

<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the one who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; <sup>2</sup> but his delight is in the law<sup>of</sup> of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

<sup>3</sup> He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. <sup>4</sup> The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

<sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; <sup>6</sup> for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

“Like a Tree Planted By The Water ...”

So goes the song; so goes the scripture.

There **WERE** the TWO TREES planted by the four great river waters in the Garden of Eden – the Tree of Life and The Tree of Judgment Making. You and I have joined First-Man and First-Woman, **choosing to judge people** over **choosing life**, for most of your lives, yes?

Then there is the telling of the **FUTURE DAYS**, the LAST DAYS, in the final chapter of the final book of the Bible (Revelation 22) of the Tree planted by the River of Life, flowing from the very throne of God, whose leaves provide for the healing of the nations, and whose fruit is ever in season.

And in between the trees by water of the very past and the very future – right square in the middle of the Bible – **IS** Psalm One’s Tree By the Water. Here the TREE REPRESENTS PEOPLE – people who make certain choices, people who choose not the way or advice of the wicked; people who choose not to scoff; people who delight in the Torah (TEACHING) of the Lord. These people choose life, not judgment. These people choose fruit and healing.

Like a tree planted by the waters. So in song, so in scripture.

The past, the future, and the present.

Where do you spend most of your time?

Even though the PRESENT is the only real time, the only time where we can live, many people spend an inordinate amount of time trying to re-live the past and worrying about what the future may hold.

An interesting question I encountered in the past couple of weeks – I invite you to now consider:

**Of all of the time you spend worrying about the future – of all the time you spend trying to look into the future -- of all the time you are trying to see what it will bring (translation: “worrying”) – how much of that time do you picture JESUS THERE BY YOUR SIDE?**

Think about it. You can't actually live in the future. But when you try to steal a peak, how much do you picture Jesus there with you?

***The way we spend our moments is how we spend out lives***, a wise woman once said [Annie Dillard.] ***The way we spend our moments is how we spend out lives.***

It's **hard to picture Jesus in our FUTURE**, **if we don't live with Jesus in our present.**

It's **hard to picture Jesus redeeming our PAST**, **if we don't live with Jesus in our present.**

***Like a tree planted by the water*** ... so, too, **OUR LIVES NEED THE LIVING WATERS OF JESUS' PRESENCE** ... if we are going to live well ... abundant and eternal.

**“Lo, I am with you always,”** our Friend Jesus told us. Do we take advantage of it?

**Christianity**, our faith, our religion, is **NOT** a **series of rules and regulations**. It's **ALL ABOUT A RELATIONSHIP**. Because a relationship with a God in the sky seems so hard, God put on human flesh to become one with us. And it cost God dearly to do so.

How much time do we spend with Jesus?

**Can you name the PEOPLE, TASKS, HOBBIES, WORRIES, OBSESSIONS, FEARS that occupy more of your time than Jesus?**

We all probably could improve our Jesus time.

And it's not impossible to do so. Not at all. Not at all.

It was in the autumn of 1992 when Eugene Pauly was home preparing for dinner, when his wife told him that their son Michael would be joining them for dinner that evening. Although his mind had been normal and very productive all his 70 some

years, in that moment, Eugene Pauly asked his wife, “Who’s Michael?” He genuinely had no idea. The next day Eugene began vomiting and having severe stomach cramps. His wife Beverly took him to the ER.

It turns out, after too long spent in testing, that Eugene Pauly had a rare form of viral encephalitis. Although large amounts of antiviral drugs prevented the disease from spreading there was no reversing the brain damage that had already been done. His body was mostly unscathed, all except for his brain.

Eugene could not remember which day of the week it was, who his doctors were, what he had said two minutes before, etc. He was able to get out of bed, walk into the kitchen, cook himself bacon and eggs, eat, get back into bed, and turn on the radio. Forty minutes later, he would get up and repeat the whole pattern, as though it had never happened.

Dr. Larry Squire, a professor, who had spent the previous 30 years studying the neuroanatomy of memory began to work with Eugene. He asked Eugene to sketch out a picture of the layout of his house. He was unable to show even the spatial relationship between kitchen and bedroom.

Beverly, upon doctors’ advice, took Eugene for a walk every morning, walking him around the block. The doctors had warned her of the need to always keep him in sight. One day, Eugene got out of the house by himself. By the time Beverly noticed, she became frantic. She went to neighbors’ houses, thinking maybe he had gone there. She finally ran in panic the route that they normally walked – around the block. No sign of him. By the time she got home, she was beside herself in fear and anxiety. She walked in and found Eugene sitting in the chair, in front of the television, watching his usual show on the History Channel. He had no memory of ever leaving the house, but she found pine cones setting on the table, and pine sap on his fingers.

Dr. Squire asked Eugene to draw a picture of the block he walked. No good. Eugene was asked to describe the difference in appearance between his house and any of his neighbors’ houses. No could do. Someone accompanied Eugene on the walk and asked him as they turned the final corner which house was his. “I don’t know,” he said, and then walked up the sidewalk to his own front door, went in, sat in the chair, and turned on the History Channel on television.

The upshot of all of this is that Eugene's cognitive functions were largely destroyed by the viral encephalitis, but his basal ganglia were undamaged – the center of the habit formation center of the brain.

If you'd like to know more about this fascinating study, I invite you to the book "The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do In Life and Business," by Charles Duhigg.

I raise it today to let you know that God has given us, in the very beginning stage of our brain's development a powerful tool for centering our lives. It's called Habit.

**I know a woman in this church – most of you do, as well. She arises at 5:00 a.m. every morning to drink from the water of life, to spend time alone with Jesus. No day in her life has begun without this habit since she was a child. And it shows in her life –every day, in every way.**

**It doesn't matter how you figure things out theologically. It doesn't matter how you interpret scriptures. If you get in the habit of spending time with Jesus, your life will change.**

**All it takes is habit.**

All you have to do is to commit to 28 days for forming this habit, and it will be there.

1. Pick a **CUE**, or **TRIGGER** – something to start the habitual conduct. It might be the alarm clock. It might be turning on the coffee pot. Just make it a daily occurrence, and then do it.
2. Then stick to the **ROUTINE** – prayer, scripture, whatever you need to spend 15 minutes alone with Jesus.
3. Then, receive the **REWARD**.

Those are the THREE steps of HABIT FORMATION: (1) cue/trigger, (2) routine, (3) reward.

Do it for 28 days and **you will have a craving for Jesus**.

Your life, too, can be a tree planted by the waters.

The worship committee has prepared **a tree by metaphorical waters for you**. It will remain here in the sanctuary during the month of September. The worship committee has also affixed leaves, for the healing of your soul.

As you come forward for Holy Communion, you will be handed a leaf. I urge you to **find a trigger to physically hold that leaf, read aloud what is written on that leaf, and then spend 15 minutes alone and in quiet with Jesus. Then be prepared for the REWARD that you will receive.**

***The way we spend our moments is how we spend out lives***

What will be your choice?

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.