

## **Here For Good 2.0**

### **Part 4**

*Psalm 37:1-40*

1. **Don't fret!**

2. **Do good!**

3. **Dwell in the land!**

- Your life:

- The church:

- With greater emphasis on:

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West Valley Church  
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### **Part 4: Here for Good**

Today we are concluding our series reviewing why our generosity initiative that we are calling "Here For Good" is so important. We are at roughly the halfway point of our three-year effort to raise money to first pay off the debt that this church had for over 20 years. Paying it off meant we can move money from mortgage to ministry. We were able to pay off the mortgage in June and we celebrated that with a mortgage burning in July! Praise God! We are working on determining the priorities to best invest that money that was going into mortgage in ways that reflect the vision that we've been talking about over this series. What's left for us now is to raise money to renovate some of the tired, older areas of our facility in order to make them more usable, more accessible, and more effective in caring for our church family and ministering to our community. It was great to be able to be done with the debt! But it's just as exciting to think about how we will update some of the spaces in our facility so that you'll be able to use them and enjoy them even more, and so will our community! We will go into more detail about that at our lunch today.

So far in this series we have talked about how we need to be here for Christ – that our commitment to Christ and Christ alone will be the only way we can respond to anything that God asks us to do with our lives and resources. Then we talked about the priority of being here for each other. Last week we saw that we are here for Christ and here for each other SO THAT we can best be here for our community, reaching all those in West Valley with the good news of God's love so that they might have faith in Christ.

And we want to be faithful doing those things until Jesus comes back, don't we? We are here for good, and that's what we want to conclude with today. Here to do good, and here for good, until Jesus returns.

There is a passage that we get our theme verse from for this effort, and it's in Psalm 37:3. That verse says:

Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.  
(Psalm 37:3, ceb)

But I'd like to read to you the entire Psalm, because the context in which that verse is found is really, really applicable to today. I think you'll be surprised how much, in fact. Will you help me honor God's Word and stand as it's read among God's people today? Thank you.

Don't get upset over evildoers;  
don't be jealous of those who do wrong,  
because they will fade fast, like grass;  
they will wither like green vegetables.  
Trust the Lord and do good;  
live in the land, and farm faithfulness.  
Enjoy the Lord, and he will give what your heart asks.

Commit your way to the Lord!

Trust him! He will act  
and will make your righteousness shine like the dawn,  
your justice like high noon.

Be still before the Lord,  
and wait for him.

Don't get upset when someone gets ahead—  
someone who invents evil schemes.

Let go of anger and leave rage behind!

Don't get upset—it will only lead to evil.  
Because evildoers will be eliminated,  
but those who hope in the Lord—  
they will possess the land.

In just a little while the wicked won't exist!  
If you go looking around their place,  
they won't be there.

But the weak will inherit the land;  
they will enjoy a surplus of peace.

The wicked plot against the righteous,  
grinding their teeth at them.

But my Lord just laughs at them  
because he knows that their day is coming.

The wicked draw their swords and bend their bows  
to bring down the weak and the needy,  
to slaughter those whose way is right.

But the sword of the wicked will enter their own hearts!  
Their bows will be broken!

Better is the little that the righteous have  
than the overabundant wealth of the wicked.

The arms of the wicked will be broken,  
but the Lord supports the righteous.

The Lord is intimately acquainted  
with the lives of the blameless;  
their heritage will last forever.

They won't be ashamed in troubling times,  
and in a period of famine they will eat their fill.

But the wicked will die,  
the Lord's enemies will disappear—  
disappear like the beauty of a meadow—in smoke.

The wicked borrow and don't pay it back, but the righteous are generous and giving.  
Those blessed by God will possess the land,  
but those cursed by God will be cut off.

A person's steps are made secure by the Lord  
when they delight in his way.

Though they trip up, they won't be thrown down,  
because the Lord holds their hand.  
I was young and now I'm old,  
but I have never seen the righteous left all alone,  
have never seen their children begging for bread.  
They are always gracious and generous.  
Their children are a blessing.

Turn away from evil! Do good!  
Then you will live in the land forever.  
The Lord loves justice.  
He will never leave his faithful all alone.  
They are guarded forever,  
but the children of the wicked are eliminated.  
The righteous will possess the land;  
they will live on it forever.

The mouths of the righteous recite wisdom;  
their tongues discuss justice.  
The Instruction of their God is in their hearts;  
they don't miss a step.  
The wicked, on the other hand, target the righteous,  
seeking to kill them.  
But the Lord won't leave the righteous  
to the power of the wicked,  
and won't let the righteous  
be found guilty when they are judged.

Hope in the Lord and keep his way!  
He will lift you up so you can possess the land.  
When the wicked are eliminated,  
you will see it for yourself!

