

**Main Idea: For those who fear the Lord and follow in His ways, beautiful blessings await.**

**Title Slide**

Good morning,  
The Lord be with you.

Greetings to those of you that are with us in this room and those of you that are with us virtually. We rejoice in our Great God, the Creator of all that is, His Son Jesus who purchased our redemption, and the Spirit who dwells within us.

My name is Ryan McGregor, and I am an elder here at Tampa Covenant..

Our family has attended this church for over twenty years. I still remember bringing my parents here to this church the first time, as our guests - they are here today. I was so excited to have them hear our pastors and when they finally came here from Michigan, there was a guest speaker that Sunday. So, if you are visiting, we are so glad to have you. I invite you to get to know us after church with some tasty treats. I would encourage visitors to come back next week too, and the Sunday after that.

The Psalms of Ascent are Songs sung on the road trip to Jerusalem. The blessings that God had given to the children of Israel would have been on the forefront of the traveller going to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles or Passover.

So as we look at the text today, We will see God's blessings that He brings to the ancient Israelite singer in Psalms 128 and how He brings those blessings to us today.

Thank you Emeree for reading our text this morning.  
Let's Pray.

Lord we give you honor and praise.  
We do not deserve the blessings you bestow on us.  
We are in need of your grace and you are so generous with it.  
Speak to the hearts of those here today.

May you forever be praised  
Amen

## **Fearing the Lord**

### **Slide 2**

Psalm 128 begins by saying

Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways

Who doesn't like to be blessed? When someone says they are blessed, it sounds like things are well with them. Everything is going great. It's smooth sailing. Isn't that where you want to be? "Hashtag blessed"?

Blessing goes a little deeper than just a lottery ticket. Blessings involve God's favor to His people. A deep contented happiness. Something that goes the beyond the superficial.

Well Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways.

The Hebrew word that translate 'blessed' is Asre, and it's the first word in the entire book of Psalms.

### **Slide 3**

Psalm 1 talks about the same type of blessing, and gives the same "how to" manual to get it.

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.

These are the prerequisites for the blessings that follow in Psalm 1 and Psalm 128

### **Slide 4**

Fearing the Lord involves awe and reverence for the majesty of who God is. The term 'fear' doesn't just mean knocking knees, wide eyes and running for cover.

I work in a school and it is very evident when that a class of students treats a substitute different than the teachers. When a teacher is there, students take the teacher seriously, but when the substitute is there – there can be some leeway.

Our fear of God means we take him seriously.

The world doesn't take God seriously, to them God is a lazy substitute teacher that is at the front of the classroom and talking and if a student feels like listening in class then that is fine for them. The world may acknowledge God exists, but they are not paying attention. Not so with the Christian. He's our king and the Lord of all –Whether we are paying attention or not. Fearing Him means we admit that God's in charge not us.

What would be the greatest sign of someone who fears the LORD, who thinks He's in charge?

#### **Slide 5**

They walk in His ways. If you are going to take God seriously, you are going to obey what He says to do. Walk in His ways. Follow His Path, Do what he commanded us to do.

And where will those paths take us? There are four blessings that I want to talk about.

#### **First, the Blessing of Harvest**

#### **Slide 6**

Vs. 2 says You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands. You shall be blessed and it shall be well with you.

I pointed out Psalm 1, but to the ancient singer, Psalm 128 would have been a repetition of things they already knew going way back to Deuteronomy 28.

#### **Slide 7**

“If you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments that I command you today,

3. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

## Slide 8

I grew up on a farm. I just visited this past month. This year we were able to be in Michigan to watch the wheat being harvested. These past few weeks, farmers in Michigan - after planting their wheat fields months ago - are now bringing in the Harvest. Their hard work is finally paying off, they are now enjoying the work of their hands - NOW those pesky deer do seem to sneak in and steal a little of the harvest – **Slide 9** But most farmers let that slide.

Following the LORD, for the ancient Israelites, would mean that they would sow the seeds, **Slide 10** water and fertilize the plants, and watch them sprout from the ground. Everyday they would see the wheat, the plants maturing, and then finally the harvest. Then there were feasts - community feasts- to celebrate when the harvest came in. The end result of their own hard work would go *to them*, they would eat the labor of their own hands.

You might be saying – I'm not a farmer. When you put that picture of wheat up there, that was the first time I ever saw wheat.

