

“Delight”
Psalm 36 (Inclusive Bible)

Emptying and Filling

We are now journeying through the season of Lent. Traditionally, Lent is a time to practice self-denial and discipline. That’s why many people choose to give something up—like chocolate, coffee, or social media. It’s a way to make space for something deeper. Have you decided to give something up this Lent? I heard Carl Bishop Jr. gave up coffee and it’s not exactly making him happy—but that’s kind of the point, right?

Lent is about more than just giving things up. It’s about becoming more aware—of what we rely on, what we crave, and where we turn for comfort. It’s a season of emptying—but also of being filled. As we let go of certain things, we create room to be filled with what really matters.

This week’s Lenten theme is delight. At first, it might sound like an unusual word for Lent. Lent often feels quiet, even a little heavy. But delight belongs in Lent—because this season is also an invitation to return to God, to be refreshed in God’s presence, and to rediscover the joy that comes from being fully alive.

Today’s psalm gives us such a beautiful picture of that joy: *“How precious is your love! Whether creatures of heaven or children of earth, we all find refuge in the shadow of your wings. We feast on the bounty of your estate, and drink from the stream of your delights. In you is the wellspring of Life, and in your light we become enlightened.”*

I love that this psalm doesn’t talk about God’s presence in vague, abstract ways. It uses language we can feel—shelter, feasting, drinking, light. It’s an experience you can taste and touch. It’s not just something we think about—it’s something we live and feel in our bones. That’s the kind of joy and delight we’re talking about today. Delight, in the language of this psalm, is not an idea to think about. It’s something we experience. We don’t just reflect on it—we taste it, see it, feel it. We drink from the stream of God’s delight. And that means our spirituality—our life with God—is not something that floats above our daily life. It’s grounded in our bodies. It’s found in the moments when we are most present, most aware, most alive. And so yes, Lent is a time of delight. Not the sugary, surface-level kind. But the kind that comes when we slow down and pay attention—the kind that bubbles up when we remember how good God is, and how beautiful life can still be.

I was reminded of this recently when I thought about our Thanksgiving gathering in 2024. Thanksgiving is a time when families gather. But many immigrants, including pastors, don’t have extended family nearby. So Juhee and I invited a few Korean clergy families from Rhode Island and Connecticut to join us at our home. [ppt] We didn’t have turkey or mashed potatoes. But we had delicious Korean food, plenty of conversation, and laughter that just kept going. And since I happen to have a foot massage certification—yes, really!—I taught the husbands how to give a good foot massage to their wives. Happy Wife! Happy Life! It was hilarious, a little awkward, and full of joy. It wasn’t a religious gathering, but God was with us. In our laughter, our food, our fellowship, we shared in God’s delight. It flowed through the room like a gentle stream—refreshing, renewing.

So let me ask you—when was the last time your delight bucket was filled? When did you last feel that deep sense of joy, of connection, of being alive? Maybe it was with family or friends. Maybe it came through music or worship. Maybe it was by the ocean, in the mountains, or even at a Red Sox game. Where do you go when you need to feel deeply alive again?

Or maybe you're thinking, "I can't remember the last time I felt delight." If that's where you are—please don't stay there alone. Come talk to me. Let's share a meal. Sometimes delight returns in the most ordinary ways. Lent is not just about sacrifice. It's about learning to see again. To taste again. To delight again in the goodness of God.

The Spirituality of Delight

If we slow down and really pay attention, we'll start to notice—there's still so much around us that invites us to delight. Rev. Ben Hensley once said, "The spirituality of Delight is a spirituality that enjoys, appreciates, and experiences the actual pleasures of the creation God has made." I like that. It's not about escaping the world—it's about waking up to it. Even in the busyness of life, we are surrounded by God's creation. Every creature, every tree, every moment, carries the beauty and joy of the One who made it. But we miss it. We rush. We keep our heads down. And in doing so, we pass by the stream of God's delight that's flowing all around us.