I myself have seen wicked powerful people,  
exalting themselves like a stately cedar.  
But when I came back, they were gone!  
I looked all over for them,  
but they couldn't be found!

Observe those who have integrity  
and watch those whose heart is right  
because the future belongs to persons of peace.  
But wrongdoers will be destroyed all together;  
the future of the wicked will be cut short.  
The salvation of the righteous comes from the Lord;  
he is their refuge in times of trouble.  
The Lord will help them and rescue them—  
rescue them from the wicked—and he will save them because they have taken  
refuge in him. (Psalm 37:1-40, ceb)

Thank you for standing; I know that was a long one. You can be seated.

Real quickly, let me just give you a little bit of background for this Psalm, okay? As you know, some of the Psalms are poetic literature, and others are closer to wisdom literature, like Proverbs. This one is like a combination of poetic and wisdom literature. King David wrote this, and he was a brilliant poet and songwriter. This one is written in an acrostic style – which means that the first letter of every two lines begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Its design is very complicated and detailed. But even though it is written in poetic style, its contents are more like wisdom literature. Wisdom literature in the Bible is Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job. Wisdom literature of the Bible is about living wise, which is to live successfully in this life. You really need to read all three to get the full understanding. But this Psalm is more like the book of Proverbs. Something you need to understand if you don't already is that Proverbs are principals, not promises. In other words, they tell you that if you live this certain way, then, the results in your life will be positive. But that's *generally speaking* – it doesn't always happen that way. Proverbs are not promises, they are principles. For instance, Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he shall go, and in the end he will not depart from it." That's a principle – generally, that is true. But it's not a promise – it doesn't happen every time. That's what Ecclesiastes is about – it doesn't always happen the way it should. Then Job basically says, "Whether it does or doesn't, God can be trusted so maintain your integrity and live in close relationship to him." Make sense? So this Psalm is stating wisdom principles.

One last thing: the focus of this Psalm is a contrast between those who trust in God and those who are wicked. But not just any wicked people; it seems to focus especially on those who are seemingly successful and yet sinful. And even though they are sinful, they have great wealth and power. So this Psalm is dealing with how we should feel about the seeming success of the sinful, how it seems unfair, and how we should live instead. Okay? *That* is what we are going to learn about today – how to live Here For Good. Starting with...

### 1. **Don't fret.**

Have you ever thought, "Here I am, working my behind off, being a good person and doing all I can to love other people and it feels like I'm just scraping by. But here are people who are clearly evildoers – they could care less about God or anyone else but themselves – and yet they are making money hand over fist, and they've got all these cool things, or they get the promotions, or they make the sale, or they get the guy or the girl..." Ever thought like that? That's what the very first verse is talking about. The passage we read says, "Don't get upset..." and other translations say "Don't fret..." But the word "fret" is way too tame – the original language is much stronger. It's talking about just plain jealousy over what these people have, mostly due to their sinful actions. And it's jealousy to the boiling point – getting all worked up and angry over it. It's not hard to get that way, is it? It just doesn't seem fair.

Maybe you don't struggle with that. But remember I said that what this Psalm says about evildoers is directed toward those with both money *and* power. In fact, power is really the currency of this world, and money is just a cheaper version of it. So if we aren't just talking about sinful people with money but also those with power, how would that apply today?

Well, think about the world of politics. That's some pretty low hanging fruit to use as an example these days. If you are conservative politically, are you all worked up because the liberals seem to have the power? Or, if you are a liberal, were you all worked up when the conservatives seemed to have the power? Or what about this: as a Christian, when you see people in Washington (whether DC or KC – District of Columbia or King County) – when you see people in Washington making decisions for our state or nation that you feel are opposite of biblical morals, do you get all worked up and angry? Do you find yourself wishing your “side” had the power? Then you are “fretting.” You are doing what this Psalm says not to do.

This instruction is relevant for us today. If you read this Psalm again from that understanding, you'll see that over and over, every time it contrasts the evildoer with the follower of God, it applies to situations we face today. But the great thing is that this Psalm doesn't just say, “Don't do that!” It actually tells us what we *can* and *should* do instead.

So while it says, “Don't fret,” it tells us instead...

## 2. **Do Good!**

First of all, understand that doing good is the antidote. Any time you find yourself getting angry or worked up about how unfair this world is, or about how someone else is getting ahead and you're not, or about how those in power are getting away with things, then you need an immediate inoculation or vaccination by doing something good for somebody else – and the greater the need that you meet, the stronger the dose you'll receive. This is very practical advice.

