



"...The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live..." (Ecclesiastes 9.3)

*Wherewith shall I come before the LORD,
and bow myself before the high God?*

*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good;
and what doth the LORD require of thee,
but to do justly, and to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with thy God? (Micah 6.6,8)*

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salm 1 & 2

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Psalms 1 and 2 have long been viewed by many exegetes as intimately connected. It has even been suggested that they were at one time a single psalm. Too much water has passed under the bridge for us to be certain about the second contention, but a close reading today does persuade the careful reader that they do, at the very least, play off and complement one another. Many have pointed out that Psalm 2 ends on the same note with which Psalm 1 began: *'ašrê*, a macarism that we have translated as "truly fulfilled" in Psalm 1 and "enduring" in Psalm 2.¹ Both psalms, then, have an acute interest in establishing of what the truly "happy," "fulfilled," "enduring," and "progressive" life consists.

Psalm 1 teaches that a life of advancement and fulfillment consists of rooting oneself deeply in the guidance and values that God provides in scripture, and in striving to live according to that

¹ We accept the proposal that *'ašrê* comes from the root *'šr*, meaning "advance," "go/ walk forward." As one author put it, the word "derives from a root meaning 'to go forward,' 'to walk on,' 'to march steadily' (cf. Akkadian, Arabic, etc.), *perhaps even to progress* in the way of comprehension" (Terrien, "The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary," *Eerdmans Critical Commentary*, emphasis added).

guidance (1.²).

“How truly fulfilled [are]...
they [who] choose YHWH’s direction
and consult his Tôrâ at all times.”²

At the same time, the fulfilling and progressive life consists of rejecting the guidance of the ungodly, whose unethical behavior is antithetical to a healthy and enduring society.

“How truly fulfilled is one who
does not walk as directed by the ungodly,
does not stand in the path of the unethical,
and does not sit in gatherings with sociopaths!”³

Psalm 1 concludes as it began with a warning about the ungodly. In addition to being built upon rejecting the guidance of the ungodly, avoiding their lifestyle, and refusing to cooperate or collaborate with them in their unethical sociopathy, the fulfilling and advancing life and society are also built on rejecting their often boisterous demands for influence, power, and governance in society.

“Therefore, the ungodly should not participate in a place of decision making,
or the unethical have place in a just assembly.
For, YHWH promotes the norms of those who do right,
but the norms of the ungodly are to perish.”⁴

In a sense, Psalm 2 opens where Psalm 1 opened and closed: with the wicked. But in Psalm 2, the wicked are represented by those in power. The governing. The first psalm’s warning about not allowing the ungodly to “participate in a place of decision making” has gone unheeded.

² All psalm translations are mine unless noted otherwise.

³ Psalm 1.¹

⁴ Psalm 1.⁵⁻⁶

Those who govern the nations and those who allowed them into the position they hold, are in open rebellion against God.

“Why do the nations raise such a ruckus,
and entire populations grouse to no avail?
world’s kings offer resistance;
world leaders form a united front
against YHWH
and against his Māšîaḥ.”⁵

Such rebellion is not allowed to stand. Whether the nations and their citizenry know it or not, they are on borrowed time. They are given time to repent, but that time will not last to perpetuity.

“Now then, O kings, be sensible in your response.
Learn your lesson, O rulers of the earth.
Serve YHWH with deference.
Be content with cowering before him;
kissing the Son’s feet,
lest he become enraged, and you be annihilated;
for his anger can flare up in a flash.”⁶

There are many other truths to explore in these two psalms, and innumerable ways to examine them. But I’ve said what I wanted to say in this brief homily. These two introductory psalms preview themes that will run throughout the Book of Psalms, to wit:

The world is infested with many, millions, of ungodly, unethical, and sociopathic individuals. They freely offer their guidance and their values to the unsuspecting. They invite all to adopt these norms and values as their own and collaborate with them in society destroying activities. These ungodly, unethical, and sociopaths find their way into positions of governance. From these

⁵ Psalm 2.¹⁻³

⁶ Psalm 2.¹⁰⁻¹²

high perches, they foment rebellion against God until annihilation is the only possible end.

In his mercy, God has provided guidance that delivers us from the perilous traps the ungodly set. This guidance is found in his word, in scripture. By giving diligent attention to the word of God and striving to abide by the guidance found in it, we discover a life that is fulfilling and that allows for unknown progress and advancement.

Now, in my former, unrepentant life, I would end with this conclusion and bear testimony to the truth and reality of these things. But as I have so often said, “That was then.”

This is now.

“In 2016, a man—a man as ungodly, as unethical, as sociopathic, and as dismissive of God’s gracious guidance as any who had ever offered themselves for any public office in the United States—presented himself to Americans and asked that he be granted a position “in a place of decision making.” The place of governance that he desired—the presidency of the United States—might possibly be the most powerful position of governance the world has ever known. He shamelessly offered his own brand of perverted guidance. He presented his own deviant norms. He invited others to join him. Collaborate with him.

Tragically, tens of millions joined him in his ungodliness, his immorality, his sociopathy. More tragic, notwithstanding the Psalmist’s warning that “the ungodly should not participate in a place of decision making,” millions who express love for and allegiance to the Book from which this warning comes, granted him a place of governance. This was a violation of the most basic of godly principles.

He and they have ever since been on rampage. They have raised a hellish ruckus. They have resisted God’s guidance and formed a united front in rebellion against God. Even with his defeat in 2020, he and his minions doubled down, fomented insurrection. Through these and many other anti-social activities, they have created a chasm between them and God that has only deepened and widened since then.

No, such rebellion will not be allowed to stand. Whether the nation and its citizenry know it or not, they are on borrowed time. They are given time to repent, but that time will not last to perpetuity.

“Now then, O kings, be sensible in your response.

Learn your lesson, O rulers of the earth.

Serve YHWH with deference.

Be content with cowering before him;

kissing the Son’s feet,

lest he become enraged, and you be annihilated;

for his anger can flare up in a flash.”

Yes, in these two opening psalms of the Psalter, both individuals and nations can find much to guide them in their attitudes and behaviors. The two paths, fulfillment, advancement and endurance, or damnation and annihilation, are clearly set forth. All are free to choose their path, but not the consequences of their choice. Each path contains within its own course, the seeds of its own inevitable destination.

It would be hard to overestimate the importance and pertinence of these two psalms and their message to today’s world and to America in particular. It has a choice to make between advancement and annihilation. Lets hope they choose wisely.

*“Moreover by thy word is thy servant warned:
and in keeping of them there is great reward.”⁷*

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

⁷ Psalm 19.¹¹, KJV