

Matthew 5:1-12 (NKJV)

Mt 5:1 And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. **2** Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: **3** "Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **4** Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. **5** Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. **6** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. **7** Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy. **8** Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. **9** Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God. **10** Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **11** "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. **12** Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

When Jesus begins to speak, he starts with the word Blessed. Then he repeats that word 8 more times. And then he repeats the same idea with different words, rejoice and be exceedingly glad. I have been gripped with truth this week. I feel compelled to focus on it more before we go forward. Maybe it is because someone here might need to hear it. I know that I need to think it.

What would you think if I were to tell you that God's intention for your life, if you are a child of His, is to be **eternally gloriously happy**?

Let's think about that for a few moments.

If you have children and you love them, what do you want for them? Do we not often say we just want them to be happy? And as Christians we understand that their **happiness** needs to be based on a **faithful Christian walk**. But even in this, don't we desire and pray for their happiness? We **do not pray** for misery unless we are convinced that it is necessary for them to adjust their course of action so they can be happy.

All of us understand, even if we have never considered it intellectually, that we continually make decisions **primarily** based on what we think **will make us happy**. I came to Christ initially because I did not want to go to hell. Hell would make me eternally unhappy. I did not want to be unhappy for eternity. So what God offered toward my **happiness** was better than what life **without Him** held. I decided to follow Christ for my happiness.

Carla came to Christ because she believed that Christ loved her. That offer was one that appealed to her because she felt **the need** for that love. And she thought that love would make her happy.

We all have different stories, but if we reduce it down far enough, none of us came to Christ because **we desire to be miserable** and following Christ will make us miserable, but following Christ was more honorable than our own happiness. No, deep down we all pursue happiness, whether we admit it to ourselves or not. And we do it all the time.

Even as Christians, when we choose to sin, even though we may understand that our sin might punish us later, we want happiness now. We do not choose our sin because we **look forward** to God's **disfavor** or discipline, or because we like the **consequences** of our sin. We all make a foolish decision to pursue happiness by a means that God does not allow, and therefore that means will only serve to ultimately **make us miserable**.

What I am saying is that we all deeply desire our own happiness and we all orient our lives in that pursuit. It is a primary motivator.

Now somehow in the back of my mind I have held the idea that the pursuit of happiness, making decisions based on whether that thing will make me happy or not, is a **bad** thing, or at **best** a **mixed** thing. I have held this idea, (without really being clear about it), that a decision to follow Christ is more noble than a decision for my happiness. It is like a decision to follow Christ is **on a higher plane** than choosing for my ultimate happiness. I have recently come to believe that this is an inaccurate way of looking at things.

When God created us, He created us with the **capacity** for happiness. God created happy. He created us in a way that we would naturally pursue happiness and make our decisions accordingly. That in itself is not bad. It is part of being human.

The spiritual element of good and evil kicks in on **how we decide WHAT** will make us ultimately happy. Do we believe that ultimately God is the **source** of all lasting happiness, and that only the **happiness** we experience in **submission to His will** is worth pursuing? Or do we believe that we can better decide what will make us happiest **apart** from God's guidance? Do we have faith? Or do we have unbelief? You and I will all make hundreds of decisions today. And all of them can be traced back, in some form or fashion, to what we most believe will make us happy. Now what happens if we **do not believe that it is God** that will ultimately make us the happiest? Well, we might follow what God says because we know **we must do the right thing**. But following Him gives us little pleasure because we are

doing it grudgingly, with the suspicion that the world's way would actually produce more happiness for us.

Why else would we be tempted to be **envious of the wicked**. Think about it. If you know that the path you are on is leading to a **delirious happiness** one day. And up until that day we have **foretastes** of the happiness to come in Christ, if we really believed that, what do the wicked **get** for themselves that is not inferior to what we **already have**. Maybe they get the lion's share of money, sex and power. But if we understand God, if we really get who He is, all that stuff is child's play compared to what we **have now** and **will get later**.

Is that not all the reasoning from scripture? Where are we ever compelled to resist evil even though it offers us something good? No the reasoning is that we must trust God that **what He offers us** is always **better** than what the forbidden fruit offers. We are compelled by the reasoning that **God's way makes us happy**. The devil's way offers a thrill, but it is always followed by **anguish** of one form or another. Sin is simply deceptive.

What I am trying to get at is that it is important that we understand and believe that the beatitudes are directed to **human beings** who **desperately and continually** want to be happy and make all their decisions accordingly. And this God is telling them not only that He **intends** for them to **BE** happy but where this happiness is **really found**.

