

Living the Good Life

Harmony M.B.C., December 31, 2017

Isaiah 55:1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Isaiah 55:2 Wherefore do ye spend money for *that which is* not bread? and your labour for *that which* satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye *that which is* good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

Isaiah 55:3 Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *even* the sure mercies of David.

Isaiah 55:12 For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap *their* hands.

Isaiah 55:13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign *that* shall not be cut off.

These verses are a scriptural summary of the experience of salvation and the potential for happiness through joy and peace. I want us to notice that the words are laid out in such a way that there is direction from God about entering in to this kind of life (vv. 1-3), then there are the outcomes when we embrace the newness of life with the spiritual vigor that it has the power to bring (vv. 12-13).

But, I want us to accept the fact today that not everyone who has professed salvation in Christ feels anything like what is described in verses 12 and 13 of our text. This is a fact we see all around us. We see professed believers that seem to spend most of their time in misery, or depression, or extreme stress, or a sadness that blots out any humor and wipes away any smiles.

- ❖ I see some of the Lord's people who remind me of Droopy the detective dog in cartoon days past and gone (describe depressed looking face of Droopy while saying "You know what, I'm happy.")
- ❖ The old Al Capp cartoons (L'il Abner) in the local paper used to show a guy named Joe Btfspk (name pronounced by sounding each letter) who went around with a rain cloud right over his head. Some folks must be relatives of Joe!

I believe these folks don't find much association between their condition and our text. They may actually be skeptical about whether this really is a possible spiritual

and emotional place for a Christian to be in. And, if a person's life continues in a Droopy attitude, you can't blame them for feeling that way.

In 2015, researchers reported that 11% of Americans over 12 years old take anti-depressants. This figure has gone up 400% in the last decade. This represents about 9,770,000 citizens. But, here's something even more sobering about Americans using chemicals to help them with emotional problems; to help them in their search for happiness: there are about 130 million Americans using alcohol, illegal drugs, or legal drugs to cope with emotional problems and stress. This is in a nation where the population of people older than 12 years of age is around 200 million. This is around 65% of this age group population. They are looking for peace and happiness, and guess what? They aren't finding it. This is the sad and terrible conclusion.

Today, I want us to explore the idea of discovering happiness, of having joy and peace, the idea of the very things of earth turning to our favor, and seeming to explode with singing and merry-making to the Lord. I hope today, we can see that even a thorn tree of troubles can become a beautiful evergreen of God's blessings, and a brier of pain can become a wonderful shade tree of comfort, spiritual delight and reason to rejoice in the Lord.

I. First, let's consider the source of true happiness, of joy and peace

- ❖ **Mat. 13:44** Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.
 - Treasure hunting is a pretty big hobby in the U.S. In fact, National Geographic had a TV series during 2013-14 called "Diggers" which featured amateur treasure hunters – lots of people like to think about finding treasure out there in the fields...but it is kind of upside down that people don't seem too interested in finding the treasure referred to here in Matthew.
 - This verse is about how discovery of the kingdom of heaven results in total commitment by the finder – it suggests that the awakening of salvation enables the receiver to realize the value of it and he then **gives up everything else to have it**. Notice that the **discovery of joy begins here**.
- ❖ **John 16:24** Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.
 - This reveals the process or pathway through which we can find full joy in Christ. Note that it requires us to ask in the name of Christ

- As a way of accessing the source (Jesus Christ) of all that can possibly give us this joy we need and want
- Everything that a believer is lacking in things that move him toward full joy can be gotten by asking the Lord
 - Sometimes the people of God act like the man in an old mystery tale who was found dead from thirst with his hand in the water of a lake!
- ❖ In **1John**, the apostle writes about having Christian joy, and tells us in verse 4 that he was writing his letter that our joy might be full.
 - What was he writing about (go to that chapter)? Answer: he was writing about the things that formed a bond between believer...he was writing about **Christian fellowship**...writing about it that believers' joy might be full.
- ❖ If we have taken ourselves to a place in our lives where we are not having ongoing fellowship with God through the Holy Spirit and not having fellowship with other believers through those avenues which are available to us, we live in a void where our joy can't be full
 - Psychologists tell us that some of the most emotionally disturbed people they work with are those people in the world are those who isolate themselves - withdraw themselves from family or friends that they could find identity with and find companionship with. This is doubly true for Christians if the isolate themselves from fellowship with God and His people. They become spiritual hermits.
- ❖ **Gal. 5:22** But the **fruit of the Spirit** is love, **joy, peace**, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,
 - This tells us that the joy and the peace we should be enjoying is the fruit of the Spirit.
 - Us boys who lived in Pottertown used to sneak into our neighbors big apple orchard to get apples. That old farmer would yell at us and chase us out if he saw us in there, but he knew we were going to sneak in there and get a few apples. But, when we went in there, we already knew which trees to go to, because we had been spying on those apples growing out there and we knew just where to get the biggest and tastiest ones.
 - Question: Is there one thing on this list like what is on this list: Sadness, sorrow, anger, resentment, moroseness, depression, despair, distress
- ❖ **Rom. 15:13** Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.
 - This bible fact shows us the source of joy and peace (filled with it by the God of hope) and the conduit (believing) through which it comes
 - Note also the outcome of having joy and peace: “abound in hope”

