

An Ordinary Day In The Life Of A Christian

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Preacher: Rev. Thomas Davis

- [0 : 0 0] Well this evening I'd like us to turn back to Psalm 145 and I'd like us to read the first two verses again. I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.
- Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. I'd like us to do something that's maybe a wee bit different and I hope you'll see as we go through why it is a wee bit different.
- Our title is An Ordinary Day in the Life of a Christian and I want us just to think about an ordinary day.
- Now for all of us an ordinary day will look slightly different. If you imagine the day that rise ahead tomorrow or later in the week, we'll all have different plans, different things that we're going to be doing, different experiences.
- But the fact that we all have our own different ordinaries, there's certain general things that on an ordinary day are going to be the same for us all and these are the things I want to think about today.
- [1 : 2 2] I'm going to list seven, seven things that happen on an ordinary day. Number one, you wake up. So tomorrow is going to be yet another Monday morning, very likely to be yet another ordinary day.
- Tomorrow we're all going to have duties. So maybe that's work, maybe school, maybe responsibilities at home, maybe people that you'll attend to, even if it's just by phoning them or meeting them.
- Maybe you'll have an appointment you have to go to, maybe you'll have a medicine that you have to take, maybe you've got a dog that you have to walk. Tomorrow we will all interact with people.
- So there's family that we live with, friends whose company we enjoy, colleagues you'll work alongside or classmates, strangers that you'll encounter as you go through your day, maybe even enemies, people who are difficult, people who will be frustrating, maybe even people who will hurt you.
- Tomorrow we will all receive news. That might be national headlines, it might just be simply asking somebody how are you doing. Tomorrow we will have successes, so there will be things that go well, things that we accomplish and things that are a joy and a delight.
- [2 : 4 6] Tomorrow there will be sufferings, things that are either done by us or done to us that will cause pain, sorrow and disappointment.
- Now that might be as minor as your football team losing, it might be as major as a health scare or a crisis at work. So one, two, three, four, five, six and then seven we will go to bed.
- And that's an ordinary day. Now there's exceptional days when one or more of these things won't happen but if tomorrow is an ordinary day then I think that we can be pretty confident that we can experience all seven of these.

What I want us to ask tonight is what difference does the Gospel make to an ordinary day? And I think that's an incredibly important thing for us to think about.

Psalm 145 speaks in verse 2 of every day, blessing the Lord. But even though Psalm 145 speaks of doing that every day, I think it's very easy for us in our discipleship, in our lives as Christians to focus primarily on exceptional days.

[4 : 13] So there might be days when we experience wonderful things, answered prayer, encouragement, wonderful awareness of God being near us and these exceptional days if we ever have them are what we tend to hold on to.

And even in our weekly pattern of worship as a church it's easy to kind of think that our Christian discipleship is very much concentrated on meeting together on a Sunday to worship, meeting together midweek to pray and to have Bible study.

All of that is not necessarily bad, all of it's good, exceptional days are great and the high point of worshiping on the first day of the week is a wonderful, wonderful thing but all of it carries the risk that on an ordinary day, on a boring Monday morning we can fall into the mindset where God can seem in the background and the Gospel can easily lie to one side.

And what I hope we're going to see tonight is that right in the midst of the most ordinary of days you will find the extraordinary wonder of the Gospel in it all.

So we're going to go through each of these in turn. On an ordinary day then you're going to wake up so alarm goes off, you get out of bed, you get dressed, you have breakfast, you plod on into another ordinary day and all of that is very basic, it's all just the stuff that we do before the main activities of the day begin.

[5 : 59] But if we stop and think for a moment we discover that before you've even finished your cornflakes or your cup of tea you have already experienced a feast of theology.

If you go back to the beginning of the Bible and read Genesis 1 you'll see that three of the biggest theological truths contained in the Bible are revealed on the very first page.

The first is the doctrine of creation, that's obvious, it's one of the first things that the Bible reveals to us.

Opening sentence in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, it's telling us that God is our Creator and that everything around us is the work of His hands, or maybe more so speaking the work of His voice.

He calls it into being, through His Son Jesus Christ the world is created. Second big truth revealed on page one is the doctrine of providence.

[7 : 04] So God doesn't just create the world and leave it, that's a kind of religious position that's been held over the centuries, it's often known as deism, the idea that God created the world and then He just left it to its own devices, that's not the biblical picture at all.

The Bible tells us very clearly that God is involved in His creation. He upholds, directs, disposes, governs all of His creatures and all of their actions and that balance, order and functioning of the universe that we can observe around us is all maintained by God.

