

I) Psalm 128 – The Good Life

A) Introduction – What comes to mind when I say, “the good life?”

1) *Our Michigan trip*

2) *Maybe for you the good life is. . .*

- (a) Your own island in the S. Pacific sitting on the beach sipping Mimosa watching the sunset
- (b) Maybe driving through Big Sur with the top down.
- (c) Maybe hunting wild game in Africa

3) *Psalm 128 gives us a picture of the good life*

- (a) It may not be quite what you thought of when you thought of the good life but it is meant to give us a very appealing picture of the kind of good life that we were created to have.
- (b) Under the heading of the common grace of God, with all the good things that God created and made available to everyone, here is a picture of the good life.
- (c) Read Psalm 128

4) *Prop: God created us for the good life but in Christ we have the better life.*

II) The Good Life Promised

A) Being “blessed”

1) *To be blessed is to be living the good life*

- (a) A state of happiness, wellbeing, satisfied and well supplied. In a word, to live in God’s favor.
- (b) It is the state of being that we were created for and the state of being that we ultimately desire for ourselves, even if we define the details differently.

2) *Ps. 128 gives us the picture of the good life, the blessed life in ancient Hebrew culture.*

- (a) Here are the components that we can relate to.

B) Meaningful work

1) *You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands.*

- (a) Meaningful work that brings a return.

(b) Maybe your version of the good life did not include work. But a truly good life does. We were made to work, to have meaningful work and for that work to produce a return.

2) *When you get no return, it's hard on the soul – you feel not blessed (unhappy, dissatisfied, etc)*

(a) To till the soil, sow the seed but get no harvest is a curse. To tend the flocks but they miscarry is not blessed. To work hard and not get paid is not the good life.

(b) Hard work with no return or little return or delayed return is hard. (stay at home moms, etc.)

3) *Ps 128 gives us a picture of a man at his dinner table with plenty to eat. It's part of the good life*

C) Meaningful relationships/family

1) *A wife who is like a fruitful vine*

(a) It could be referring to more than being fertile but not less. She bears lots of children.

(b) The phrase “within your house” is reference to her faithfulness as opposed to a wayward wife who is promiscuous. Pr. 7:11-12 She is loud and wayward; her fee to do not stay at home; now in the street, now in the market, and at every corner she lies in wait.

2) *Children like olive shoots around your table*

(a) In an agrarian household, children are a blessing because children are a necessity. They are your work force.

(b) The olive shoots are signs of new life and future fruitfulness. The picture given is a household at the dinner table, Father, mother, and several children around the table with plenty to eat, all enjoying each other's company.

(a) **It's the closing scene from a Duck Dynasty episode.**

(b) Speaking of having babies. . . .Aug – Dan and Regan Torres had Anamarie Sophia, Jul – Jonathan and Sarah Vince had Zander Adam, Jun – Daniel and Tina Wang had Abigail, and in May – Chris and Courtney Frick had Charlotte Wren.

D) Peaceful Society and long life

1) *May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem*

(a) times of peace verses times of war or the recent situation in Charlottesville. When there is not peace, no one is feeling blessed.

(b) The good life has kids playing in the streets – not rioting in the streets.

2) *Long life - May you see your children's children.*

- (a) Death is always like an enemy but when it comes early it has a real sting to it. The younger the harder and to bury your own child has got to be the hardest.
- (b) But to see your children's children is a blessed life.

E) Summary

1) This is God's picture of the good life.

- (a) Meaningful work that brings a good return – people around you that you love and care about and who love and care about you – your country and your city is at peace – and you are sitting at the dinner table with your grandkids.

2) You should be saying "I want the good life, I want to be blessed?"

III) The Good Life Connection

A) Those who fear the Lord

1) The real connection to the good life

2) The fear of the Lord = a right reverence with a sense of awe toward God.

- (a) Easily misunderstood phrase but think recipe of awe, reverence, respect, love, and submission.

