



Epiphany 4  
February 8, 2026  
Psalm 1:1-2

## Blessed by the Word

Not too long ago, I was driving down the highway past an approximately 40-foot motorhome. Towed behind it was a fiery-red Ford Mustang convertible. I noticed the license plates. The RV had this – BN BLSD. Can you figure it out? Yep. And the Mustang's license plate was BN BLSD2. Is that what it takes to be blessed? 350 square feet of mobile living space along with a car that can go 0-100 in 8.9 seconds? Obviously not. But what would it take for you to consider yourself blessed? First day of retirement? Waking up in a new house? Recovery from an illness? What about as a congregation? I'll be honest... I've had some concerns for our Light of the Valleys. We're a bit in a rut regarding total worship attendance. Do we need to see packed rooms to be "blessed?" Do we need 8 kids at Children's message? A new building?

What does it take for us to say, "I'm blessed," individually? As a community? As a congregation? Today, let's spend some time considering what the Lord says. In our Gospel reading today, we heard the opening lines of Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount," the longest recorded discourse of Jesus recorded in one chunk. There he is, overlooking the Sea of Galilee with his disciples, just dropping morsel after morsel of divine advice. "Want to be happy? Want to be blessed? Be merciful. Be pure in heart. Be a peacemaker." It's a fascinating section of God's Word. But long before Jesus outlined his recipe for blessedness, so did the Psalmist. Some suggest that Psalm 1 was the text that Jesus used as the basis for his sermon on the mount. Psalm 1 starts, "*Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers.*"

Paints a vivid mental image: walk, stand, sit. Much ink has been spilled about the progression of sin in our lives. First time you witness something that's wrong, you maybe just walk past. The more you're exposed to it, you stand and take a closer look. Finally, you sit down and make yourself comfortable. We could dig into these words and apply them to various petitions of the Lord's Prayer – a prayer also included in the Sermon on the Mount. Lord, "Lead us not into temptation." Help us keep walking by. Or, if we are sitting comfortably in sin, "Deliver us from evil." But instead of using Psalm 1 to say we are blessed by avoiding the bad, let's look at this Psalm from a positive standpoint. What is the recipe for a good life? A blessed life? The psalmist doesn't just preach, "Be separated from the world." Rather, he preaches, "Be saturated in the Word." *Blessed is the whose delight is in the law of the Lord.*

Honestly, that hurts my Lutheran ears: delight in law? Thought we were saved by grace alone. There are two main teachings of the Bible: law and gospel. Gospel by definition is the good news of what Jesus has done. So then isn't the law bad news? That part of God's Word that shows me my sin. A list of God's dos and don'ts. And if you don't do the dos and you do the don'ts, your done. The wages of sin is death. Yes – when contrasted to the Gospel, the law is bad news. But here's where we need a little, "How to Read Your Bible" lesson. The word "law" is used in multiple way. When contrasted to the gospel, the good news of Jesus, the law is bad news. It condemns me. It shows me how I've fallen short of my holy God's demands and deserve nothing but eternal separation from him in a place called hell. But that's not the only way that "law" is used. In a narrow sense it shows me my sin, but in a broad sense, law is also used as a synonym for the whole Word of God, including law and gospel.

I know, sounds confusing. But let me explain how that happened. Ever hear of the word, *Torah*? Torah is the name given to the first five books of the Old Testament. If you look at the first five books of the Old Testament, what do you find? A lot of law. Wanna find the Ten Commandments – Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. Want to find the Civil Law that God provided to guide Israel as a nation or the Ceremonial Law on how he guided their worship? Go to Leviticus. Most of the ink of the first five books is law, therefore *Torah* became synonymous with law. But it's not only "law." Where do you find your value as a person that God took extra special care to make in his own image? Genesis 2. The first Gospel promise that God would send someone to crush the devil's head – Genesis 3. Want to hear God describe himself as compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin? Exodus 34. Where does God give the command to bless his people with the same words we use today, "The Lord bless you and keep you...?" In the Torah. So law in the narrow sense means God's dos and don'ts. But in the broad sense, it means all of God's Word. In fact, when the Psalmist wrote, the Torah was the whole Bible. So that's what the psalmist means when he says, "*Blessed is the one whose delight is in the law of the LORD.*" Delight in the Torah. Delight in the Word.

