



Happy New Year 2026!
"Flourish"
By Pastor Jody May 12/28/2025

[CALL TO HEAR]

Psalm 92:12-15 ESV

- ¹² The righteous flourish like the **palm tree**¹,
and grow like a cedar in Lebanon;
¹³ They are planted in the house of the Lord;
they flourish in the courts of our God.
¹⁴ They still bear fruit in old age;
they are ever full of sap and green,
¹⁵ to declare that the LORD is upright;
He is my Rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him."
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**Pastor - "People of God, this is the Word of God."
People - "Thanks be to God."**

Pray

Illustration

The "Queen Palm"



¹ The use of the palm tree as a symbol of victory in the Bible carries profound theological implications. It points to the ultimate victory of Christ over sin and death, a victory that believers are invited to share in through faith. The palm branches waved during Jesus' entry into Jerusalem foreshadow His impending victory through the cross and resurrection, while the palms in Revelation signify the final victory of God's people in the eschaton.

In summary, the palm tree serves as a powerful biblical symbol of victory, righteousness, and eternal life, deeply embedded in the cultural and historical context of the Scriptures. Its use in key biblical narratives underscores the triumph of God's kingdom and the hope of ultimate victory for believers.



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Introduction

As for the Christian as well, one who has been planted by still waters, one who endures the heat, cold, famine, drought, war, and disease, they too will bear fruit and grow in and out of all seasons. As long as they live, they are Green, they are strong, they Flourish.

What does 2026 hold in store for us?

So many times, we preach as Christians on the travesties of having to live in a fallen world and we are wise to do so. But what we neglect is that God did not call us to live in fear, gloom, nor dread.

Colossians 4:5 ESV

Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.

Ephesians 5:15-16 ESV

¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.

Psalms 90:12 ESV

So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

The Call is to **walk in wisdom**, that is understand the world is not like you, the world wants to make you like them, BUT there is no escaping of living in the world. Therefore, God in all His wondrous wisdom created in us a way, to live in light of a hostile land: the ability to grow no matter what the circumstances. God's will for His people is to prosper, not to hide, not to be afraid but to be wise.

His people, the 'righteous' will **FLOURISH**, פָּרַח (paw-rakh) **vb. bud, sprout, shoot**²; that means they will continue to grow, be useful, give fruit, no matter what the conditions are. The verb **conveys two meanings**, and that is why it works so well with the image of a Palm Tree. It means that you grow

²Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, [Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon](#) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 827.



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personally (new shoots) while you bear fruit (dates), and that is for others. The Christian is called to grow both ways.

Notice it doesn't matter the age of the believer as well. When you are of God's people, you flourish, period.... We see in Mark 11:12-14 and Matthew 21:18-22 that Jesus curses the "unfruitful" fig tree. The tree is given to bear fruit, and Jesus' cursing of the tree was a curse on Jewish leadership of that day and their lack of fruitfulness. There was no defense to be given, there was no reasoning as to why it wasn't happening, Jesus knew the story already it was too late. (example of my distant relative)

Perhaps it is time for HCC to steer clear from a message of false bravado in the New Year after all it isn't us that wins the day, that's our Lord's job. Neither is it a time for call to arms for we already know the enemy, we already know their strategy, anti-Christ messaging, we just need to live the way God intended for us to live, unapologetically for God alone. Perhaps the strategy that best fits the moment is to simply proclaim to our people what they are called to do, **FLOURISH**. The **MP** of the text today will tell you why that's a wise idea.

MP:

God plants the righteous and their Flourishing proclaims His goodness.

I have 4 different things that I want to talk about today, about this type of flourishing that the text describes. First, we will talk about that **condition needed for flourishing**. What are the signs of the person that pursues what's going on here in the text. Next, we will look at **the place of the flourishing**, where is it that we are planted so we can grow. Then we will look at the **duration of the flourishing**, how long is one expected to keep up this type of growth. Lastly, we will talk about the witness of flourishing, or the proclamation it is meant to give. All done so that when we leave here today, perhaps for 2026 the guiderails of God's Word will keep us from being disenfranchised and will cause our flourishing throughout this year.

