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**Delight in the Lord**  
Psalm 1

Tragedy can press us one of two ways. Shove us away from God allowing the Evil Accuser to sow in our vulnerable soil, even subtle thoughts of discouragement and disillusionment, feeding on negative unanswerable questions...watering the poisonous growth of ridicule and scorn. Tragedy can shove us away from God...away from God's people...away from the truth of His Word...away from true healing...away from the pain...away to escape...away from the suffering...away to use the evil tools of Satan to dull the pain instead of dealing with the pain. The Evil one would like nothing better than to continue to reek havoc and confusion in your life...and whisper in your ear...there's no other way...there's no other way. The evil one is the author of confusion and disillusion. Tragedy can shove us away from God....or it can press us closer to His heart. How...O How I wonder could one make it through such pain without knowing our Savior?

This morning we are all hurting deeply. I wish I could say that the tragic event that occurred this week is all just a bad nightmare. I wish the pain in my heart would disappear. I wish I could like Jesus said to Lazerous, "Get up and walk" But, I can't...I even tried it Thursday night..it didn't work. I wish I could say that My friend did not die in the manner in which he did...but I can't. Being honest and genuine before God and the reality of the event forces me to accept the facts which bring me to great tears for all of us and especially the family. Our friend is gone and taken by a great sin which is forgiven by God but induced by the Evil one to bring much pain on the thousands of lives He touched. If Mike could be standing here next to me at this podium...I know he would not want his death to be a stumbling block to anyone else. He was a man who strived after God's own heart and delighted in His Word. Because of that fact, based not on any acts of righteousness that Mike

has done in this life, but because He believed in the Lord Jesus Christ...He is saved and with Jesus today.

If he were standing here today He would want to preach from Psalm 1. Several months ago in preparing for a future sermon...He left with me a partial manuscript of his sermon. I'll begin with his words as he speaks to us from the Mike we knew and the Mike who loved God deeply. His words to us challenge us to remember what is truly important.

Here are the words of Mike Thomas (READ from manuscript.)

This passage clearly draws the line between righteous and evil. The good and bad. There are two ways available to choose for men. The way of the Godly or the way of the evil. We cannot approach this passage passively. We are confronted with a choice. It is a great temptation to give in to the evil one..to indulge in the devils tools to escape our suffering and pain. To cover it over to try and hide it...but that does not bring healing...it just makes ugly scars of bitterness and anger and discouragement. I do not know much but I know that God is sovereign and wants us not to hide but the struggle, to avoid, to cover but to walk through the pain with his help and strength. We could do it no other way.

From this Psalm we will look for guidance and wisdom direction when it seems there could be none. To ask the questions ever present in my mind, I wish to ask 4 questions of God's word this morning. First, What do I need to avoid? Second, What do I need to engage? What am I to expect? And finally, What will keep me going?

**First.** What am I to avoid? Look at verse 1 I am to keep myself away from the influence of evil. There are two ways I could choose. One seems the easier, run to the devil, escape and dull my mind. Forget about God...feed those evil thoughts that God is not real, it doesn't work. We must recognize those are not the thoughts implanted in our head that belong to God. Slap them out of the room. The evil one is the one that wants to distort and disillusion. He is the author of destruction. I am to avoid the influence of evil.

Note the progression. Walk stand, sit. This is an increasing involvement with Satan's negative discouragement gang green. He wants

nothing better to infect and poison your mind and cripple main your life. The progression is from one of casual influence to wholehearted collusion and scorn against the righteous one. Sitting in the seat of scoffers! Sitting with those who turn what is holy and good into ridicule. Mocking the ways of God with defiant taunting rebellion. Satan has exploited our friends Achilles' heal. He is aiming at the leaders and He's picked off one of our Captains. When God's people become effective when life takes on true meaning and purpose solidly based in God the Devil starts hitting harder. I am not interested in him taking any more casualties with him. Avoid the evil one...avoid the one who is the author of destruction. Slap those negative evil, ungodly thoughts of God our of your mind and out of the room. Do not entertain them. I doubt if many here are in full blown collusion with the evil one, but there may be some who are allowing themselves to be casually influenced by his tools. Drugs, Alcohol, pornography, rage, bitterness. Do not walk, do not stand. Do not sit in the seat of the wicked. What am I to avoid? The influence of the evil.

