

Sermon: The Pursuit of Happiness
 Scripture: Psalm 1-2
 Series: Psalms: The Songs of Jesus
 Speaker: Don Helton (don@harmonybiblechurch.org)

Date: October 23, 2016
 Campus: Danville
 Livestream: Burlington & Nauvoo

INTRODUCTION

- We all love music. On the count of 3, shout out your favorite band, singer, or song.
- Between now and New Years, we are going to be studying some of the Psalms in a series called, the Songs of Jesus. The Psalms are the songs Jesus sang for worship, but they aren't just the songs sung by Jesus, they are songs about Jesus. Turn or tap in your Bibles to Psalm 1.
- To give an introduction to this book, we have a video for you that we think you will find enjoyable and informational. It's from the great folks at the great ministry called the Bible Project. You can find this video and many more at their website: **[[SLIDE]]** jointhebibleproject.com or by searching around on YouTube. A few asides. This video is longer than most we show in a service, so settle in. We felt this was so helpful, fast-paced, and accurate that we couldn't hope to duplicate it effects merely by talking up here. Also, it is fast-paced and some of the text on screen is too small to see if you're seated far away. But don't worry about that. If you catch a fraction of this, you'll be doing fine. I certainly hope you will go online to watch this again as we continue for a dozen weeks or so in studying the book of Psalms.

[[VIDEO]] <https://jointhebibleproject.com/product/read-scripture-psalms-video>
 Easier to find by Googling: Bible Project Psalms

SERMON // The Pursuit of Happiness...The Path of Happiness...The Person of Happiness

[[SLIDE]] 1. The Pursuit of Happiness

- Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence. Our national DNA.
- Happiness the America Obsession. The USA ranks #25 in the developed world in happiness. 2 places behind Rwanda (Don Cheadle). Our happiness levels haven't changed since 1972. According to the World Health Org. we are #1 by a very wide margin at being anxious.
- "Blessed" in verse 1 at its most basic means "happy". The tense means that happiness is something you receive, not something you achieve.
- Peripheral Vision at Night. If you look right at it, it disappears. It feels like happiness is allusive. Where do we find it? We find it in the One who made us.
- **[[SLIDE]]** **"God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there." - C.S. Lewis**
- But people can have a hard time believing that God even wants us happy. With all the fun-killing rules He has for us and all the pain in the world, it could maybe seem that way. But this Psalm wants to point us to happiness and Jesus does too.
- **[[SLIDE]]** **Jesus in John 15:11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."**
- What he was getting at was that most of our unhappiness comes from how were are responding to situations with all the chatter in our heads, instead of teaching ourselves in those moments with truth. To put it another way, instead of letting our heart tell our head what to think, we need to let our head tell our heart what to feel.
- **[[SLIDE]]** **"God designed your emotions to be gauges, not guides. They're meant to report to you, not dictate you." (Jon Bloom).** Feelings are important because they let us know how we are doing and where we are. Our emotions aren't meant to guide us. For the path to happiness, we'll need to look in a different place.

[[SLIDE]] 2. The Path of Happiness

- What The Path Is Not (verse 1)

"Let me explain. No, there is too much. Let me sum up." (*Princess Bride*)
walks not in the counsel of the wicked / nor stands in the way of sinners / nor sits in the seat of scoffers
 Brain (intellect, advice) Behavior (habits, direction) Belonging (identity) ^cynic
 > Spiritual happiness is spoiled by unspiritual information, habits, and companions.
- What the Path Is (verse 2)

but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night.
 > We'll explore the idea of meditating on the Bible in a moment, but here's the big idea.
 > **[[SLIDE]]** **Your attitude and habits with God's Word determine your happiness.**
 > From Keller: Do you know what the godly person does? He delights in the law of God. Do you know what that means? He loves God telling him how to live his life... Day and night he's trying to find ways to have God tell him how to live his life.
 > "To a graceless neck the yoke of Christ is intolerable, but to the saved sinner it is easy and light... We may judge ourselves by this, do we love that yoke, or do we wish to cast it from us?" (Spurgeon)
 > If you're not happy in God's Word, you won't be happy in God's world.
 > If you are happy in God's Word, you will be happy in God's world.
- **[[SLIDE]]** **Joshua 1:8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.**
- What The Path Produces (verse 3)

