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Sermon 8 August 2021

Title: Psalm Beach 4 (The Whole Enchilada)

- Hola, amigos de la iglesia, y bienvenidos a Playa del Salmo! We are so glad that you have joined us this morning—whether you’re with us in person at our Sunday Brunch or you’re joining us online from one of so many places all across the globe-- wherever you are, we’re glad you’re here with us for this 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in our scriptural excursion to the gateway to the Tehillim, Psalm Beach. We hope that you are blessed by what you see and hear and that you have already felt the presence of the Holy Spirit as you’ve worshipped with us.
- Well can you believe it’s already the fourth Sunday in our Psalm Beach series? We’re going to enjoy our virtual holiday for another two weeks yet—even though we’re past the halfway point, for now let’s savor the moment and enjoy the 3 Sundays we have left –soon enough all we’ll have are holiday memories—but isn’t that a good part of the reason we take holidays-- to make memories?
- One of the things I like about Facebook—and there are many things I don’t like about Facebook, but one of the things I do like is the way that Facebook has a “memories” feature—each day, you get reminders of what you posted, and what you were doing on that particular day, one year ago, two years ago,

three years and so on—as far back as it can go, depending on how long you’ve been on Facebook—my memories go back 12 years—and this week I was reminded that 3 years ago on the 2nd of August I took the opportunity to see John Prine, one of my favourite singer-songwriters, at the Kelvingrove Bandstand—that’s a beautiful, small, outdoor amphitheater in the Kelvingrove Park in Glasgow—if you ever get the chance to see a concert there, take it, because it’s a wonderful venue—John Prine died due to complications from COVID in the early days of the pandemic, so I am doubly happy that I was able to see him when I did.

- But John Prine tells a story about meeting one of his fans—he’d sometimes visit with his fans before and after a concert—and he says that he met this woman and she told him what a pleasure it was to meet him because she just loved his music, and she told him, she said, “I love all your songs, but my favourite of all the songs you’ve written has got to be the one you sing about the happy enchilada.” He was puzzled by this and he asked her, he said, “about the what now?” And she said, “that song you sing about the happy enchilada.” He furrowed his brow and shook his head, and he was still confused and so he said, “Ma’am I hate to disappoint you, but I have never written a song about an enchilada, happy or otherwise.” And she said, “oh yes—you have—it goes ‘it’s a happy enchilada and you think you’re gonna drown’ --- and that’s when John Prine realized that he had written a song called “That’s the Way that the World Goes’ Round,” and the chorus of that song says “That’s the way that the world goes’ round, you’re up one day, the

next you're down—it's a half an inch of water and you think you're gonna drown, that's the way that the world goes 'round." And I guess "it's a half an inch of water" does sound a lot like "it's a happy enchilada"—and so it was an understandable mistake--and if you're enjoying the enchilada that's on our menu at Sunday Brunch today, I do hope that it's a happy one.

- The title of our sermon today is not "The Happy Enchilada," but "The Whole Enchilada."
- The Whole Enchilada. That's an expression, an idiom, that probably originated in the United States about 60 years ago or so, but it's a way of talking about all of something—everything—not just a part or a piece of something, but the whole thing. We use other expressions that are similar, like "the whole 9 yards," and "the whole shebang," and "the whole ball of wax," but the "whole enchilada" is, it seems to me, a lot more appetizing than any of those, and you might use it in any number of situations. If you were talking about the recent Euro 2020 football tournament that happened about a month ago, you might say that the England team did well enough to make it to the final at Wembley stadium, and lots of other teams won a few particular games, but Italy won the whole tournament. That's everything—the whole enchilada.
- Or the other week when I joined the men's breakfast at the Brisbane Hotel on Tuesday morning—and what a great time of fellowship that was—but I ordered two poached eggs and toast, and some of the other men had different combinations of breakfast items, eggs and bacon or sausage and

mushrooms and beans or whatever, but a couple of guys, and I'm not mentioning any names—they know who they are—they got the full breakfast—the full Scottish—with bacon, sausage, black pudding, tomato, mushrooms, tattie scones, hash browns, beans AND egg—and I don't blame them, I've gotten it before and it's amazing—but the Full Scottish isn't just a partial breakfast—it includes everything—the whole enchilada—metaphorically, of course—if you want an actual, literal whole enchilada for breakfast, you need to come to the LargsNaz Sunday Brunch.

