the living God.

Listen: are you feeling like you can't measure up? Are you despairing that your sin is too great? Instead of trying to measure up on your own merits, look to Christ's merits! Repent of your sin and place ALL of your trust in Him. Place your trust in His perfect life and His sacrificial death on your behalf! And see Jesus risen from the dead, having secured your salvation and interceding for you at the right hand of God almighty. Get your eyes off yourself and look to Christ.

And seeing Him, being filled with the Holy Spirit, resolve to become more and more like the person this Psalm describes. Resolve to resemble Jesus-the One who opened the door for sinners like us to become saints who are welcomed into the throne room of God. Because the Gospel isn't *just* about what Christ accomplished for you in the past, it is also about what He IS going to do in you. And He promises to make you more and more like Himself. So strive, strive hard to look more like Christ. Strive hard to look more and more like Him. Because you were saved not remain in sin, nor to remain bound by old habits, but to resemble Jesus-the blameless One who ascended the holy hill of the Lord.

Thanks be to God! Let's pray