This word **BLESSED** is a powerful word because it strikes at the heart of what we as humans **want to be**. We want to be happy. We want to be in a **position** of happiness. We want to be in **mindset** of happiness. And ultimately we want to be in an **eternal circumstance** of happiness.

So the million dollar question being answered by Jesus before He goes on to anything else, is to tell us who the people **are** on this planet who are the **happiest**. I know that might seem far fetched. It might even seem sacrilegious. But I think that is only because we have not fully considered the implications of what God's word tells us about happiness. We have softened the words to where they do not mean what the original audience would have understood. Oswald Chambers did us no favors when he separated joy and happiness. And we have made the **pursuit of happiness** sinful instead of clearly defining the **pursuit of happiness apart from a relationship with Christ** as sinful.

God never intended humans to live their lives in ways where they decide against their own happiness. He only intends that they **trust God** to be the **source** of all those things that will ultimately make us happy.

If you see your Christian life as one **counter** to your own happiness, you do not have the fuel to live faithfully. God is calling you to happiness. And at its core is the happiness of God.

AW Tozer in the Knowledge of the Holy says this: **What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. No religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. The most portentous fact about any man is not, at a given time, what he may say or do, but what he, in his deep heart, conceives God to be like.**

I believe it is very important for us to understand what our God is really like in regard to happiness. It is scattered all through scripture. And yet somehow I have been missed much of it. Maybe you have too.

Let's look at some scriptures that are almost shocking when you consider them.

1 Timothy 1:11 (NKJV)

according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

It is very odd but many translations translate the Greek word used here for **blessed** as the word for **happy**, **EXCEPT** when it refers to God. When it refers to God they always use the word **Blessed**. There is no good explanation for that. It is the word that the Holy Spirit chose in both cases. But for some reason it seems unspiritual to say that God is happy.

1 Timothy 6:13-16 (NKJV)

I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, 14 that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, 15 which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.

See in vs 15- GOD who is the blessed and only Potentate

It is interesting to see what solid scholars, ones we tend to trust, have said of God's happiness throughout the ages.

Charles Spurgeon said of 1 Tim 1:11 **"The Gospel is the Gospel of happiness. It is called the glorious gospel of the blessed God. A more correct translation would be "the happy God". Well then, adorn the gospel by being happy."**

In 1 Tim 6:15 God is described as the **blessed** God. When we consider that means the **happy** God it makes more sense when it says 2 verses later that **God gives us**

richly all things to enjoy. A happy God wants to be the source of a happy people. That really is the gist of it.

If we just think about it even a little bit, we would conclude that God is inviting us into something **He already has**. How can that not be? We are created in His image. Part of that image is the capacity to have **traits** like **He has**. We have reason. We have emotion. We have a sense of moral rightness and wrongness. We have the capacity for joy, for happiness. All of these have been affected by the fall. But they reflect things about **our Maker**. How could God call us into **His happiness** if He Himself has none of it?

Where does happiness come from if not from God's own character?

John Piper says of 1 Tim 6:15

A great part of God's glory is His happiness. It was inconceivable to the Apostle Paul that God could be denied infinite joy and still be all glorious. To be infinitely glorious was to be infinitely happy. He used the phrase, "The glory of the happy God" because it is a glorious thing for God to be as happy as he is. God's glory consists much in the fact that he is happy beyond our wildest imagination.

Look what Isaiah said about Christ. Isaiah is clearly a prophecy about Christ.

Isaiah 42:1 (NKJV)

Isa 42:1 "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.

Several times scripture tells us that the Father draws attention to His son, with whom He is **well pleased**.

This is describing happiness. We would never think to separate these things. If you **delight** in a dear friend, that person makes you **happy**. When you see them **your heart cheers**.

Well Christ coexisted with His Father forever. Do we really think that one day the Father suddenly **changed** and was **all of a sudden** well pleased with Him? Of course not. The Father **was always** happy with the Son.

The fellowship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is the stuff happiness is made of. It can be no other. It is a joyful union. How can we imagine the wonderful qualities told to us about our God and **not** imagine that their fellowship is heavenly and full of joy, full of happiness.

Look at what scripture says of Christ's happiness.

John 17:13 (NKJV)

Jn 17:13 But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.