And then the third big thing that's revealed on page one of the Bible is what we call the cultural mandate. Now you won't find those words in Genesis 1 but you will find the concept.

This is the term that theologians used to describe the command that was given to humanity to be fruitful and to multiply and to fill the earth and to subdue it.

And so the phrase here, cultural mandate, comes from the idea that humanity is to cultivate life on earth and so humanity is to cultivate community, industry, art, discovery, education.

[8 : 22] In other words, humanity is meant to thrive in the wonderful creation that God has given to it. And what I want us to discover is that all three of these saturate the first half an hour of every ordinary day.

And so when you open your eyes, you take a breath, which well you've done all night anyway, when you stand up, when you get dressed, when you wash, when you plan, all of these things are displaying creation, providence and the cultural mandate.

In fact, all three of these are in the bowl of corn flakes that you eat for breakfast. Now maybe you don't eat corn flakes, I just want you to imagine that you do. You look at that bowl of corn flakes or whatever it is you eat for breakfast, what are you looking at?

What are you looking at when you look at that bowl of corn flakes? You're looking at seed time and harvest. You're looking at the turning of the seasons.

You're looking at the provision of warm sunshine and hydrating rainfall. You're seeing craftsmanship in the process used to make the corn flakes, to make the box that they came in.

[9 : 42] You're seeing employment, purpose, achievement. You're seeing provision and nourishment. You're seeing an orderly society of commerce and trade.

You are seeing delight, if like me, you absolutely love corn flakes. It's reminding us that there's so much just in your corn flakes, just in what you have for breakfast.

You can say exactly the same thing about your clothes, about your homes, about your phone, about everything that you encounter when you wake up in a new day.

All of it is pointing us back to God. Sam 145 makes that clear. The Lord is good to all. His mercy is over all that He has made.

What do you need to do to grow in theological knowledge? Do you need to read books? Do you need to listen to sermons and podcasts? Do you need to do the Saturday course? Do you need to have in-depth discussions?

[10 : 47] Well, these things are all good. Yes, you can do all of these things. But you also just need to eat your corn flakes with your eyes open. It's very easy for an ordinary day to begin with a sigh.

And I've done that many times, especially on a Monday. But for us as Christians, an ordinary day should begin with a wow.

Number two, on an ordinary day, you will have duties that you need to do. Some of these might be a source of pleasure. So maybe you love school.

Maybe you're delighted to go to work. Maybe you really enjoy gardening or taking the dog for a walk. So maybe all these things give you a huge source of pleasure.

But maybe the duties you have are a source of pressure. So school might be rubbish. Work might be stressful. The garden might be relentless.

[11 : 48] And the dog might be driving you around the bend. Sometimes pleasure, sometimes pressure. And the truth is, the duties of an ordinary day are almost always a mixture of both.

What difference does the gospel make to that? Well, the amazing thing about the gospel is that the focus is neither on pleasure nor on pressure. The focus is on purpose.

And again, it's theology that tells you this. The doctrine of creation, the doctrine of providence, the cultural mandate, all of that is telling you that you are made for a purpose, that what you do matters.

And even on the most ordinary of days, your life is part of something bigger. And Psalm 145 hints towards this in verse 4.

It says, it says, one generation shall commend your works to another and shall declare your mighty acts. Now, you might think, oh, well, yeah, that's a great verse for ministers like me.

- [12 : 53] You know, you're proclaiming God's mighty acts to your congregation, to your community, and I'm doing that in my generation. And there's people who've come before me, people who come after me. But I think that the scope of this verse is much, much wider than just the work of ministers, because the whole of human history is grounded on an inescapable dependence of one generation on the next.

Every generation depends on the one that came before it and the one that comes after it depends on them. That applies to everything. It applies biologically, it applies materially, it applies educationally, it applies technologically, socially, culturally, and most importantly of all, it applies theologically.

You are part of a generation that's totally reliant on those who came before you, and it is on you and me that the next generation completely depends.

And this verse, verse four, I think is fascinating because it's a verse that every human is fulfilling even if they don't know it. So you think about the genius researchers at the universities across our country who are teaching students, they are commending God's works to the next generation.

If you have a genius medical researcher looking at molecular biology or whatever it is they do, what do they do? They're just commending God's works to the next generation because all their research is teaching them more and more about what God has made.

- [14 : 29] It's the same for somebody who teaches you music at school. They are passing on a skill and a gift from one generation to the next.