3) More than believing

- (a) I believe in God. I believe in Jesus. Now where is my blessing?
- (b) James 2:19 You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe – and shudder!
- (c) James main point – genuine faith is much more than merely agreeing with facts about God
- (d) "The Bible isn't interested in whether we believe in God or not. It assumes everyone more or less does. What it is interested in is the response we have to him: Will we let God be as he is, majestic and holy, vast and wondrous, or will we always be trying to whittle him down to the size of our small minds, insist on confining him within the boundaries we are comfortable with, refuse to think of him other than in images that are convenient to our lifestyle? But then we are not dealing with the God of creation and the Christ of the cross, but with a dime-store reproduction of something made in our image, usually for commercial reasons. To guard against all such blasphemous chumminess with the Almighty, the Bible talks of the fear of the Lord – not to scare us but to bring us to awesome attention before the overwhelming grandeur of God, to shut up our whining and chattering and stop our running and fidgeting so that we can really see him as he is and listen to him as he speaks his merciful, life-changing words of forgiveness." Eugene Peterson

B) The connection to the good life is in the blessing

1) We need to realize that God is a God who loves to bless.

- (a) At creation “And God blessed them.” God’s favor on them that satisfied their souls and made them happy.
- (b) The fall – disrupted the blessing and put mankind under a curse.
- (c) But God’s plan of Redemption was to bring back this blessing.
 - (a) It had its beginning in Gen. 12 by calling Abraham, pronouncing him blessed and giving him the promise that through him all the people’s of the world would be blessed through him.
 - (b) The thread runs throughout the bible and leads to Christ as the Seed of Abraham, through whom all peoples find their blessing.
- (d) We come into this blessing through faith in Christ – we stand in him, with him, looking to him who walked in the fear of the Lord. Though he was equal with God did not count that equality but lowered himself, taking the form of a man, a servant, and humbled himself in sweet surrender to the Father and walked out that obedience perfectly so that the Father gave him complete authority to bestow upon any and all who call upon him. He freely gives it. We receive it. Never earn it. And through him we come into the Blessing of God.

IV) The Better Life Received

A) All spiritual blessings in Christ

1) *Something better than the good life*

- (a) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. . . Eph. 1:3

2) *How is life in Christ better than the good life?*

B) The good life includes meaningful work

1) *But Jesus give us work that is better than work and a return that is better than a paycheck.*

- (a) Story from John 21 – Peter said, “I am going fishing.” They worked all night long and got nothing. Jesus said try the other side - so many fish in those nets they were unable to haul them in.
- (b) This encounter was a repeat of a similar encounter when Jesus first called them and said, “I am going to make you fishers of men.”
- (c) Fishing is meaningful work that brings a reward but Jesus gave them more meaningful work, kingdom work. There now a spiritual work beyond the natural work and whether you are fishing or programming or selling or driving, belonging to Christ enrolls you into something altogether more meaningful – the work of the kingdom. You don’t need to quit your day-job but you do need to

recognize that your job is not your identity, Christ is, and your work in His service is meaningful and rewarding.

2) Jesus gives us food that is better than food

- (a) Jesus at a well in Samaria – “I have a food to eat that you do not know about. My food is to do the will of him who sent and to accomplish his work.” Jn 4

C) The good life includes meaningful relationship, even family

1) But Jesus gives us something greater

- (a) “While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” Mt. 12:46-50
- (b) “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,” Eph. 2:19
- (c) The priority of Jesus above our family is a hard teaching of Jesus as he teaches us the cost of discipleship, but it is in putting Christ first that we come into the true blessings of God.

2) Jesus was the “blessed” One, yet he did not have a wife and children.

- (a) The Apostle Paul was one of the happiest and most grateful for the blessings of God person in the bible and he did not have a wife and children around his dinner table.

D) The good life includes a peaceful society

1) But Jesus gives us greater peace.

- (a) Oddly, Jesus said, “I have not come to bring peace but a sword.” Mt. 10:34-
- (b) Rom. 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

E) The good life includes long life

1) But Jesus gives us eternal life

- (a) The Blessed One walked on the earth for only 33. That is a short life by any standards. And yet he lives to this day and lives forever, as will we if we are in Him.

V) Conclusion

A) The greatest mistake is to fixate on the good life and reject the better life.

1) *But this is what Jesus meant when he said "For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." MT. 16:25*

(a) The good life is in fact a god life and we should desire it. But don't lose your life trying to get it.

2) *All the meaningfulness and rewards for our labors, all the joys of having a loving family, all the peace and the long life, it is all on the other side of placing complete trust in Christ and being will to lay it all down for his sake.*

(a) And when we do, we live each moment as if we have it all already, even the best is yet to come.

3) *If we don't truly believe this and live this, we lose our testimony, we lose our effectiveness, we have no good news to tell anyone.*

B) God is not trying to take the good life from us. He is determined to give us the better life.