But it doesn't take a stretch to apply this to your own work. There are avenues in our own careers where we can see a harvest. Where we can see the work of our own hands. When you finish a project, an assignment, a course of study, a plan of action, you see the harvest. That's a blessing from God.

The very first thing we read about in the Bible is God working. God doing good work, He finds delight in it. The very first thing God says to the man He created is to work

## Slide 11

Tim Keller says this

In the beginning God worked, work was not a necessary evil or something that came into the picture later, or something that human beings were created to do but that was beneath the great God Himself. Work could not have a more exalted inauguration

Too often we view our work as a burden. A task to get past to get to vacation. "Everybody's working for the weekend." . But we glorify and reflect God when we work, and through that God blesses us through the work of our hands and the harvest he brings.

## **Blessing of Family**

Someone who works and sees the labor of their hands, would bring that blessing back to their home. Our work comes back to our family, the second blessing.

### **Slide 12**

Verse 3

Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house;  
Your children will be like olive shoots around your table.

Throughout the Bible, family was so important to the children of Israel. We can point to Sarah and Abraham, Jacob and Rachel, and Hannah as people who felt unfulfilled in their lives because they didn't have children— That strong family connection they were yearning for.

Being a fruitful vine definitely sends the obvious picture of having offspring. But it also sends the picture of refreshment and enjoyment.

The passage says that around your table are your children.

People point to kids and say they are “growing like a weed”. Well older people say it, and I'm 50, so I should probably start saying it myself. The Psalm says that children will be like olive shoots around the table.

### **SLIDE 13**

Olive shoots grown from an olive tree. A shoot can be harvested to grow another olive tree. I also looked up how long an olive tree lives and got lots of different answers. But every answer, I found was much longer than any tree I've planted. Olive trees are around for hundreds of years. Comparing children to olive shoots speaks to longevity - with a really long o. That's the example God gives of blessing for continued family.

Family means different things to each of us here in this room. Our families could be the source of Good memories, or heart breaking memories. There's as many unique family stories as there are people in this room.

But In Matthew 12

#### **SLIDE 14**

46 While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak with Him. 47 Someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.”

48 He replied to him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?”

49 Pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers.

50 For whoever does the will of my Father in Heaven in my brother and sister and mother.

Jesus in this story, shows a bigger idea of family than we are used to.. He doesn't go out to speak with His family, because He already was speaking to them. He had the same familial relationship to his disciples as to His own family. In fact, He gave His disciples precedence over His own family.

He also stresses in verse 50, that this is for whoever does the will of My Father

God refers to us as His family throughout the new testament.

Look at these verses. **[SLIDE 15]**

**John 1:12**

**But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He  
gave**

**the right to become children of God.**

**Romans 8:17**

**And if children, then heirs-heirs of God and fellow heirs with  
Christ**

**Ephesians 1:5**

**He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus**

**Christ according to the purpose of His will.**

Look at the familial terminology here. (Wait a beat) Children of God. Heirs of God. Adoption to Himself as sons. He gave the right to become children of God.

We are family. Us. This is what we all have in common, and nothing we achieved ourselves. Through Christ, our children will be like olive shoots around your table, but not necessarily biologically. Look around, the people sitting behind you and in front of you are your family, just as much as the people sitting in the pew with you. We are there for each other, we share our joys, our difficulties, our triumphs and our sorrows. Sure we get into arguments, what family doesn't? Sure we don't agree with everything the other person does. But at the end of the day, at the end of every day, we are family.

#### **SLIDE 16**

Verse 4 ends, pointing back to the first verse, reminding us where these blessings come from.

#### **So What is the Problem?**

So this sounds like a great deal, right? Your life & family. It's a way better deal than a free Netflix trial. Why doesn't everyone do that? Doesn't it seem like the obvious choice?

You see fearing the LORD and walking in His ways. Means putting someone else in charge. We as a people are loath to do that. We don't like to be told what to do. I really don't. The God filled life sounds good, but the **self** filled life sounds a little better. Wouldn't it be great to have all the things in verse two and three, buuuuut you did it. Our own sinful nature tempts us in this direction, and to be fair so does our culture.

The Psalmist never says wealth. If God is doing the blessing, then prosperity is going to mean something different to Him than it does to us here in 2023.