Delight takes practice. It takes intention. It's something we have to train ourselves to see. Like a muscle we have to use again. That's why practices like *visio divina*—or what some call "seeing with the eyes of a poet"—are so important. The poet Mary Oliver had a moment like this once. She was walking through a fall field when she suddenly noticed a cluster of goldenrod swaying in the wind. It stopped her in her tracks, and later, she wrote this poem:

... For myself,

I was just passing by, when the wind flared
and the blossoms rustled,
and the glittering pandemonium

leaned on me.

I was just minding my own business
when I found myself on their straw hillsides,
citron and butter-colored,

and was happy, and why not?

Are not the difficult labors of our lives
full of dark hours?

And what has consciousness come to anyway, so far,

that is better than these light-filled bodies?

All day
on their airy backbones
they toss in the wind,

they bend as though it was natural and godly to bend,

they rise in a stiff sweetness,
in the pure peace of giving
one's gold away.

Isn't that beautiful? She wasn't planning on delighting in anything. She was just passing by—doing her own thing. But something grabbed her attention And in that small, golden

moment, delight found her. How often do we miss those moments? Even the most beautiful things—a piece of music, a sunset, a kind word—can pass us by if we're too distracted, too busy, too tired to notice.

Practicing the Delight Found in Everyday Life

During this season of Lent, we're invited to slow down just a bit—to take smaller steps, deeper breaths, and begin practicing what we might call the spirituality of delight. Just pause for a moment. Look around. There is delight all around us—in the warmth of sunlight, in a flower blooming by the sidewalk, in a smile shared with a friend, or even in a simple cup of hot tea. These things may seem small, but they're not insignificant. God has tucked delight into the ordinary. And noticing it—that takes practice.

And I'll be honest with you—that kind of practice isn't always easy. This Lent, Juhee and I took time to reflect on how we've been caring for our bodies, which we call temples of God. We realized—we hadn't been caring for them very well. We'd been eating whatever we wanted and avoiding exercise altogether. So we made a commitment to offer some healthier habits to God. We cut back on things we love—meat, ice-cream, pastry, sugar, chocolate and of course diet Coke! And we started intentionally eating more vegetables. Not always exciting... but definitely good for us.

We also started going to the gym when we could. And were we happy about it? Let me be honest—no. At first, it was miserable. I climbed the stair stepper with a repentant heart—and with every step, it felt like my lungs were about to give out. After 30 minutes, I'd come home, collapse on the floor, and just lay there. We started strength training too. For a few days, I couldn't even lift my arms. And forcing myself to eat food I didn't enjoy? That felt like a spiritual discipline all its own.

But something happened. After a week or two, I started to notice little changes. My belly shrank just a bit. Workouts didn't feel quite as awful. And then something unexpected happened—my senses started waking up again. I could actually taste how sweet a carrot really is. I noticed that celery has a subtle saltiness to it. And bell peppers—suddenly I realized how fragrant and vibrant they are.

It wasn't just my taste buds. My whole way of experiencing life started to come alive again. And that's when I realized something important: God's delight isn't far away. It's not some mountaintop experience or future reward. It's already here. It's around us and within us—if we're willing to slow down, pay attention, and let our dulled senses wake up again.

My beloved Asbury family, joy isn't something we earn by trying harder. Delight isn't found by pushing or performing. Delight is something we discover when we stop—when we listen, when we notice, when we taste and see what's already been given.

God's delight flows through this world—in creation, in our bodies, in the love of family and neighbors, in a good meal, in beautiful music, and in the gift of rest God offers each night.

So let me ask you again: Where are you filling your delight bucket? And if you still feel empty—if you're still thirsty—don't go searching too far. Right here in this community, we can laugh together, share together, worship together. We can drink from the stream of God's delight—together. If you're struggling, don't do it alone. Come talk to me. Reach out to one of our church leaders. Let's share a meal. Let's take a walk. Let's practice this spirituality of delight, side by side. Because delight is not just a feeling—it's the presence of God. And in that presence, may our souls wake up again. And may this Lenten journey lead all of us into deeper joy.