It produces happiness – that is spiritual blessedness from God (vs 1) – but there is more: *He is like a tree, planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.* (see Jeremiah 17:7-8)
 > continually nourished, can withstand drought, strong, fruitful (not always but regularly), overarching success
- The Wicked Are Not So (verses 4-5)

> *chaff* – no root, no fruit / *wind drives away* – no strength, no stability
 > can't withstand judgment (they melt), they will be divided from the righteous
- The Conclusion (verse 6)

> *the LORD knows the way of the righteous* – knows, this is the word for relationship
 (see Matthew 7:23 *And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me...')*
 > *but the way of the wicked will perish* – eternal judgment for them, eternal life for those the LORD knows

HOW TO MEDITATE ON GOD'S WORD

- Meditate: to declare to yourself, to think, to moan, to growl, to mumble
- Chewing the cud (jolly rancher)
- Read. Re-read. Think about. Study. Memorize. Write it out. Take it with you.
- Day & Night
- You need truth to combat the lies, "the powerful and obnoxious odor of mendacity" (Cat on a Hot Tin Roof), of the world, Satan, and self. Respond to lies and fear with biblical truth and grace is muscle memory.
- **[[SLIDE]]** **Jesus in Mt 4:4 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'**
- How can you delight in the Law of the Lord? the Law, really? C.S. Lewis notes in his book on the Psalms, "Their delight in the Law is a delight in having touched firmness; like the pedestrian's delight in feeling the hard road beneath his feet after a false short cut has long entangled him in muddy fields."
- The Law provides focus and limitations. That's how you achieve much: in fitness, investing, school, hobby.

- **[[SLIDE]]** Jesus in John 15:10-11 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."
- A Personal Example: Memorizing Psalm 16 with my wife Charlotte

[[SLIDE]] 3. The Person of Happiness

- Since Psalm 1 & 2 are likely to be taken together, let's take a quick look at it. Remember when we call this series the Song of Jesus, we don't just mean songs that Jesus sang because the Jews sang the Psalms. We also mean that the Psalms, like all of Scripture, point to Jesus.
- Read Psalm 2, making brief comments along the way. Note that this is the Messiah (Anointed vs 2) and also God's Son (vs 7).
- **Your attitude and habits with God's Word determine your happiness. Your attitude and habits with God's Son determine your destiny.**
- Notice how Psalm 2 ends: *Blessed are all who take refuge in Him*. So again, we have the theme of happiness. This spiritual joy comes from those who take refuge in Him, but who is the Him of verse 12? It's the Son. What do we make of "kiss the Son"?
- Kiss the Son: This primarily has in mind the kiss of submission, where a dignitary receives the humble kiss of an inferior. It also hints at the affection God wants in relationship to Him. God wants us to recognize our proper place before Him, but to also rejoice in Him and be affectionate in our relationship. (David Guzik)
- So the Person of Happiness is the person who takes refuge in this King of Kings, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Anointed of God.
- It's about trust.
- **[[SLIDE]]** "Be happy in Him, O my heart, and in nothing but God, for whatever a man trusts in, from that he expects happiness." – *The Valley of Vision*

CONCLUSION

The pursuit of happiness has left many people depressed or angry or disappointed or anxious. It's so easy to think that happiness is something that you can achieve, when in reality it is something that you receive. Your attitude and habits with God's Word determine your happiness. If you are happy in God's Word, you will be happy in God's world. So meditate on it day and night with the view to discover where your life doesn't line up with God's good and loving laws. Rest in knowing that Jesus endured the cross for all the times our lives don't line up with God's commands. Receive salvation in knowing that the greatest command of God is to believe in His Son. *Blessed are all who take refuge in Him*.