

# **Trust in Jesus, Our Lasting Joy and Satisfaction**

## **Psalm 128**

**Sunday, August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**By Ryan Perry**

### **Scripture**

#### **Psalm 128**

***[1] Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD,  
who walks in his ways!***

***[2] You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;  
you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.***

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

***[4] Behold, thus shall the man be blessed  
who fears the LORD.***

***[5] The LORD bless you from Zion!  
May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem  
all the days of your life!***

***[6] May you see your children's children!  
Peace be upon Israel!***

### **Let's Pray**

### **Introduction**

#### **Opening Illustration**

Earlier this summer, we were at Pettibone Beach with a couple of our kids. And I remember watching them just having a great time digging out this really deep hole in the sand. But they were doing it really close to the water.

Now, if you have ever dug a hole on the beach, near the water, you know what begins to happen the farther down you get. You eventually start to get water in your hole, and the sides begin to cave in until you are left with a mini-lake that you hoped would end up being this bottomless cavern.

So all the work that went into digging this deep hole was vain and pointless, because it was impossible for them to actually achieve their goal.

## The Psalm

Our psalm this morning is a part of what is called the Songs of Ascent. These psalms, which include 120-134, were originally used by Jewish pilgrims who were ascending to Jerusalem (**because it was on a hill**), usually for one of the annual festivals.

And a neat feature of these psalms is that they are grouped in the order they are to reflect both the physical and spiritual journey of these pilgrims as they move from lament and struggle to joy and worship, which then culminates in God's eternal presence with his people.

**This means that these psalms, in one way or another, build on each other.**

So as we look at Psalm 128 today, we need to realize that it builds on and is an extension of Psalm 127.

Which means that we need to begin in Psalm 127 in order to understand the issues that are being addressed in today's passage. So let's look together at Psalm 127:1-2:

***[1] Unless the LORD builds the house,  
those who build it labor in vain.***

***Unless the LORD watches over the city,  
the watchman stays awake in vain.***

***[2] It is in vain that you rise up early  
and go late to rest,  
eating the bread of anxious toil;  
for he gives to his beloved sleep.***

The basic summary of what the psalmist is saying is this: **Unless the Lord blesses us, all human effort is vain and meaningless.**

It's like trying to dig a hole in the sand right next to water. It doesn't work because in the end, it will just fill up with water. **It won't last.**

But now we have a problem that is crying out for an answer.

**How do we actually experience the blessings of God? How do we do that in a world where our efforts do often feel vain and meaningless?**

How do we experience the true blessing and joy of our kids that is talked about in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Psalm 127:3-5 and Psalm 128:3, or the true joy of marriage that is pictured in the first part of Psalm 128:3? How can we experience the fruitful and enjoyable labor of Psalm 128:2? And how will we ever see the prosperity of God's people pictured in Psalm 128:5-6?

**What is the answer?**

The answer is found solely in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

**Proposition:** Because he is the one who has reversed the curse of sin that has affected every area of our lives. Therefore, he is the one who makes our efforts, our family, and his people fruitful, and he is the one who alone provides us with the true blessings of lasting joy and satisfaction.

So what we're going to do today is unpack those statement by looking at the different ways that Jesus provides the blessings of lasting joy and satisfaction within this psalm. I believe there are three ways:

- He provides lasting joy to those who follow him.
- He provides lasting joy by reversing the curse.
- He provides lasting joy in our human efforts.

Now, I want to say before we begin that this is the hardest sermon I have ever put together. Because it challenged me to take an idealized version of God's blessings on work, marriage, families, and the church in Psalm 128, and to think through how it applies to our lives when many of us don't feel like we are experiencing them this way.

So I was really pushed to the edge of my understanding this week, and what you're getting this morning is the outworking of my wrestling through this with God.

My prayer is that God will somehow make this profitable for each one of us as we continue on in the up and down journey of faith, as we walk toward an eternity with Christ.

### **Jesus provides lasting joy to those who follow him**

#### **Psalm 128:1**

***[1] Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD,  
who walks in his ways!***

#### **Explanation**

Between Psalms 127 and 128, one of the most common and recurring words is the word **“blessed.”** It shows up in Psalm 127:5 and in Psalm 128:1-2, 4, and 5.

And as a general rule, when you see words repeated like that, it means that they are important. But what does that word even mean?