So is the crofter teaching his young sheepdog. So is the gardener planting a tree. So is the civil servant allocating money to the education budget. It all ties in together.

No duty, no matter how ordinary, lies outside God's mighty works. Now, this is incredibly important for us to recognise what we think about duty because it will help us to shift our mindset from viewing duties as obligations and instead recognising them as opportunities.

So often the stuff that we've got to do every week feel like obligations and there's a sense in which they are. But the Gospel is telling us that every ordinary day is an incredible opportunity to fulfil the purposes that God has for us.

Now, there's two very important points related to this that I want to just mention in turn. One is that when we talk about this whole idea of purpose, it's very important that we mustn't be too individualistic.

- [15 : 52] This is a huge danger that we face in our culture just now because everything is, well, virtually everything is individualistic. And so when we talk about purpose, we think in terms of personal goals, personal hopes, personal dreams.

And that's not wrong as long as these things don't lead us into sin. But an individualistic understanding of purpose is poor theology because God's plans are always for us all.

God functions collectively. His plans are for us all together as part of His creation. And that's why some days, your days will be ordinary because we're all having sometimes just a small part to play.

The key thing we need to recognise is that the contribution that you make to this generation, the contribution that you're going to make to the generation around us this week is not determined by its size or by its prominence.

It's determined by what God can do with it. And I think that's something that's so important for us to remember. We so often think that if we're going to be any use to God, we've got to do big stuff.

[17 : 04] But God is an expert at using little things. Sometimes things that are so little, we're not even aware that we're being used.

Jesus made this so clear when he told us that every cup of water counts. Every cup of water counts. Life as a Christian is not about being someone big.

It's about being part of something bigger. So we mustn't be individualistic in terms of what we think about purpose. It's something that we do together.

This raises a second point though, and that's also really important. When we think about duties, opportunities, purpose, it's really important that we mustn't be wasteful.

Now, I'm a wee bit hesitant to say this because I think it's highly likely that I'm going to make you all feel guilty. I'm not trying to make you feel guilty. I don't want to make.

[18 : 01] I don't want to make people feel guilty, but we do have to recognise that it's easy to think that an ordinary day hasn't got much to offer.

So it's easy to think, well, what have I got to offer for Jesus this week? And it's very easy to come to the conclusion very quickly. Well, not very much because it's just an ordinary week.

And as a consequence of that, we can waste the time that we have. So much so, sometimes I hear people say over the years, I've heard people say, what are you up to?

I'm just passing the time. And I remember once a Christian I knew many, many years ago, and he was at his happiest when he could just find something to pass the time.

It was almost as though time was an enemy. And the more he could just make it pass away as quickly as possible, the better.

[19 : 01] And I can understand that mindset, but I hope we can all see that that mindset is tragic.

And it's a travesty of everything that this Psalm speaks of. You look at verse two, does it say, each day I rise, I'll pass the time away?

No, each day I will bless the Lord. Each day I'll praise him and I'll live for him. Each day is an incredible opportunity to serve him.

Now I'm going to say one more thing that risks being even more offensive. That there's a category of people who are in most danger of falling into this trap.

And that category of people is the retired. People who are retired.

[20 : 00] And what I want to say is this, when you're retired, it's so easy to think that because you can't do as much, therefore you can't do anything.

That is absolutely not true. Absolutely not true.

In fact, being retired opens up a whole host of opportunities that you will never have had time for while you were working.

And I want you to think about that. Think about how even just a text to somebody, a conversation, meeting with someone for a coffee, going for a walk with them, sending someone a card, whatever it may be, you have no idea how much God can use that to bless someone.

And so those of you who are retired, we need an army of retired people who are living every day and seizing the opportunities that God gives them.

[21 : 08] But whatever our age, whatever our stage, ordinary daily duties are an amazing opportunity for God to fulfill his purposes.

Number three, on an ordinary day, you are going to encounter people. And so that's family, friends, colleagues, classmates, strangers, and even if you're on your own all day, the loneliness that you may feel is still connected to other people because it's their absence that's giving you that sense of isolation.

So for some of us, when we wake up, the very first thing we might see is somebody else. For others, the very first thing that we'll see is a gap that we desperately wish wasn't empty.

It's just one thing I want to say here. So we asked that longstanding, plastic theological question, what are you looking at when you see a bowl of cornflakes?

Now we're going to ask an even more important question. When you meet people, what are you looking at?