1. The Condition needed for *Flourishing*.



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¹² The **RIGHTEOUS** flourish like the **palm tree**,
and grow like a **cedar** in Lebanon;

Notice in v. 12 there is a root conditioning for flourishing, righteousness. צַדִּיק 'tsad-deek' just, righteous; **blameless**. The condition for people bearing fruit and for growing throughout all seasons in life is if they are first righteous.

Righteousness is not a condition you can get yourself into, that is something that must be done to you, as we talked about last week. The Suffering Servant takes on the sins of the world and in exchange He imputes to His people righteousness! Now how does this all work?

Romans 4:3; 22-24 ESV

³For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham **believed** God, and it was counted to him as **righteousness**."

²²That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness." ²³But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also. It will be **counted to us** who **believe** in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,

Righteousness is credited to you **for your belief**. You are gifted faith (belief Eph 2:8), and God grants you a **blamelessness**, and that right standing now with God, which we call "justification", is the condition for growth! A Righteous person is a person in a right relationship with God, a righteous person grows under the care and love of God, a righteous person is under the Lordship of God's Son, a righteous person is set to grow in a hostile world better than anyone else. They will grow and flourish like a Palm Tree they will grow like the Cedar of Lebanon.

As we have already talked about the Palm Tree in the beginning of the day what does it mean to grow like a cedar of Lebanon? Well, these trees are mentioned about 70 times in the Bible, King Solomon loved them so much he





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made His temple out of them. They cut them and floated them in the sea as barges to bring them in. They are majestic trees some getting to over 100' tall, they are durable, disease resistant, and are even held in divine reverence as they were used not only in construction of Holy places but used in the keeping of the dead for the Egyptians.

The point of the text is you take the two tallest naturally growing plants in the middle east and when you look at those, you are to think that is what God's people are to be like. They grow tall when everything else in arid places grow short and bushy. They thrive even when other plants wilt and blow away. They overshadow the existing plants underneath them and then reproduce their spawn with no help from man but left to the Providence of God that if left alone would take over everything.

Family the character needed for flourishing this year is righteousness, so this year if you are a Christian there is nothing else you need other than to be made right with God in order to flourish; personal growth and fruit producing. But that also means the person that truly has put saving faith in God will also be a person that pursues God all the yearlong. Belief is always displayed by Holy living, they go hand and hand, you don't believe in a thing and act contrary to it. You believe in God then you pursue Him and that my dear friends is the person that flourishes. God does the planting, we receive the flourishing, and God gets all the credit!

2. The Place of Flourishing: Planted in God's House.

¹³They are planted in the house of the Lord;
they flourish in the courts of our God.

V. 13 shows you the place where the flourishing is to occur. There is a prime spot, there is a good place to be that helps the righteous person grow. The best spot is, **'in the house of the Lord'** or the **'courts of our God'**. This Psalm was written about 1000 years before Christ most likely putting it during the first monarchy, meaning that many believe this song should be credited to David. If so, we have to be careful not to eisegete our translation into the text. This is not an image of a tree growing out of the Temple/Kingly grounds



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for two reasons; first the temple had not been built yet, and secondly, Jews never considered the temple, nor the tent of tabernacle God's House. Those structures were merely touch points of God's presence in the world, a foot stool if you will.

While courts may put in your head more of a royal surrounding, like a king's court, the word here actually conveys protection by numbers like a cattle yard or fencing around a village. The meaning is that the righteous flourish when they are firmly planted among the people of God. That's it, the secret fertilizer if you will, the people of God growing among their own.

I have these very rebellious Apple Trees at my house. They fight with me all the time. It is easy to have a garden, but it is altogether another thing to try and get trees not to just grow but produce fruit, to flourish. The secret is you must have companion trees that are of the same species to be able to cross pollinate. During the spring while the trees are putting out their new leaves, they also put out flowers for fertilization and that happens only when compatible trees are close enough to pollinate. Where there is no like tree there is no fruit.

Family the meaning of the text and the multiple centuries of wisdom passed from David's time to us, if you are not planted among others of your own kind, you will not produce fruit. An apple tree will grow big in size but without other apple trees it will not produce fruit, of which when the Lord encountered that same situation with a fig tree He cursed it. It was a waste of the life it had been given.

Matthew 21:18-19 ESV

¹⁸ In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. ¹⁹ And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once.