- But “The Whole Enchilada” is our title for our sermon this morning, because as I've been studying and thinking about Psalm 41, the ideas of completion and inclusion—the idea of everything, the “whole enchilada,” has been a useful and relevant tool for understanding what Psalm 41 is about, and how it works, and what it has to say to us today. And so as we work our way through this stop on our journey through Psalm Beach this morning, I want to suggest 4 ways that Psalm 41 serves up the whole enchilada.
- The first way is the most simple—it just has to do with what Psalm 41 is and how it works in its context. Psalm 41 marks the end of Book 1, the first of those five collections of psalms that are in the Book of Psalms—we talked about that on the first Sunday of this series. Book 1, that's Psalms 1-41, contains all of the 5 genres of psalms that we've learned about—wisdom psalms and royal psalms and laments and psalms of thanksgiving and hymns of praise, and Book 1 is made up mostly of Psalms of David—in fact all but Psalms 1 and 2 are Psalms of David. You'll remember that we said that

Psalms 1 and 2 work together as a kind of preface not only to the Book of Psalms but also for Book 1. So Psalms 1 and 2 were the preface, the introduction to Book 1, and now at the very end of the collection, we come to the conclusion, Psalm 41.

- And one of the ways that the editors who collected the psalms let their readers know that they had come to the end of the first collection, Book 1, was by putting verse 13 at the end of Psalm 41, because verse 13 is a kind of benediction—a signal that we have reached the end of a journey that began back in Psalm 1—
- Now you’ll remember that back in Psalm 1, we saw the phrase “happy are those who do not—take the paths of the wicked” and we said that the word for “happy” there—the word was *esher*—we pointed out that it was sometimes translated as “blessed,” but that there was another word that was also translated as “blessed” that had a more religious, a more spiritual connotation—well, that other word is the word that the editors used here in verse 13, and it’s a word that is used when somebody receives a blessing from God or somebody else—it can also mean to kneel down, as you might when you are about to receive someone’s blessing—and the word here is “*barak*”—and when the word “*barak*” is used instead of *esher*—both of them can be translated into English as blessed, remember—when *barak* is used the meaning is more about receiving or giving a blessing—being blessed BY someone— being given approval and honour and favour—rather than someone who is happy and moving forward, which is what “*esher*” is about—

and that's why most of the time in the NRSV translation, "*esher*" is "happy," while "*barak*" is blessed.

- You'll see this word in your Psalm Beach phrasebook in the listening guide and on the bulletin board in the church—*barak*: blessed. That of course is not any kind of political statement and should not be construed as one—any similarity to the names of any American politicians is just a coincidence
- But when the editors of Book 1 of the Psalms wanted to provide a kind of last word to the collection, it's not surprising that their benediction, the final "amen" at the end of 41 psalms, would have been a sweeping, overarching, all-inclusive statement that blesses the Lord, Yahweh—so we find in verse 13: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen.—not just 1 amen but 2 in support of this statement about the blessedness of God—this statement is similar to what we mean when we sing "Bless the Lord O my soul, worship His holy name"—and the editors bless the Lord not just for today, and not just from now on into the future—but from everlasting TO everlasting—that's everything—the whole enchilada—and that blessing, that benediction lets us know that we have come to the end of this collection—that this is all there is of this first collection of psalms—that's everything—the whole enchilada. So the first way that Psalm 41 serves us the whole enchilada is this: Psalm 41 completes Book 1 of the psalms—and just as the Book of Psalms can be seen as a "little Bible"—everything is in there, as Luther said, so Book 1, psalms 1-41 can be

seen as a “little Book of Psalms,”—the psalter in miniature—everything is in there—the whole enchilada

- So that’s a little bit about how Psalm 41 works, but let’s look at its content as well—at what it means, as we consider the second way that Psalm 41 serves us that “whole enchilada.”
- Now I mentioned that word “*esher*” that we saw in Psalms 1 and 2—in Psalm 1, at the very beginning, verse 1-- *esher* described the way that the righteous, those who do not choose to follow the paths of the wicked but those who meditate day and night upon God’s law and direction, are happy—are “*esher*,” and then at the very end of Psalm 2 we saw that it was used to describe those who take refuge in the Lord—so that the *esher* at the beginning of Psalm 1 and at the end of Psalm 2 are like bookends that hold the preface to the collection of psalms together—joining these two psalms of orientation—and orientation, that’s when God’s in His heaven and all’s right with the world
- But last week, when we looked at Psalm 39, “*esher*” was nowhere to be found—because Psalm 39 was a lament—a desperate cry to God for deliverance from pain and transgression and immobility—there was no happy—no *esher*—in that psalm of disorientation—because *esher* is all about advancing with gladness and moving forward and progressing and getting somewhere—but psalm 39 was about being stuck in depression and confusion and the limits of our own mortality--God was in His heaven but all was not right with the world—there’s no *esher* in Psalm 39