- Note also that we must be empowered by a source outside our human selves in order to have this (through the power of the Holy Ghost).
 - My wife and I get quite a bit of electricity from our solar panel setup. But, that whole conglomeration doesn't have any power in itself to give to us until the sun hits those panels. When that happens, the power surges up and we can draw on it.

II. Now, we need to move on and take a look at the idea of “Doing things wrong or looking in the wrong place for happiness, joy and peace”

- ❖ Do you remember in the book of John, Chapter 20 when Jesus appeared to the disciples out there on the lake fishing. They had been fishing all night and hadn't caught a thing. He asked them if they had anything to eat and they didn't. So, He told them to cast their net on the right side of the ship and they would find something. They did, and we know the story about how they caught so many fish the net almost broke. What had been wrong with their effort before that time? They were fishing in the wrong place. It wasn't the location ordained by the Lord.
- ❖ The first case of this: **Knowing and not doing: John 13:17** *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*
 - What things? **John 13:10** Jesus saith to him, *He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.*
 - What about our walk of life? We know how to behave, but are we behaving that way?
 - **John 13:11** For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, *Ye are not all clean.*
 - **John 13:12** So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, *Know ye what I have done to you?*
 - **John 13:13** *Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.*
 - What about our acknowledging Christ as Master and Lord? We say we do, but are we submitting to Him as Master and Lord.
 - **John 13:14** *If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.*
 - What about our service to one another. Are we really looking for ways to serve fellow Christians?
 - **John 13:15** *For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*
 - The bible is full of instances where Christ set an example of how we are to think and act. Are we following those examples?

- **John 13:16** Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.
 - Is our attitude toward our Lord what it should be? Have we examined our humility?
- ❖ **Next, focusing on the wrong things:**
 - **Rom. 14:17** For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.
 - I'm guessing that if you had made a statement like this to Esau that day he came in from hunting with his mind set on a bowl of lentil soup, he would have laughed you out of the tent!
 - There was a comedian named "Brother Dave Gardner" back in the 80s who once had a comic line like this: "Man cannot live by bread alone, gotta have a little peanut butter!" Now, I'm afraid that is about as far as some people go in their thoughts about the difference between basic necessities and spiritual food.
 - This statement by Paul in Rom. 14:7 is an exposition that shows us the difference between material and temporal possessions, pursuits and aspirations of humans and spiritual gain
 - We have to keep in mind that it is, and will be, the things of the kingdom of God which give believers true peace and joy...and true peace and joy are only found in the things of His kingdom.
 - **1John 2:16** For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.
1John 2:17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.
 - What a lot of folks never learn is that going after things that we desire to have as humans, trying to get hold of material possessions and things that make our flesh feel good, shiny, pretty, desirable things our eyes see that make us say, "I want one of those!" will never give us joy and peace, calmness of soul, happiness, and satisfaction for the hunger that lies within a believer.
- ❖ Last, **violating conscience: Rom 14:22** Hast thou faith? have *it* to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.
 - I've had...and maybe you've had professed Christians say, "I know it's wrong, but God is just going to have to forgive me, because I'm going to do it anyway."
 - Our consciences have a way of giving us guidance. The conscience in a renewed person is a personal trainer. It uses the word of the Lord and the movements of the Holy Spirit to steer us toward right actions and steer us

away from wrong ones. When we defy our renewed conscience, it will make us feel the condemnation placed up such actions and it can make us sad, it can make us depressed, it can cause us stress and bring unhappiness.

- On the other hand, when we find our renewed conscience approving of what we are doing, it brings happiness.