Let me show you something that the writer figured out – something that you'll be glad to learn. The Psalmist realized that he can't control the attitudes and actions of the wicked. Did you know that? You can't control the actions of *anyone* else. You can't control anyone else's actions, but whose actions can you control? Your own. Doing good takes control of your life – your actions and attitudes. You *can* control your own doings. Doing good shows by your actions that God's people do good because they choose to live faithful to God, no matter what happens. In fact, that is the next point...

## 3. **Dwell in the land.**

Let me paraphrase what this Psalm says about the success of the sinful: when you look around you, the wicked gain land and wealth and power through unjust means; they take loans, and they don't repay. They seize it or cheat people out of it or steal it. They take advantage of situations and people – even their own family. So even though what they have looks like a giant tree that won't ever come down, in reality it is nothing more than cheatgrass that will burn up quickly. So don't get mad; instead we need to “dwell in the land and farm faithfulness.” The original language of this phrase is a bit tricky to translate. Some translations say, “feed on God's faithfulness,” “enjoy security,” “practice being faithful,” “uphold the truth,” or “maintain your integrity.” The literal translation is “tend to your sheep with integrity.” Here's the idea: “Because you can count on the faithfulness of

God toward you, you can live in complete faithfulness to him. It doesn't matter what happens around you; God is faithful. He can always be depended on to take care of you. When you look at the world around you, it might not look like it, but living for God is worth it. So go be generous and do good things for others."

Again, the Psalm gets pretty practical about how you can do this in...

### **Your own life:**

If you want to live faithfully for God by being generous despite what appears to be success on the part of the sinful, you'll need to...

#### **Trust.**

Over and over again, this Psalm calls us to trust God. That's going to take some work; you exercise trust whenever there is resistance to your trust in God, right? So when you are doing things right and struggling and others are doing things wrong and succeeding, you are going to have to believe God that will take care of you. Exercise your trust in God and don't give in to being angry or worse yet, acting like they do. Keep doing what's right and good.

The next, that goes hand in hand with trust is to...

#### **Wait.**

There's an old saying about God: he's seldom early, never late – always right on time. But His timing is way different than yours or mine. We want it and we want it now! But God provides for us when the timing is right. It might not be now; it might not even be later; it might be in eternity. So the Psalmist is very clear: we must keep the *long view* in mind. God's purposes are what are ultimately most important, and those take time. It might seem like the wicked are succeeding, but it's only for a season. Keep God's long perspective in mind. Stay faithful – farm faithfulness, and eventually you'll receive a harvest of provision.

And that's the other thing we're told: continue to...

#### **Live**

your life faithfully. Don't hide. Don't waste time fretting. Get out and live your life. Don't be reactive to circumstances and people, bouncing like a pinball off everything that happens (do you guys even know what a pinball is?...) Don't be reactive; be proactive. Live fully in all confidence that God is faithful. Keep doing good. Keep enjoying life. And the proof that you can do that is to...

#### **Give.**

Generosity is so important that the Psalm tells us directly to do this twice (vs. 21, 26), and indirectly several other times. When it tells us to be generous, it's not just talking about having some kind of magnanimous attitude; it's talking about *actually* giving money and resources. The perfect way to keep your attitude right about what you own is to practice regular giving. The perfect way to keep your attitude right about what others own and you don't is to practice regular giving. Give to those who need it, and sometimes to do those who don't. You have no idea what a blessing you will be to others, and Scripture is clear

that the blessing comes back on you.

Can I just take a moment of personal privilege to say thank you for the blessing you are to us? You have been so generous with your prayers and encouragement to us during these last three years that we've been helping my mom in Salem with cancer, the last year that Shelly's dad became sick in Denver and then passed away at the end of December, then after my dad's stroke in April and my mom's decline, then Shelly's mom in Arizona with surgery and her decline, then my mom passing away a few weeks ago. There has been untold hours and days away, multiple, multiple flights to Denver and Arizona and drives to Salem and back. I'm pretty sure our car knows the way to Salem by itself and I don't even own a Tesla.

And it's not only been time and travel; it's been so, so many expenditures for equipment and repairs and special foods and bills. And many of you have given financially to us. We didn't ask for it, but you are giving it. We certainly don't deserve it, but you have been so generous. And I know we aren't the only ones you do that for. You do it for each other. Folks that struggle way more than we do. And you do that for the church, too. Together as a church, we are able to do far more than any of us could individually. And that was demonstrated profoundly over the last year and a half as together we eliminated the church's mortgage. That was a debt the church took out over 20 years ago when they expanded. It was a significant debt – even after I got here and we refinanced for a lower rate ten years ago, still a year and a half ago the debt was 1.1 million dollars – and we paid it off in June! Now we need to renovate the spaces that are over 50 years old, and update some of the other areas that are over 20 years old. That's why we our goal for Here For Good is 1.6 million. We know we can't do everything we need to with the rest of our goal after paying off the debt, but we can do a lot! We'll go into more specifics about that in the lunch after church. But whatever renovations we do on the building, we do in order to carry out our mission as best as we possibly can for Christ to each other and our community.