[22 : 18] And the fundamental truth of the Gospel is that every time you look at another human, you are seeing the image of God. That's what makes humanity so incredibly special.

That's what makes each person unique, precious. They're an image bearer. And that's also what makes sin so awful because the image bearer that you're looking at, whether that's when you're looking at someone else or looking at yourself in the mirror, has been broken by sin.

Their relationship with God has been ruined. We're all prone to rebellion against him. And for any who are not yet believers, they're in monumental eternal danger.

That is what you see every time you look at someone. That's why your family and friends can give you such delight.

Their warmth, their love, care is a magnificent declaration of God's mighty works and of His abundant kindness. That's why you and your colleagues can achieve amazing things at work this week.

[23 : 21] That's why meeting somebody for the first time is wonderful because you're getting to know more of God's handiwork. But perhaps it's most important of all for us to remember this when people are difficult, when people frustrate us, when people hurt us.

The person who lets you down does so as an image bearer. Now that makes their sin all the more awful. That's why sin is so serious because we sin as image bearer.

We take the image that God has given us and we turn it back on him and we use it to rebel against him and shake our fist at him. But it also makes our reaction to people crucial.

Because if we respond by being harsh and aggressive and spiteful and cruel, then we need to remember that we are doing that to the image of God. And this is where, well here and everywhere, Jesus is our example.

And he's our example to us because he was always ruthless with sin and gracious with sinners. And that's exactly how we need to be as well. Every single person that you're going to meet on an ordinary day at home, at school, at work, in Tesco, in another car, on the TV, whoever and wherever they are, they're made in the image of God, they're tragically broken by sin, they're desperately in need of Jesus.

[24 : 37] And if that never crosses our minds, then we are getting our theological basics completely wrong.

On an ordinary day, you're going to receive news. That can happen in thousands of ways. Checking the headlines on your phone, getting a phone call and a message from someone, opening your emails, asking someone how they're getting on.

It's all just feeding us news. Even the most ordinary of days will involve us receiving and processing an enormous amount of information. Some of that news will be true, some of it will be false, some of it will be healthy, some of it will be harmful.

Earlier we were asking the question, you know, what are you looking at, whether that's conflicts or people or whatever. Here the key question is, what are you looking with? In other words, as you receive news, what lens is that coming through?

Because whenever you look at something, you need to have the appropriate lens, whether it's sunglasses on a bright day, you can just imagine, you can use imagination to try and experience what that would be like.

[25 : 50] A microscope to see something tiny, a telescope to see something far away. If you want to see clearly, you need to look through the correct lens. The key point that for us as Christians, the Gospel is the lens through which we must view everything.

Everything. So, news of political unrest among the nations, we remember that God is sovereign, that his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, his dominion and Jewish to all generations.

News about news of economic hardship ahead, which is probably going to be a reality for most of us, the Gospel tells us that God will provide, he's the one who gives us food in due season.

News of people being mistreated in the world and suffering, the Gospel tells us that all injustice is wrong, it's going to be called to account, the unrepentant wicked will be destroyed, all the information we receive needs to be viewed through the lens of the Gospel.

And this is why we mustn't just have our Gospel glasses on on a Sunday, we need to have them on all the time through every ordinary day. And the key point is that looking through the lens of the Gospel is not, it's not trying to give you religious vision, it's going to give you accurate vision.

[27 : 25] The lens of the Gospel is going to show you on every ordinary day that people are precious, that life has meaning, that time is short, that gossip is damaging, that gentleness is strength, that injustice is wrong, that kindness is valuable, that riches are overrated, that sex won't satisfy you, that life is a wonderful gift and that there is always always always always hope for you and for every person that you meet.

I'm going to do number five and six together. On an ordinary day you're going to succeed and you're going to suffer, that might be big or small, it might be a day when everything goes well, it might be a day full of frustrations, the Gospel makes a massive difference to all of these and it does so in all directions.

So our moments of success are reasons to rejoice, reasons to sing the words of verse one, I extol you my God and King, I bless your name forever and ever as we enjoy all the good things that he gives us in life.

Our moments of suffering are reasons to sorrow, reasons to cling on to verse 14, the promise that the Lord upholds those who are falling.

In moments of success the Gospel lifts us to rejoice, in moments of suffering the Gospel reaches us when we're low. But what I want us to see is that the Gospel does even more than that.

[28 : 52] The Gospel guards us against thinking that life should always be wonderful. It's so easy to make an idol of our success, sort of our comforts, sort to long for approval from others, for power and influence in our lives and to think that these are the keys to happiness and that these are a sign of God's favour when they're not.