Now let's unpack that word, "Delight." What does it look like to "delight" in the Word? When I worked on the sermon a few weeks ago, I asked Pastor W, "What does *delight* look like you to you?" Now you have to know something about PW. I know it doesn't look like it... but I don't think I've met someone who loved donuts more than him. So it made sense when he said "delight" reminds him of desserts. Something sweet. But it wasn't just Dan. A Google search of delight revealed the same thing. Plug in "delight" and you get one dessert pictured after another: chocolate delight, strawberry delight, lemon delight. Or there's a coffer creamer brand named Delight. And in way, what a great description of what the Word does – it makes everything sweeter. From a pastoral viewpoint, I've seen it. I remember the suicidal woman in my office, confessing her sins and her dark thoughts. But when we opened up Scripture, her mental problems didn't evaporate, but there was hope. Her situation became easier to swallow. Or I remember being with a gentleman in a hospital room right before he was wheeled into a risky surgery. As Scripture was opened, you could see fear give way to calm. The Word sweetened a bitter moment. Or I think of the widow, standing at the grave of her husband of 62 years and just seeing how the promises of glorious reunion at their Savior's side sweetened the moment.

It seems the Psalmist had some thought of eating in mind as well as he goes on with the next line, "*Blessed is the one whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.*" We hear meditate and we think yoga pose and hum. But this word actually has an eating aspect to it. It would be the same word that a Hebrew would have used to describe a dog chewing on a bone. Ever hear that... where they just growl as they keep gnawing on a bone to get all the flavor out of it? That's what God invites us to do. Want to delight in the Word? Chew on it.

Just a few weeks ago, I was talking to a friend about my frustration with my personal devotional life. Seems like it was so roller coaster. I'd be really good at spending time in the Word for a few weeks, then there'd be a gap. Good. Gap. Good. Gap. He encouraged me to approach my devotions a little differently. Instead of approaching it as an assignment, he suggested I spend time preparing myself to be in the presence of God as he comes to me in his Holy Word. Pray. Confess. Read a hymn verse. Light a candle to remind you of how the Word is a light for your path or to smell the candle and be reminded that your prayers are an aroma to God. Read the verses out loud to involve your ears instead of breezing through 20 verses and shutting the cover. As I slowed down, you know what happened? I delighted in the Word a bit more. I could remember at night what I read in the morning. I savored it instead of just swallowing it whole like a daily vitamin.

Now I'm not saying there's a magic formula on how to read your bible. You can't always read it out loud. If you do your devotions at Starbucks and read out loud, "Blessed is the one who delights..." that probably wouldn't work well. You don't need a candle. The Holy Spirit doesn't attach himself to wax, but to the Word. But the psalmist's point remains: *meditate* on the Word. Chew on the Word. And it will be provide the nutrition we need at just the right time. Lying awake at night, bothered by a particular sin of word, thought, or deed? Ah, there it is, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Worried about a lost job or a big move? There it is, "I know the plans I have for you." Pained and beaten up over a family situation? "A bruised reed I will not break, a smoldering wick I will not snuff out." Oh, we may not get the full flavor out of the Word with the first bite, but don't underestimate the Spirit's ability to keep working on our hearts long after the pages are shut. He promises that as we delight in and meditate on his Word, we will be *blessed*.

That doesn't mean you'll get 40-foot motorhome and shiny, red convertible. But we'll be blessed because these words, and only these words, point us to Jesus, our Savior who perfectly delighted in the Word as our substitute. When he was tempted by the devil, what did he say, "Man doesn't live on bread alone, but on the very words of God." He wasn't just saying that, he was living it. He was tasting the sweetness of his Word. When sister Martha was all about making a tasty meal, sister Mary was delighting the Word that fell from Jesus' lips. And what did Jesus say? Mary chose the one thing needful. When Jesus was suffering in the final hours of his life, what sustained him? His friends? They scattered. His popularity? Gone. No, it was the Word and the promises it contained. And because the Word points us to him and all he's done for us, one day he'll be able to say, "Come to me, all you who are blessed; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you" (Mt 25:34). You don't need a license that says, "BN BLSD," because through the Word, your says, "IM BLSD." Amen.

#### EYEDROP DEVOTION

*Are you "blessed"? Why did you answer the way you did? Being "blessed" doesn't come from shiny cars or mantle-worthy family photos. Ultimately, being blessed is found through the Word of God. As we delight in his Word and savor it, the Spirit sweetens bitter moments, calms fearful hearts, and reminds us of forgiveness in Christ. So slow down. Taste the promises. Let them sink in. In Christ and his Word, you are truly blessed.*