Look at whose joy Christ wanted the disciples to have. He wanted them to have **HIS** joy, His happiness, His delight. That is because **He already had it.**

John 15:11 (NKJV)

Jn 15:11 These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

Here we see that Christ makes it even more clear. He wants to **give us His joy**, the Joy He has, so that it can become **our joy**. We often think that God wants to make us more righteous, more obedient, more godly, but do we consider that he also wants to make us **happier**? That is clearly what He says.

Then look at this parable that Jesus told.

Matthew 25:23 (NKJV)

Mt 25:23 His lord said to him, 'Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

The word picture Christ uses here for the reward given to the faithful servant is clear. He is calling the servant to come into this **rich fellowship with the lord** in such a way that the lord's joy, which the lord **already possesses**, will be shared with the servant.

Think about this. Who do you like being with the most? Grumpy people or happy people? We sometimes want to think that people respond to us for different reasons than they really do. Most of the time, it is our actions and attitudes that create other people's responses to us. Rarely have they picked us out from all the people of the earth to have a bad attitude toward. We create responses in others largely by our actions toward them. And happiness is just one example.

Now who would want to be with a God that is only and always disapproving of them? No, we want to be with a **happy God** who wants us to share in that happiness. We want to go to a banquet where there is **celebrating**, not gloom and doom. And **is that not** exactly how God describes what He is **calling us into**? He wants us to have joy. But not only is it joy, it is **HIS** joy. It is joy that comes ultimately from Him. That necessitates that this joy **existed** before we did. Jesus is a happy God.

Have you ever considered how children gravitated toward Jesus? Why would they do such a thing? Do you ever see children run to greet grumpy gloomy

people? They might do that some, but not consistently. They gravitate to happy people. People who express their joy with them. It is always fun to watch Carla with our grandkids when they first see each other. That is the kind of thing that draws kids. It stands to reason that Jesus must have had that kind of draw. I am not at all trying to say that this is **ALL** Jesus was. But I believe we must understand it is **some** of what He is. If He is calling us into **His joy**, He must already possess it. And if **He has it** we can assume it is **greater than ours**. Isn't this a wonderful truth?

Does it scare you? Does it scare you because you think that since such a happiness is **available** that I must possess it, I must feel it, I must display it. And if I feel differently right now, then there is something wrong with me. It puts pressure on me. I am afraid that I must have that joy and I do not think I can do it.

The beauty of how we are made is that **we do not need to fear the blessings** that God has for us. If we will still our **hearts** of our **fears**, which scripture tells us to do constantly, we can **receive** these good things from Christ. He is not pressuring us to take these gifts. He is offering us this gift because He loves us. We do not need to fear our failure to possess them by our efforts any more than we need to fear not receiving our salvation because of our efforts. We receive them. And how do we receive them? The answer is always the same. We receive them by faith. We believe that Jesus would not lie to us. Our feelings do. Our fears do. Our perceptions do. Our world does. Our enemy does. But Jesus does not. If we fixate our minds on things that we fear, we feel fear. If we fear that this message from God is now a burden to us, now I must feel happy, but I cannot see that happening, guess what? Fear will be the result.

But if we will come to Christ in trust, in prayers and supplications with thanksgiving just being honest with God, we place ourselves in a spot where we are **free** to feel this happiness, we are **allowed** to feel this happiness. Emotions are not driven by our wills. They are driven by our beliefs. The answer to feeling right is not to try harder to feel something, it is to apply our minds to believing something. You never change your feelings by trying to feel differently. You change your feelings by thinking differently.

What wonderful truth we are about to study in the following several weeks. The sermon on the mount is like a neon arrow that says **Happiness is Here**. And it points to the beatitudes which are nothing more than the description of what a Christian is.

Now, maybe all of us are thinking at this point, but what about sorrow? What about misery? What about the pain I experience? I cannot pretend that this does not exist. I will not be fake. And that is all good. There is never a need for a believer to be fake in one's relationship to God. It is not a virtue to pretend something before God that you know not to be true.

So who should we go to in order to find out how to handle the relationship between happiness and suffering?

Well, as always, we must go to the expert at living the Christian Life- Jesus.

We know that Jesus was called a **man of sorrows**. He was acquainted with grief.

He wept real tears of sorrow. So what was life like for Him? Was it a mixed bag where if circumstances were good he had a **sorrow-less joy** but when circumstances were bad he had **joyless sorrow**?

That is not what scripture tells us.