The Gospel guards us from thinking that everything must always be perfect for me. The Gospel tells us that that's not how life is going to be. But the Gospel also guards us against thinking that suffering is always awful.

That's so easy to have that very simplistic view of life where if things are good then it's great and if things are bad then it's awful. I want more good and I never want things to be bad. But the truth is struggle and suffering and trials can be an enormous sort of good.

And there are key tools in God's hands in his work of sanctification as he teaches us, guides us and when he needs to he disciplines us so that we become more and more like Jesus.

Paul speaks of that so powerfully, he says that we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character and character produces hope and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who's been given to us.

[30 : 21] On an ordinary day this week when you have success rejoice and thank God but guard your heart so that your hope and identities always in Jesus are not and whether or not you have a good day and when you face sufferings never think that it means that God has abandoned you.

He's never going to leave you and the fact that your suffering is not a sign that he's forgotten you, it's a sign that he's got big plans for you.

As we saw in verse 14 he upholds those who are falling and he raises up all who are bowed down.

So on an ordinary day we're going to get up, we're going to attend to duties, we're going to encounter people, we're going to receive news, we're going to have successes, we're going to have sufferings and then you're all going to go to bed.

And as Christians we can and should do three things when we go to bed. First we can look back over the day that we've had and as we do so we give thanks to God for everything that we've received from him.

[31 : 35] We think about all that we've learned, we acknowledge where we've gone wrong and we've repented and tell God how sorry we are and we marvel at how God transforms every single part of the most ordinary days, the fact that God is righteous in all his ways, kind in all his works.

So we look back. The second thing you can do is look round. Sometimes that will be with a sense of peace, you get into bed, you look around and you think oh I'm so glad I'm in bed, I'm so glad I can rest and there's just that great sense of peace and relief of getting to bed.

Sometimes going to bed is just the best. But sometimes you look around with a sense of fear, sometimes going to bed is the worst and it's the last place you want to go and you go and you're just confronted with all your worries and thoughts and fears and struggles.

The amazing thing is that when you lie in bed you can look around knowing that God is with you, that the Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

This is maybe a guess, I probably shouldn't be so speculative, but I would like to think that the majority of times that verse has been fulfilled when people have been lying in bed.

[32 : 57] Lying in bed at night, struggling to sleep, anxious, suffering, lonely and you talk to God and he is near to you, near to all who call upon him.

So you can look back, you can look around but most of all as we go to bed we can look forward. We can look forward to another amazing ordinary day tomorrow and even more so we can look forward to an utterly amazing eternity with Jesus and with each other in the new creation.

And I love the way this is brought before us in verse 2. Another way verse 2 starts with every day and it ends with forever and ever.

And that's the great wonder of the Gospel. It transforms every day through all that God has done for us in Jesus and it holds incredible promises for our future.

It promises the most wonderful forever and ever for all. I want you to go away now and I want you to think about a final question.

[34 : 12] What are you going to do with all of this tomorrow morning? For those of you who are Christians, how is this going to change tomorrow?

How is it going to shape how you get out of bed? How is it going to affect the way you live your life? How is it going to shift your perspective? What are you going to do with this tomorrow morning?

Both in terms of the opportunities that you have and also the struggles that you face. But even more importantly for anyone here, anyone watching at home who's not yet a Christian, what are you going to do with all of this tomorrow?

What are you going to do with it? Because you've got to do something. You've got to either say no thanks or say yes Lord, I want to follow you.

I want every ordinary day that I've got left to be for you. Amen. Let's pray. Father, we thank you so much for your Word and for the truth that you've revealed to us in it and for the difference that makes to every single part of our lives and to every day that we live.

[35 : 45] We thank you for all the blessings that you give to us on every ordinary day of our lives. We pray that every ordinary day that we have this week and that we have in the rest of our lives would be transformed by the Gospel and that we would see and recognise the difference that you make to every part of our lives, that you would take us and use us so that we would live every ordinary day of our lives for your glory.

Amen. We're going to close with Psalm 116 and the sing Psalms version from 1 to 9.

I love these verses and I love how they begin, they speak of just a great expression of our love to God, but I also love how they end because in verse 9 speaks of living for Him while we have breath.

So it's simultaneously praising God for what He's done for us and it's recommitting our lives to Him as we seek to serve Him. And so it's a brilliant Psalm for us to finish with and it's a brilliant Psalm to set us up for the week that lies ahead.

Let's stand and sing together.