Well, if you go to Instagram, Facebook, or TikTok and you see people who caption a picture of their new home, car, job, or vacation with **#blessed** you might think that it means, **“The favor of God, given to his people through material things.”**

Now, there is truth to this statement, because God is the one who **blesses** us with all that we have, but that isn't what the word **“blessed”** means.

If you can remember all the way back to the beginning of May, when we went through Psalm 1, you will know that the word “blessed” or *esher* in Hebrew actually means **“A state of happiness.”**

But we're not talking about a mere **"feeling" of happiness** that, in general, changes with our circumstances. **We are talking about a rooted and lasting joy that comes from being a people who have received the unearned favor and fellowship with God.**

So even when the psalmist talks about the blessings of work, marriage, children, and church, he sees these things as an overflow of the joy-filled relationship and fellowship that he has with God. **Which means that his joy comes from God, and not from his gifts.**

**But then the next question is, how do we actually experience that kind of blessed joy?**

The psalmist gives us the answer, ***"by fearing the Lord."***

Now, the fear of the Lord doesn't mean that we cower before God in fear. Rather, in its Old Testament usage, it points to the idea of **reverence, awe, and worship.**

This means that we need to put our full hope and trust in God alone, we need to believe that he is worthy of all our worship and praise, and as a result, we should be seeking to walk in obedience to his commands **(walk in his ways according to verse 1).**

So when the psalmist says, ***"Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways,"*** what he's saying is: If we want lasting joy, we need to trust and follow God.

And for us as New Testament Christians, this means **that we need to put our full hope and trust in the person and work of Christ.**

He is the one who redeemed us from the curse of death, he is the one who perfectly feared and worshipped God when we couldn't, and he alone is the one who, by his Spirit, empowers us so that we can walk in obedience to God's commands.

So it is only through Jesus that we are able to experience the lasting joy and satisfaction that God offers us.

As Paul writes in Romans 15:13:

***[13] May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing (In Christ), so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.***

### **Illustration**

I know that I've done a similar illustration, but how many of you were told this phrase as a kid, **"You are what you eat?"**

**Why did our parents say that to us? Because in some ways it's true.**

What we eat has a profound impact on who we are, how we live, and who we become.

1. The nutrients from our food provide the building blocks for our cells, and directly impact our physical growth and health.

2. Our dietary choices influence our habits. If we eat good, healthy foods, we are more likely to have the energy to take care of ourselves, vs. if we fill our bodies with junk food, we are less likely to make good, healthy choices in other areas of our lives.
3. The food we eat even affects our cognitive function, like our ability to think clearly and critically, and our mood.

## **Application**

Similarly, when it comes to our faith, **“we are what we worship.”**

If we try to find our lasting joy in our jobs, our spouse, our kids, our house, our money, or any other thing in creation, we are going to end up just like Adam and Eve.

They worship a created thing (a piece of fruit), because they were tricked into believing that it would bring them the lasting joy and life that only God could give them.

Once they ate the fruit, their eyes were opened to the reality of sin, they became afraid and hid, and they lost the simple and complete joy that they had once experienced with God.

As a result, they were dead in their sin, they were separated the perfect fellowship that they had with God in the beginning, **and they were now in need of a Savior so they could get it back.**

The good news is we have that Savior in the Lord Jesus Christ. And if we come to him in faith and believe that he is our only hope for life, joy, and peace with God, then we can and will experience the lasting joy that he provides.

Because we will no longer be seeking earthly pleasures as our main source of satisfaction, but instead our desire will be to follow Jesus and to experience the eternal treasures that are only found in a life that is lived for him.

**So that’s the first way that Jesus provides lasting joy within Psalm 128.**

Which now brings us to the rest of the Psalm, where we get this joy-filled picture of work, marriage, family, and the church, that’s supposed to belong to us as God’s people. But the question is, how do we get those blessings? How do we get there? This brings us to our second point.

**Jesus provides lasting joy by reversing the curse**

**Psalm 128:2-6**

***[2] You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;  
you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.***

***[3] Your wife will be like a fruitful vine  
within your house;  
your children will be like olive shoots***

*around your table.*

**[4] Behold, thus shall the man be blessed  
who fears the LORD.**

**[5] The LORD bless you from Zion!  
May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem  
all the days of your life!**

**[6] May you see your children's children!  
Peace be upon Israel!**

What the psalmist is doing here is giving us this amazing picture of the real-world blessings that will come to those who worship God and find their lasting joy in him.

