

Are you happy? And I mean happy... not content, not just “ok”, not happy enough...but truly and deeply happy. The happy that is more than a feeling. That’s the “happy” I have in mind.

Are you that kind of happy? What does it take to be happy? Luck? Security? To love and be loved? Lack of problems, or at least sufficient resources to deal with problems of life? Is being happy an emotion? A decision? An attitude?

In the Bible, when we see the word “happy” it can be helpful to know that it is also sometimes translated as “blessed.” It has a different nuance; a more transcendent connotation than “happy.” Many people say it has a different “feel” from happy; more of a state of being than simply an emotion. Certainly a “blessed” person is going to feel happy as well as be blessed.

The Psalms has been called “The Prayer-book of the Bible” in that it is a collection of prayers, mostly in poetic form that would have been sung in worship. Oddly enough for a collection of prayers, the first three Psalms are not prayers. They are, however, instructions. They inform the reader/hearer in the proper use of the Psalms. Take Psalm 1 for instance. It is a reflection on the benefits of spending time and energy on divine truths. Here is the beginning of Psalm 1:

*1 Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked,*

*or take the path that sinners tread,*

*or sit in the seat of scoffers;*

*2 but their delight is in the law of the Lord,*

*and on his law they meditate day and night.*

*3 They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither.*

*In all that they do, they prosper.□□*

The Psalmist is reminding us that our happiness does not come from hanging with people who mock or make fun of others, but especially who make fun of those who take God seriously. Our happiness does not come from following a path of temptation and sin. And our happiness certainly does not come from taking our direction from wicked people. The Psalmist is very clear in telling us that happiness comes from “taking delight in and meditating on the Law of the Lord day and night.”

But what does that mean? Well, the Hebrew word (the language of the Psalmist) that is translated as “meditate” literally means to chew on or gnaw on something.

So the person that is happy is the person who chews on the Law of the Lord: the truth of God;

the truth of God's love, the truth of God's action in the lives and history of God's people, and the truth of God's calling of the people of faith to loving action in service to all God's people. The person who is happy is well nourished by God's truth and is not easily destroyed by times of trouble; is like the tree that grows by the river and is not harmed by a long dry spell. The person who is happy is one who has made a steady diet of the Word, chewed it well to get all the "good stuff" out of it and digested it so that it becomes who you are... the ultimate "You are what you eat." The happy, the "word/law fed people," are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper. They are strengthened and sustained by chewing on the truth of God.

But wait, there's more. The Psalm continues

*4 The wicked are not so,*

*but are like chaff that the wind drives away.*

*5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in judgment,*

*nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;*

*6 for the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,*

*but the way of the wicked will perish.*

The happy (Word/Law fed people) are strong and survive, but the wicked are "not so." They are not happy in that they have not digested God's word—they have not chewed on it enough to

get any of the good stuff out of it. Like the stone that passes through the digestive tract unchanged, it is as if God's truth has passed through them whole. So the wicked are like chaff that the wind drives away. My best visual of "chaff" is from when I was a kid. We would grow popcorn for our own use, and when it was ready, we would spend a Sunday afternoon shelling the kernels off the ears. There would be lots of chaff mixed in the shelled popcorn so my dad would take it outside and pour the popcorn kernels from one bowl to another, holding the first bowl high so the wind would catch the chaff. If it wasn't a breezy enough day he would turn on a fan. The heavy popcorn kernels would fall into the bowl and the chaff was carried off in the wind. Those who have not chewed on the WORD are malnourished and weak. They get blown around by any winds of change that come along. They have no substance and they cannot last through the trials and tribulations of life. They will wither in the time of crisis.

So happiness, or blessedness if you rather, is the result of a decision. It is not the decision to try to feel a feeling... because you can't create that with any authenticity, but the decision to discipline our lives: 1.

To chew on the Word for the deep nourishment of God's truth and 2. To not follow the ways of the scoffers, the sinners and the wicked. Those who are well nourished in God's truth can recognize sin for what it is: a lie. It is a tempting lie because it can sound good in the moment, but it does not last. So chew on the word, read it often—out loud, silently, in lots of different versions. Think about it, talk about it, sing it, pray it. Let it fill you with good things; substance, faith, depth, courage and strength.

Happiness to you from Pastor Karla

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