What is the thing that Christ did that gave Him the greatest grief? Would it not have to be when He took **upon Himself** all our guilt, all those things that we recall in the middle of the night and regret so fiercely? Would it not be when He took upon Himself the anguish of our sin? Was the peak of His agony not when He called out to His Father,

this relationship that gave Christ eternal joy and provided for His Father eternal joy,

when Christ called out, My God My God Why have you forsaken me?

Would this not be the very ultimate of suffering? Would this not have been pain that we could not have withstood? Would this not be far worse than any life experience we will ever have?

How could this have anything to do with happiness? Does this not disprove everything that we have said so far? Is the Christian life not just lived with an underlying misery that matches the happiness?

Well look what scripture says about how Christ regarded this event. How did Jesus regard the misery? What was His mindset? Because that, for sure, is the mindset we should have.

Why did Jesus do that thing that would bring Him the ultimate of misery? He did it for a greater insurmountable joy.

Jesus did that which would make Him the saddest to have that which would make Him the happiest.

Hebrews 12:1-2 (NKJV)

Heb 12:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us,

and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Look at this.

Even Jesus made His decision for that which would make Him happiest. Did dying on the cross make Christ happy? Only a fool would think such a thing is true.

Dying on the cross dished out untold misery. It was awful.

But **why** did Jesus **do it**? For the **joy** it would bring about. For **happiness** that was to come.

Was Jesus happy on the cross? No. He was in agony. But Christ did not lose sight, in the **agony** He was experiencing, of the **happiness** He was headed for.

That is what faith does.

The Christian life involves all kind of suffering. Hurts hurt. They are supposed to.

There is nothing unspiritual in admitting that. There is truth in that reality. But the thing we must cling to by faith is that suffering is **temporary truth**. But joy is **eternal truth**.

When we fixate on the **temporary** we can make a wonderful rational case for how reasonable our conclusions are. We can excuse our behavior and our despondency on lots of available facts. We can be deceived by the temporary and allow them to be considered absolutes. But those are all **lies** to a believer.

Christ did not fixate on the temporary. He did not run from the pain. He was sane, so He did not desire the pain. But He desired what it would **produce**. And He **knew** what it would produce. He saw the joy that was coming.

Did Christ not **count it all joy** the way **we** are supposed to **count it all joy**? The bad was working out something wonderful. So we **reckon** that outcome while we are in the suffering. Is that not exactly what James says?

James 1:2-4 (NKJV)

Jas 1:2 **My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.**

Happiness is based on a truth that is **permanent**, it is **eternal**. We are the **happy** people. We are the **blessed** people. We are the people for whom this is true.

This is not true for our world. So when we suffer, we do not lose sight of this. By faith, we reckon that we are the happy people. There is a **reason** for joy in the greatest suffering. And we are to **cling to it** because we are clinging to the **goodness of God** when we do. We are making a statement about our God that

says He truly loves us and desires our happiness forever. That is the statement believers are to be making to the world. That is the kind of light we should be shining in this dark place. We are the only humans who have **permanent** reason to be happy that lasts through all the **unhappiness** of life.

If we believe that unhappy events in our lives are reason for despondency, like we have earned the right to have an unhappy life, we have not looked at Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. He suffered more unhappy events than we ever will. And He held on to **His hope of joy** through the whole thing.

And just one more thing. Look what the Joy Christ had consisted of. Really, what thing did Christ's suffering **accomplish**? Why was that suffering necessary? It certainly wasn't for Christ's sake. The suffering was to provide salvation for us. Do you see the implication here? To Christ, **having us with Christ forever** was worth what He went through. That is at least part of the joy that was set before Him. While He was dying on the cross He was looking forward to being with us for eternity. He kept the joy in view.

We talk a lot about our fallen-ness. And that needs to be clearly understood. We have no inherent virtue that deserved or earned Christ's love. But we also need to understand and incorporate this next truth. Christ's love for you, if you are a child of His, made it worth His while to suffer and die for you. **You are the reward He was dying to gain. You are the joy He was dying to gain.**

You talk about reason to be happy. You talk about the happiest people on the earth. **You are the reward He was dying to gain.**

God does not need us in order for Him to be happy. But it is clear all through scripture that God is pleased to have fellowship with human beings. We cannot say that it increases His happiness, but we can say that it is part of His happiness. That is truly what our Happy God is like. Fellowship with humans is pleasing enough for Him to sacrifice His Son to have it. And again we find our way back to seeing how salvation is all about God, and we are the happy participants. We will be learning more in the future weeks about the happy people.