**Secondly**, What am I to engage? Look at verse 2. For David the Psalmist, it was the Torah. We are to delight in God Word. In contrast to the way of sinners is the way of the Godly. Our delight, our desire is to be in God's Word. It is to be a fresh well we can peacefully drink deeply from. Not a bore. Not a drudgery. Is it not amazing how tragedy can place a unquenchable thirst for His Word? Tragedy drives us to our knees in meditation upon His Word and God. It kicks out the false crutches of pride that we rest on. We come to know that our definition of success is entirely different than God's. When tragedy strikes? What are we to engage in? We should be bathing constantly in God's Word. Verse 2 Day and night. It should be on our minds. I can think of no better way then to soothe our minds and bring strength to our minds then to memorize and meditate on his word. Are you aware of the war within your mind? This Psalm 1 would be a good one to begin memorizing. When life goes ballistic, what should we engage? Where should we run? to God's word. Delight in God's word.

**Third**, What should we expect? Verse 3. Fruit. Fruit produced that comes in it's season. Not on our timetable, but God's. The evil one would love to run it's wild dogs over the garden of faith that Mike has planted in many of our lives. The Devil would love to ruin his crops. He

would love to turn up the sun of scorn and ridicule and cause the planted seeds, the little green sprouts to wither under the scorn and die. He delights in perverting and twisting his evil mental confusion, and causing us to blame God. Why? Who is responsible for this? It is not God. The tragic event that occurred has the signature of evil. The stench of Satan's handiwork lay scattered in pieces. Why did this happen? I don't know. Who is ultimately responsible. The evil one. Mike will have to answer to God for his sin, but Satan's talons had to have sunk deeply in his mind to cause such a terrible tragedy. Let me tell you folks what happened last Monday night was not the work of God. James 1 "Let no one say when He is tempted "I am being tempted by God for God cannot be tempted by evil and He himself does not tempt anyone.

"And God will be faithful to bring fruit in it's season. What should we expect? We should expect fruit from the seeds that have been planted. They will yield it's fruit in season. Sometimes God allows suffering to strengthen our faith. In John 10 Jesus very good friend Lazarus died and Jesus was delayed in coming in verse 15 said, I am glad for your sakes that I was not there so that you may believe. later in verse 25 "I am the resurrection and the life he who believe in Me shall live even if he dies. Do you believe this? This is our hope. And our hope that he who began a good work will complete that work that was started. As Samson of old who pulled down that pillars of the pagan temples in judgment against evil did more good in his death then life. Do not allow the seeds of God planted to be scorched by Satan and evil. May Mike's death drive us to the arms of God and bear the fruit he removed himself from the opportunity from harvesting. In suffering what are we to avoid? The influence of evil. What are we to engage? Delighting in His Word. What can we expect in the future? Reaping the fruit from the seeds that were sown.

**Finally**, For those who are left behind to pick of the pieces in suffering. In the midst of tragedy. What will keep us going? Look at verse 4-6 The wicked, the way of the sinner is a purposeless life. It's like the farmer who throws grain into the air in the wind so the worthless husks and chaff will blow away and leave the important grain meat. The way of the sinners lacks substance, it's purposeless, no meaning to it's life or death. When tragedy strikes we can see easily the chaff, the froth

in our own lives. We also can clearly see the stuff that really matters. We who are believers can keep on going because we have hope within us. There is purpose in our life. It is not meaningless but meaningful. A life lived without the taste of the creator would be futile like withering grass, but in spite of all appearances of waste. In spite of the suffering of the righteous. In spite of the seeming overwhelming triumphs of the wicked. The thing that keeps us going is the purpose that is only found in knowing God. The Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the wicked ways will perish.

When life is threatened big things seem so trivial and little things mean so much. Let us as a body commit to supporting long term. Remember to put on your calendars, birthdays, holidays, anniversaries are the toughest. When people are hurting, a felt tip greeting can sometimes be less jarring than a ringing telephone. Maybe send a cassette tape of music. Even more helpful than asking if there is anything you could do would be to search for a practical need to be met then ask if you can do it. Your presence indicates your love. Love longs for companionship. A hug, physical touch can be a powerful way to communicate your love. In the midst of the storm we will find God's presence in surprising places. God is truly at work around us. He is in the calm gently flowing waters. He is there. He is in the wild torrential storms...He is there.

In Psalm 1 there are Two ways to choose. Which way will you choose? What voice will you listen to? Who will you allow to influence you? Where will you stand? Mike underlined one of his favorite scriptures in John 6: 60-69 Many of the people around Jesus were giving up and leaving Him because things were getting tough. Jesus turned to the disciples and asked will you go as well? Peter answered and said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."