- But now—here in Psalm 41—there it is again, right up front—first word of the first verse—happy—*esher*—and again in verse 2—the same root word that *esher* comes from, *ashar*—that means to go straight on, to advance, to progress—
- Remember that we saw in Psalm 1 that happy are those who delight in the law of the Lord
- and then in psalm 2, happy are those who take refuge in the Lord—
- but here in Psalm 41, the psalmist tells us about something else that the righteous do that makes them “*esher*”— that makes them happy and gets them somewhere.
- Psalm 41 tells us in verses 1 and 2: Happy are those who consider the poor; the Lord delivers them in the day of trouble. The Lord protects them and keeps them alive; they are called happy in the land.
- Now let’s consider what the psalmist is saying here—Happy, *esher*, we know what that means, are those who consider the poor. The word that is translated “consider” there means to pay attention to, to look out for—and the word that is translated as “the poor” is “*dal*”—it can mean a person or people who are poor or weak or lowly—it refers to those who are in need—those who lack—who don’t have enough—and the word “*dal*” comes from a root word that literally means “to hang out to dry,” like you would fish or skins--and so there is the sense that these are those who have been abandoned, left to fend for themselves—and so what the psalmist is telling us is that those who pay attention to, who look after the needs of folks who have



been hung out to dry—those who do that are happy—*esher*—they are moving forward, they are making progress—we might sum this up by saying the ones who get ahead are those who look after those who are in need—and if you want to get ahead, take care of your neighbour in need.

- What a contrast to the world's values and its strategies for success—our cultural wisdom tells us that if you want to get ahead, you've got to look out for number 1—it's a dog-eat-dog world and I'm gonna get mine and you better get yours—but the psalmist tells us here that the one who is happy, the one who is righteous, looks after the needy—and more than this, notice what the psalmist tells us—as the righteous look after those in need, so the Lord looks after the righteous—
- the psalmist doesn't say that we are to simply pray for those in need so that the Lord will look after them—no the psalmist says God takes care of the righteous and as the righteous are blessed and as they are supplied with resources, so THEY look after those in need
- As we said last week, when we pray for those in need—when we see things in the world that are not as they ought to be—things like poverty and hunger and lack—we should expect that one of the ways our prayers will be answered is through God's giving US the resources and the creativity and the power of the Holy Spirit to change the way things are into the way things ought to be.
- And when we combine what Psalm 41 tells us at the end of Book 1--that happy—*esher*—are those who take care of others—with what we saw at the

beginning of Book 1—in Psalms 1 and 2—that happy are those who delight in the Lord and meditate on His word day and night—THEN we see a complete image of that righteousness, that holiness that is both internal and related to God (happy are those who delight in the Lord and meditate on His word day and night)—and also external and related to others (happy are those who look after the needs of others) and those two interconnected parts of what it means to be righteous are the same two parts that Jesus talked about when he said that the greatest commandment was to Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength—internal, related to God, like we find in Psalms 1 and 2—and He added that second, external, lived-out component that we find in Psalm 41—and love your neighbour as yourself. These two, Love God, love your neighbour, internal and external—on them, on these two commandments, Jesus said, hang all the Law and the Prophets—and what he meant by that was that in these two commandments we find everything—the whole enchilada.

- So our second point is that Psalm 41 reminds us of the two parts of the greatest commandments
- The third way that Psalm 41 serves up to us “the whole enchilada,” has to do with the fact that Psalm 41 is a psalm of thanksgiving. That’s the fourth genre of psalm that we have looked at in this series.
- And we find the thanksgiving part of psalm 41 in verses 4-12, where the psalmist, having just told us in verse 3 that the Lord looks after those who look after others, that He heals them when they are on their sickbed—and if

you follow along in your listening guide you see that then the psalmist gives us an example of God's healing—of God's answering prayer—the psalmist begins to recount his story in verse 4 when he says As for me, I said, 'O Lord, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you.'

- So this was in the past that the psalmist asked for healing, and then he tells us that even though his enemies think he's got one foot in the grave, even though they talk bad about him and gossip about him—he knows that God is pleased with Him, and upholds him because of his integrity (this is down in verses 11 and 12)—because he has looked after the needs of others-- and God has set him in His presence forever
- Let's take a look at what the psalmist tells us about his enemies “who wonder in malice when he will die”—we read in verse 8 that “They think that a deadly thing has fastened on me, that I will not rise again from where I lie.”
- And I just want to take a moment to consider what the psalmist is reminding us of here, and it's this simple truth—whatever you're going through—whatever your situation, whatever your condition, there is one thing that does not matter—one thing that is of no consequence whatsoever, one thing that has no bearing on the way things really are—and that is what “they” think. The psalmist tells us what “they think”—they think a deadly thing has fastened onto me—they think the icy hand of death has gripped me and I will not rise again from where I lie—they think I'm done for, they think I'm a goner, they think that I have no life left in me—even my best friend has

turned against me—the psalmist tells us in verse 9: Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted the heel against me.