- In verse 2, he says that their work will be fruitful, and they will be happy and satisfied.
- In verse 3, we get a picture of a family where the inference is that their marriage and kids will flourish. The wife, like the vine, will bear the fruit of productivity and children, and their kids, like olive shoots, will be plentiful and prosperous.
- In verses 5-6, we see these blessings overflowing into all of God's people. God will bless from his dwelling place (Zion), his covenant people will flourish for generations to come, and peace will rule in the land.

And I hope that we all read these verses and get excited about the prospect that these are real blessings that God wants us to experience. **He wants to take the vain, empty, and anxious efforts of Psalm 127, and he wants to make them abundantly fruitful.**

But I can imagine that many of us read these verses with the sting of longing, because we know that our life with God falls very short of this idealized picture.

You've been faithfully working the same job for years, and yet you can barely get by financially, and work feels at times more like drudgery than it does a delight.

You know your marriage could be so much better, and yet it feels like you and your spouse struggle to be on the same page.

You've longed for a spouse or children for years, and yet God hasn't provided those things.

You have children, but unfortunately, they've walked away from the Lord, are making bad choices, or worse, some of them have died prematurely.

Lastly, when we look at the church, we don't always see it flourishing. Instead, we see persecution, a people marginalized, and many who are lukewarm in their faith.

**So how can these promises be true when they feel so far from our reality?**

We find our answer when we realize that the psalmist is giving us an idealized version of life that brings us all the way back to the Garden of Eden.

Where God put the man, Adam, to do fruitful labor. Where he gave Eve to Adam so that he could have companionship and they could have a fruitful and flourishing marriage. And where God gave them the command to be fruitful and multiply, that they would have kids who expand and prosper, until the whole world was full of God's people.

However, this could only happen if they perfectly obeyed God. But we know they didn't. So instead of experiencing the joy-filled blessings of their relationship with God, they were cursed by him in Genesis 3:16-19. Let's look at those verses together.

***[16] To the woman he said,***

***"I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;  
in pain you shall bring forth children.  
Your desire shall be for your husband,  
and he shall rule over you."***

***[17] And to Adam he said,***

***"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife  
and have eaten of the tree  
of which I commanded you,  
'You shall not eat of it,'  
cursed is the ground because of you;  
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;***

***[18] thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;  
and you shall eat the plants of the field.***

***[19] By the sweat of your face  
you shall eat bread,  
till you return to the ground,  
for out of it you were taken;  
for you are dust,  
and to dust you shall return."***

When Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God and eating the forbidden fruit, they forever marred the original blessing that God gave them to be fruitful and multiply.

So now, there is pain in childbearing, and as we see later in the murder of Abel by his brother Cain, there is pain in child-rearing.

There is now dysfunction in the marriage relationship as the wife desires to usurp her husband's God-given authority, and as her husband becomes domineering in his leadership.

Where the ground used to easily and fully yield its fruit to the man, it will now take painstaking work just to bring forth enough food to feed his family.

And finally, instead of receiving the gift of everlasting life with God, the curse upon them is now death.

But despite these curses, God doesn't leave them without hope. Because right before he pronounces these curses upon them, he gives them a promise in Genesis 3:15 as he's cursing the serpent.

***[15] I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring;  
he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel."***

This verse is amazing because it is the first pronouncement of a Savior in all of scripture. One who will defeat the serpent (Satan) by bruising his head, and will reverse the curse of sin, even as he himself is bruised (on the cross).

This is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. This is why this is called the **protoevangelium** or **the first pronouncement of the gospel** in the Bible.

Jesus, through his life, death, and resurrection, defeated the power of Satan, sin, and death, and in so doing, he reversed the curse of Adam and Eve that was upon us.

As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22:

***[21] For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. [22] For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.***

**Romans 6:22-23**

***[22] But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. [23] For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

Through Christ, we have been given a new and everlasting life with God and have been set free from the power of sin and death.

So now we have a real hope and a lasting joy in Christ because we know that Jesus is the one who secured the promises of Psalm 128, **and one day we will experience them fully with him.**

Look with me at the following verses:

**1 Thessalonians 4:17**

***[17] Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.***

One day, we will experience a perfect and joy-filled relationship with God.