Family let's just take this moment here to recognize that if in your life over the past year, if you have a hard time seeing fruit you should have produced, it



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may be due to your commitment to being around God's people. There are several types of fruit the Christian can produce.

Key Aspects of Christian Fruit

- **Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23):** The most direct description, focusing on internal character traits developed by the Spirit, like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
- **Good Works (Colossians 1:10; Ephesians 2:10):** Bearing fruit also means actively doing good deeds and contributing positively to the world and God's kingdom, empowered by God's strength.
- **Evangelism (John 15:16):** Jesus chose followers to "go and bear fruit—fruit that will last," often referring to bringing people to faith in Him.
- **Praise & Thanks (Colossians 1:12):** Giving joyful thanks to God and confessing His name is a form of spiritual fruit.

You may be thinking that's not just me though Pastor. I mean I follow Jesus, I like Him, but I find producing fruit to be a troublesome ordeal. My friend let me just say you may be laboring under a false assumption of your life.

John 15:16 ESV

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, He may give it to you.

The righteous are planted among God's people and they are planted to produce fruit that abides, lasts, remains, does not spoil. Family if you have had a hard time producing fruit this past year let me ask you a simple question for consideration, **Who have you been living for this past year?**

God does the planting, according to Jesus it was to produce fruit, so family if that has been a problem let me ask simply, who have you lived for this past year? When we live for God among His people the things we ask for are



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granted, because the things we ask for are usually for the good of the people. That is the fruit of a flourishing person.

3. The Duration of Flourishing: Fruitful to Old Age.

¹⁴ They still bear fruit in old age;
they are ever full of sap and green,

So, this concept maybe a little hard to grasp. It is not natural for us to think about being fruitful in old age. There is a natural decline in production in a number of areas as we grow older. The body begins to go, the mind is not as sharp as it was, one's energy level begins to diminish, so what in the world is this verse describing.

Well, while all the images thus far are compared to a physical world what the Bible is describing is the Righteous person's spiritual life as they grow, as one planted in the house of God. A Christian never stops growing until death, a Christian never stops producing fruit in their life until death, because that flourishing is of a **spiritual nature**.

As for personal growth, the amount of knowledge does not matter, it's not about how much you know, it is how you put to use what you know. Older Christians do this the best. They have a fruit that younger Christians do not have because it is a mature fruit that doesn't even get produced until later in life, and that is called **WISDOM**. An older person begins to understand how to read the Bible, how to apply it to their lives, sees their sin more clearly and fights it more aggressively. AND because they have been purified as silver and gold, they practice what they now preach. Christians never stop growing in this way they just get better as they age!

The fruit they produce as well becomes sweeter and more mature. When they love others, it is not as tainted with what they can get out of it. When they sacrifice for God, it is not so tainted with believing that God will give them more for good behavior. When they love others as themselves it is much more genuine and selfless. And the great thing about this, this is what the older Christian lives for, they want to die doing these things. That's what



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we all should want in this room, and that is the picture of this verse, we will die yes, but we will go out glorifying our God with our flourishing, for it is how He made it to be!

The challenge for my maturing Christians in this room is did you let 2025 trouble you enough that you took your eyes off the prize? The reward is not comfortable living in the now, the reward is sacrificial living enjoying the knowledge that you are disconnected from this world and waiting for the next. Let me encourage you along with myself, let us keep our eyes on the goal and give to the next generations the fruit seasoned with wisdom, and model lives that find their joy in being obedient to God's Word not personal desires.

4. The Witness of Flourishing: Proclamation of God's Goodness.

¹⁵to declare that the LORD is upright;
He is my Rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him."

This last part in this call to Flourish speaks to what's the point of all this. Family and friends, if you have ever wondered what '*is the point of life*', this is it!

What is it that the righteous proclaim through their flourishing? That's a life that is growing in two ways: growing always putting out new sprouts contributing to **personal spiritual health** AND producing fruit for the proliferation of the species or the church, **multiplying**.

Summary:

What is the point to the life that flourishes among people of like faith? That's growing corporately as believers becoming stronger together as the church, while increasing the numbers of the church, that is in the household/courtyard of God.

What's the point to as we age, we don't ever stop contributing but we actually get better at it? That's the fruit becomes sweeter, and the tree becomes even stronger before death?