Jesus warns us of this in Matthew 6:19 **SLIDE 17**

Do not lay up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

Jesus says the real prosperity is doing the opposite.

Laying up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where moth and rust don't destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal

The Psalm then turns outward, in a benediction prayer for the final two verses.

## Blessings from Jerusalem Slide 18

Similar in purpose to what we will hear at the end of the service today. A benediction is pronounced before you go out into the world.

The third blessing comes from Jerusalem

Verse 5

The Lord Bless you from Zion!

May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life!

The Psalms of Ascent were sung on the way to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the political and spiritual Capitol of Israel. The prosperity of Jerusalem would come from prosperous growing families. The blessings don't just stay in our house. They were to flow out into the country. The phrase "seeing the prosperity of Jerusalem" would have had a different feel after the Babylonian exile or even Jesus' time, but God is not distressed or held in check by any political arrangement. God is the same in Genesis, Nehemiah, the Gospels and today.

When we, here and now, look to the prosperity of Jerusalem. We point to the greatest thing that ever happened there. Jesus, who came to call sinners to repentance. That's the blessing that we see and experience, the blessing we dance around in. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, our sins are forgiven.

But saying that makes it really personal.

Maybe when the Bible says "your sins are forgiven" you think that can't be true. Maybe you are on the outside of the faith looking in or very possibly you're a Christian and you still say the same thing. *"You don't know me. You don't know the things I have done."* We've all made sinful, wretched selfish mistakes.

Abraham Lincoln's law partner William Herndon said that in Lincoln's early life he had a problem with Christianity. **SLIDE 19**— "Lincoln maintained that God could not just forgive, that punishment has to follow sin." Lincoln was right. God can't just look at your sin and then look at your cute face and laugh it off. That might work with grandparents but God cannot do that. I don't know what you may have done in your life, but if you believe it is worth punishment. God agrees with you. **SLIDE 20**

Romans 6:23 says the Wages of sin is death. Sin requires payment. The payment is death. But also in the book of Romans, Paul says, **SLIDE 21** " But God commendeth His love toward us, so



that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Christ, knowing your sin had to be paid for, paid your penalty. God knows who you are and He knows what you did so He sent His Son, His Only Son, the One He Loves, Jesus to pay for that sin. **SLIDE 22** And that’s not even the best part. He died, taking your penalty to the grave and rose again, coming back to life and destroying death destroying the punishment of sin. As children of God, this graciously belongs to us. But if you are outside looking in and are interested in learning more, find someone to talk to. Maybe me. Maybe one of our real pastors. This room is full of people who want to share the gospel with you.

### **The Blessing of the Future**

#### **SLIDE 23**

In verse 6, the Psalmist sings, “May you see your children’s children.”

There are definitely some members of our family who are not here today. Speaking of family brings up tough memories. But I want to leave all of us with two verses.

#### **SLIDE 24**

The first is Romans 8:18

Paul says, “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”

#### **SLIDE 25**

The second is I John 3:2

John says “Dead friends, now are we the children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

Our future is full of promise. When our time here is done, we will be together as a family in the most real way! All of us. That is a promise. Jesus said when He comes again, He will receive us to Himself. The work and the heartache we endure now are not even worth comparing to the blessings that are coming.

If you take nothing away from this, as you prepare to walk back into the world that God has prepared for you to serve Him in, remember the blessing that WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM.

There's no ifs in that statement. All who fear the Lord and walk in His ways, will see the prosperity and glory of Christ and all of our "family" for the rest of our life and eternity.

## **CLOSING**

### **SLIDE 26**

We talked about four blessings, Harvest, Family, Blessing from the cross in Jerusalem and Blessing for the Future but through Christ, it's really impossible to count all of our blessings. The Blessings in this chapter are not get rich quick schemes. They are not recipes in the sense that you follow the instructions set the oven at 350 degrees and 40-45 minutes, everything is fine.

These are lifelong instructions. You won't raise a crop in the next few days. They come from fearing the LORD on a daily basis. They come from walking in His ways, every day. And when we finish our journey of walking in His ways, we will see Him as He is.

Amen

Lord thank you for the blessings throughout our lives.

We have you to thank for our family, our work, our salvation and our future.

Man's empty praise and treasures that fade are never enough.

You came along and put us back together.

And every desire is now satisfied here in your love.

Amen