All of that is so we can continue to farm faithfulness together as...

### **The church:**

We farm faithfulness in our lives and homes, and together as West Valley Church on this corner. How do we do that? It's what we've been talking about all through this series, but let me summarize it again. We know that as the church, if we are going to carry out our mission to Love, Learn, and Live, it's going to require us to first of all be...

### **Multi-generational.**

When we look at the way the world around us prioritizes things, they are dividing the generations at the expense of one another. Every generation is looking out for itself. To farm faithfulness, we must be a community in which each generation looks out for the *others*. Where the older ones mentor the younger ones and the younger ones spend the energy setting an example for the older ones. We look out for and take care of each other. Every generation is valuable and important in the Kingdom of God. Right?

Then it means we also need to be...



## **Multi-ethnic.**

The world around us is becoming more and more divided, all under the guise of being more accepting. Everyone is forced to defend their ethnic group. But in the church, ethnicities are all recognized, accepted, and find their place in the Kingdom of God. No one gives up their ethnicity; instead they use it to serve each other. Every tribe and nation and tongue come together to offer a united praise to God that this world knows nothing about and can never create. Our church and our staff need to reflect the ethnicities of our community. We don't have to fret over racial divisions; we can farm faithfulness by accepting and honoring and serving each other. So we will reach out to and minister to each other in each of our own cultural preferences.

And it means we've got to expand our spiritual footprint beyond this corner. We have the resources and the leadership to create worshipping communities beyond 72<sup>nd</sup> and Nob Hill, into unreached areas of our valley, like out in the Mountainview Elementary community. We must be...

## **Multi-site**

– one church in more than one location. You are so generous in your giving and your serving that God has positioned you to reach out beyond your borders and reach people where other churches aren't able to!

You know, we had a fourth goal – and that was to be mortgage free! But we don't have that on the list anymore – we've accomplished it! Now it's time to accomplish the others. Let's get this renovation done so we can get going on these three!

But I want you to know that, during this pandemic, we've seen some great opportunities. We've been able to create an online campus through our video streaming, so we *are already multi-site*, but in a way, we never would've imagined a year and a half ago!

But while we are doing what I mentioned above, we need to do it...

## **With greater emphasis on**

...some areas. The pandemic has also shown us some of the areas we really need to improve. One of those is increased...

## **Member care.**

We realized that we could've done that much better. So we are working on the systems and structures we need, through our staff, our small groups, and even our database. We also realize that means we need to invest more resources in children and youth and young adults, men's and women's and marriage ministries and in spiritual formation.

And we've realized we need to prioritize...

## **Meaningful evangelism.**

That means we need to make sure that, in all the ways we serve our community, we can be more proactive in sharing the Gospel and seeing people come to faith in Christ. That's why we're here, and we must do a better job of it.

And in all those things, we won't experience success if we aren't practicing...

### **Missional prayer.**

Here's what we mean: we do a GREAT job of praying for each other. It is amazing how diligent and faithful our prayer team is, and you all are, for one another whenever there are needs that you are aware of. We have a culture of prayer for each other's needs. But our prayer can be much, much more than simply praying for our needs, as important as that is. We need to be praying about the mission of God's Kingdom. Did you know that in the Lord's Prayer there are ten things we are taught to pray for, and only one and a half of them is about our needs. Our daily bread is the one about our needs, and then our forgiveness, but even that is actually about our need to forgive others. Basically 90% of the Lord's prayer is praying about God and his purposes for others. And yet 90% of *our* prayers are about *our* needs. We need to turn that around, folks. We need a culture of missional prayer.

This is what it means for us when we're told to:

Trust the Lord and do good; live in the land, and farm faithfulness. (Psalm 37:3, ceb)

Let's pray: *pray for us to farm faithfulness*

Pastor Jason is coming to dismiss us. Please! Join us in the gym for a great meal and a great celebration of what God has done, including an update on Here For Good, some testimonies and a new video, we'll talk about what's ahead for us, and then a time of prayer and commitment together, and it will all be over an amazing prime roast dinner.

Pastor Jason:

Don't get upset over evildoers; don't be jealous of those who do wrong, because they will fade fast, like grass; they will wither like green vegetables. Trust the Lord and do good; live in the land, and farm faithfulness. Enjoy the Lord, and he will give what your heart asks. Commit your way to the Lord! Trust him! He will act and will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, your justice like high noon. Be still before the Lord, and wait for him. (Psalm 37:1-7a, ceb)