## **Revelation 19:7–8**

***[7] Let us rejoice and exult  
and give him the glory,  
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,  
and his Bride has made herself ready;  
[8] it was granted her to clothe herself  
with fine linen, bright and pure”—***

***for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.***

The perfect picture of marriage that we see in Psalm 128 will be fulfilled when Christ (the groom) brings us, his people (his bride, the church), to himself.

## **Isaiah 60:21**

***[21] Your people shall all be righteous;  
they shall possess the land forever,  
the branch of my planting, the work of my hands,  
that I might be glorified.***

The work that Christ accomplished for us on the cross is going to result in the prosperity of his people as we inherit an eternal home with him.

This means that our hope and our joy, as Christians, aren't in the expectation that we will experience these blessings today. Rather, it's in the fact that one day we will be with Christ and will experience all of these blessings in an eternity with him.

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But if I ended the sermon right there, you might leave here thinking:

- My hope and my joy are found in my relationship with Jesus.
- One day, when he returns, I will experience the full benefits of that relationship as it relates to work, family, and the church.
- But I guess that I don't get to experience those blessings in my life today.

**Which isn't true.** Because the whole witness of the entire Bible makes it clear that we will experience these benefits, in part today, while we wait to experience them fully in our eternal home.

## **Jesus provides lasting joy in our human efforts**

Look with me at the following verses.

### **Colossians 3:23–24**

***[23] Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, [24] knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.***

### **Ecclesiastes 3:12–13**

***[12] I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; [13] also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God’s gift to man.***

Your work may be hard, it may be monotonous, it may not often feel fun or even enjoyable, but know that you are working for the Lord and that you are serving and proclaiming Christ as you do it. But also, that God is allowing you to enjoy the fruit of your labor as you are being productive and providing for yourself and your family. **So rejoice in your toil.**

### **Ecclesiastes 4:9**

***[9] Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.***

### **Ephesians 5:28–33**

***[28] In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. [29] For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, [30] because we are members of his body. [31] “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” [32] This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. [33] However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.***

Is your marriage ever going to be perfect? No. This side of eternity, there will be strife, arguing, and at times separation that, unfortunately, leads some to divorce. But this isn’t God’s heart for marriage.

Rather he wants us to enjoy the reward of companionship, and one of the ways that God allows many to experience that is within the confines of a marriage. And his desire for you, if you are married, is to live within that relationship in a way that reflects the great marriage of Christ and his bride, the church.

Which means, Lord willing, as you do that, you will experience the fruit and joy of that relationship, as it points others to Jesus.

### **Psalm 127:3**

***[3] Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD,  
the fruit of the womb a reward.***

### **Proverbs 22:6**

***[6] Train up a child in the way he should go;  
even when he is old he will not depart from it.***

### **Ephesians 6:4**

***[4] Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.***

Look, I realize that these verses can feel hard to read and wrestle with. Some of you have wanted children, but God never gave them to you. Others have had children or even grandchildren die prematurely.

Yet, for some in this room, you feel like you have raised your kids in the instruction of the Lord, and yet they have not continued to follow him.

But that doesn't mean that these verses aren't true. If you have children, you know that they can bring sorrow, but they also can and do bring times of great joy as you watch them grow and flourish in the world. They truly are a special blessing from the Lord.

Also, when it comes to raising your kids in the Lord, we first and foremost rest on the fact that God is the one who has to bring them to faith. And yet, we are commanded to do so because we know that God uses it pass along **“the faith once for all delivered to the saints”** to future generations.

In fact, according to Pew Research, roughly about 79% of all people raised in a Christian home retain that belief into adulthood. So yes, your children are a blessing from God, and he is using your efforts to draw them to Himself.

**And as an encouragement for those whose kids have walked away from the Lord, keep praying, keep instructing, because God's not done with them yet.**

### **Ephesians 4:15–16**

***[15] Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.***

It may not always feel like it, but Jesus is growing and building his church, and he will do it until the day he returns. If I didn't believe this, I wouldn't be up here preaching this message, nor would be put so much energy into a new mission and vision.

## **Conclusion**

So even though life is hard, and our effort in this life can at times feel meaningless. Remember, our joy isn't in this world. Instead, lasting joy is only found in the person and work of Christ.

- He is the one who gives us lasting joy as we trust and follow him.
- He is the one who gives us the lasting hope and joy of the eternal blessing to come.
- He is the one who is giving us a taste of those blessings today until that day we see him face to face.

So look to Christ, trust in his gracious blessings and provision for you today, and yet live with anticipation that the best is yet to come.

**Let's pray.**