- Even his trusted friend has deserted him—but in verse 10 there’s that all-important conjunction, “but.” And that conjunction--that “but” changes everything—verse 10 But you, O Lord, be gracious to me, and raise me up--- I know that you are pleased with me; because my enemy has not triumphed over me. 12 But you have upheld me because of my integrity, and set me in your presence forever.
- Now notice that the psalmist doesn’t tell us that he experienced some miraculous physical recovery—that he jumped up from his bed and ran around the town—but he does tell us that God is pleased with Him, that God upheld Him, that his enemies have not triumphed, and that God has placed him in His presence forever.
- It doesn’t matter one iota what “they” think—what matters is what God thinks—it doesn’t matter what “they” say—what matters is what God says.
- It doesn’t matter what they think about you—about your past or your future, or what they think about your ability or your disability, it doesn’t matter what they think about where you’re from or what you look like or who your family is or isn’t, what matters is what God thinks.
- And it doesn’t matter what they say about you, it doesn’t matter what they say about your past or your future, or what they say about your ability or your disability, it doesn’t matter what they say about where you’re from or

what you look like or who your family is or isn't, what matters is what God says.

- And if God thinks you have integrity, and if God says He is pleased with you, if God thinks you're gonna rise up, if God says come into my presence forevermore—then you have reason to be thankful, don't matter what they think or what they say.
- And so Psalm 41 is a psalm of thanksgiving—a psalm that tells the story of a cry for healing and deliverance like we saw in psalm 39, that psalm of disorientation, when things were hard to understand, when there was suffering and confusion, when the kind of “orientation” that we saw in Psalm 1 and 2 was nowhere to be found—when things didn't make sense—so in psalm 1 and 2 we saw orientation, things were going right and they made sense-- and in psalm 39, disorientation, things were going wrong and they didn't make sense and the psalmist laments, cries out to God—but here in psalm 41, there is a story of the loss of orientation, a prayer to God in a time of disorientation, and a restoration, an answer to prayer, an assurance of deliverance from the one who raises the psalmist up—a reorientation—here in psalm 41 we find a movement through all three of those categories—that's everything—the whole enchilada.
- And so the third way that Psalm 41 serves us the whole enchilada is that it is a psalm of thanksgiving—and so it tells the story of orientation, disorientation, and the reorientation that comes when God answers the prayer of the one who laments.

- And finally I want to suggest one final way that Psalm 41 offers us the “whole enchilada.”
- And in order to do that, I want us to consider the gospel of John, where in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter, John tells us about the way that Jesus tells his disciples that one of them will betray him, about the way he dips his bread and gives it to Judas, who has sold his loyalty and his faithfulness for 30 pieces of silver--- who will lead the authorities to Jesus, and so help to bring about Jesus’ arrest and eventual crucifixion.
- In verse 18, Jesus tells his disciples that Judas’ betrayal fulfills the scripture, “the one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.” That scripture of course is from Psalm 41—we just read it in verse 9.
- And when we look back at Psalm 41 from our contemporary perspective, back through the New Testament and the gospel narratives, when we consider the way that Psalm 41 is fulfilled in the story of Jesus’ betrayal and crucifixion, then we can read with full insight the way that Jesus’ enemies had considered him as good as dead and buried—the way that they thought a deadly thing had fastened on him, that He would not rise again from where he was lain—But we can hear Jesus say in the words of the psalmist, even amidst the betrayal and humiliation and kenosis of crucifixion, “you Oh Lord, you raise me up,” My enemy has not triumphed over me—you have upheld me”
- And even though the theology of the Hebrews at the time of Psalm 41 was not yet particularly concerned with what would come to be known as the

resurrection of the dead, we can look back and know that resurrection was certainly a part of the understanding through which John would have read the psalms, and we can read the psalm with the understanding that Jesus has fulfilled the scriptures and we can see how Psalm 41 points us to the truth of the gospel, the gospel of Christ crucified and resurrected

- and so Psalm 41 reminds us of the way that we too can find healing and transformation, the way that through the good news of the cross we too have the opportunity to be raised up, given life abundant and everlasting, the way that we can be set in the very presence of God forevermore. Psalm 41 proclaims to us the measureless love of God, that shall forevermore endure— from everlasting to everlasting
- Psalm 41 points us to the good news of the gospel—and that gospel, that good news, that truth, offers with it the opportunity to partake not of the bread of betrayal but of the bread of life—and that is an opportunity that means everything