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What's the point of all of this!? It is to **DECLARE**, inform, proclaim, to bring to public knowledge, that God is upright, **STRAIGHT**, that you were planted by Him on that Rock, and the reason for your growth is that the source of your strength, the LORD, is untainted, there is no unrighteousness in Him.

It points to His durability, stability, purity, strength, and self-invigoration, not yours. **You grow and get better with age because what you are growing from, by, and to, is an eternal source of life and that is why your Spirit shows eternity in the present.** You are growing from an altogether different source than the world and it shows in your life. It is to pronounce to the world there is a God, He is good, and in Him you too can find this well of life! It is to bring Him glory!

If you have ever wondered church what is the point to your existence it is to point to the goodness of your God, in the flourishing of your life, which is exactly what Jesus wanted for you!

John 10:10 ESV

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it **abundantly**:

Abundantly means exceptionally or more than you will need. **Jesus, the Servant of God, came for us so that we may Flourish for Him.** What's holding you back family? Let me close with some suggestions for you to get behind this year, in case you are still not sure where you may be missing the mark, but you know your past year wasn't really about flourishing.

[CALL TO OBEY]

- **Resolve to Faithfulness not Fruitfulness.**

You cannot force growth God brings that and He does it by your faith. We believe and we are imputed righteousness. The righteous person is the one that flourishes. We will not measure the health of our spiritual lives/ministry by visible success but by faithfulness to Christ, tenderness of conscience, and obedience to the hidden places of my mind.



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- **Resolve to finding joy in God Himself.**

All good work flows from a delight in Him. Each day we acknowledge our weakness before God, and we treat that weakness not as a hindrance to living faithfully, but as a doorway to connection with Christ and a place by which we enter into His strength. When we read the Bible, it is to search for answers, look for ways to repent, and relish in what it shows me about God and myself.

- **Resolve to Steward the Physical body with gratitude and discipline.**

The physical is not given to escape worldly demands it is given to engage with them. Let us therefore recognize it is not an inconvenience to ministry, but as a gift entrusted to me for faithful service, endurance, and physical presence.

- **Resolve not to numb pain but embrace it.**

Let us resist the temptation to numb pain through productivity, humor, technology, or busyness, choosing instead to bring sorrow honestly before the Lord.

MP:

God plants the righteous and their Flourishing proclaims His goodness.

Family, I pray you all find you have been imparted God's righteousness so that you may enjoy flourishing in His name this year in 2026.

Prayer

Communion

Mark 14:22-25 ESV

²² And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." ²³ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. ²⁴ And he



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said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Today when you eat of the bread remember the life of Jesus which was lived for us. He lived a life as righteous Palm Tree as a perfect Cedar of Lebanon, always growing and always producing fruit. He was cut down in His prime and yet it was still enough to earn us the righteousness we needed for flourishing. His righteous living we believe was lived out for us and by that faith we are saved. Praise be to Him for His commitment to the plan of Salvation.

Today when you drink the juice remember the cost of our sin displayed by His blood for the new covenant. His majesty, His glory, His righteousness was too much for sinful men to bear so He was cut down for the whole world to see. Yet, on a tree He was placed and in the act of ultimate human humiliation He turned that tree into the most prized of all symbols the Cross. By the blood that ran down its' trunk we are forever supplied eternal life through the forgiveness of sins. Praise be to Him for His everlasting love to God and to us!

[CONFESSION OF FAITH]. * The Congregation will stand.

Elder – **"Christians, what do you believe?"** Congregation - recites the LBCF 1689

Congregation - recites the LBCF 1689 Chapter 13. Of Sanctification.
Paragraph 1. All Who Are Saved Will Pursue Holiness

Through sanctification, the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed ³, and its various lusts are more and more weakened and killed. ⁴ Those who are sanctified are more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces ⁵ to the practice of true holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. ⁶

³. Romans 6:14; ⁴. Galatians 5:24

⁵. Colossians 1:11; ⁶. 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14



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[OFFERING+LAST SONG]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, that planted in the righteous that which was earned, perfected, and provided by Son.

Go in the name of the Son, who provided for us abundant life, that we may now flourish for God all the way until the end.

Go in the name of and power of the HS, that enables our flourishing by granting us faith in the Son, now go and share that fruit with a world in need!

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