

Searched by the Psalms

Happiness in Jesus Christ

**Ps 1, Matt 5:1-12, and Gal 5:1 & 22-25
(Hymns – chosen by BTPC)**

God wants us to be happy.
That is my conviction.
Jesus Christ came to bring a salvation
that brings true happiness to human beings.
Our gratitude and thanksgiving
for that marvellous gift of grace
is expressed in living the life modeled by Jesus Christ.
We are to be a blessing to all we encounter
in every dimension of our lives.
True Christian happiness is found in living a Christ-like life.

Our Scriptures this morning help us understand what that means.

Psalm 1 outlines what creates a blessed or happy life.
The teaching of this Psalm is found
throughout the wisdom literature in the Bible.
The basis of a happy and rewarding life
Is rooted in a personal relationship with the living God,
the God who created, redeemed, and sustains the universe.
We Christians believe that God is seen most clearly
in the work and teaching of Jesus Christ.
The essence of his teaching is found
in many of the worlds religions and ethical philosophies,
but there is something unique about the Christian way to happiness.
We believe that there the divine energy
that created all that is
has chosen a people to work with him
in continuing to create and bless.
That people is the Church of Jesus Christ,
embodied in congregations like this and Brentwood
around the world.
These people have been touched by the grace and mercy of God.
They have received the gift of forgiveness and grace.
They have been freed to find happiness in blessing others.

The Psalm uses a powerful image
to remind us how God's gift of blessing and happiness works.
We are like a strong, flexible trees at the side of a river.

God's grace is like the water that gently and generously
flows past our roots continually
nourishing us to be fruitful and helpful
to all those who pass by
in search of nourishment or shelter.

But what qualities of personal character and behaviour
lead to this kind of happiness?
No better list can be found than the one in Paul's letter to the Galatians.
Paul begins this chapter
with a resounding affirmation that Christ has set us free
to be God's people.
We are free to witness to the happiness and blessings
to be found in relationship with Jesus Christ.
We are free to model that happiness in everything we do.
By God's grace through the gifts of God's Holy Spirit,
we live in Jesus Christ.
That life is characterized by
love, joy, peace,
patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, humility, and self-discipline.
To live these values and bless others through them
is to find happiness in Jesus Christ.

What often keeps us from living these values is fear –
fear of failure, fear for our safety, fear of embarrassment,
fear of those who think and act differently,
fear of dying.

But in Jesus Christ we see most clearly
the love of God that casts out fear,
that frees us to live courageous lives that bless
God, others, and ourselves.

Over this next year, I will have the privilege
of teaching the youth in grades 7-12 of this congregation
once a month in their Sunday School class.
We will allow the Holy Spirit to provoke us with the parables.
We will choose 10 of the parables that Jesus taught
and explore together how they help us lead lives
of blessing and happiness.

But if our children are going to believe Jesus' message,
they will have to see it believed and practiced by their parents and elders.
They will have to see us taking these qualities of living
as seriously as God does in the life of Jesus Christ.
We will have to make them a topic of conversation in our homes
and a pattern of behaviour in our lives in the community.

The Beatitudes are the sermon with which Jesus began his public ministry.

The Hebrew word for *happy* or *blessed* is *asre*.
The Greek word is *makarios* and is used throughout the Beatitudes.

Happy or Blessed are those ...

- ... who know they need God and his kingdom
- ... who are sensitive enough to mourn when things go wrong
- ... who are humble in their attitudes and behaviours
- ... whose greatest desire is to do God's will
- ... who are merciful to others, as God has been to them
- ... who are pure in their intentions and actions
- ... work for peace
- ... who suffer because they are faithful to God

Live like this, and you will be happy and glad.

That, in summary, was Jesus' first sermon,
filled with divine wisdom, grace, and truth.

A few years ago, the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan
produced a wonderful document and graphic
to focus its attention on the elements of a healthy church.



[project this graphic on the screen]

Drawing from the image of the church as the body of Christ
in Ephesians 4,
they talked about the growth of an organic body
as it spread happiness and blessing in the service of Jesus Christ.

There are six dimensions of this holistic mission
in any congregation or partnership of congregations:

- Proclaiming the Gospel – this involves the salvation and renewal of every aspect of human life, our personal, communal, social, economic, and political selves
- Nurturing God’s Children – this is the formation of the spiritual values of happiness for both those inside and outside the church
- Serving with Love – follow the example of Jesus in serving all he encountered
- Transforming the Society – transform the human conditions we find in our society to achieve justice, peace, and flourishing
- Caring for God’s Creation – actively preserve the environment and ecology of our planet as God’s faithful stewards
- Gospel and Culture – have the courage to challenge and change those aspects of our culture that are not true to the Gospel – use our gift of creativity in God’s service

This is a moving and inspiring vision
of what happiness in Jesus Christ
looks like when embodied in a congregation and a church.

This is what we are working towards together
here at Brentwood and Burnaby Taiwanese.

This is what we are inviting Ya-Tang to join
and bring his gifts to help grow
as we seek to flourish in our common faith in Jesus Christ.

And we can be confident that
our respective trees are being constantly fed for happiness and blessing
by the streams of God’s grace and love in Jesus Christ.

May God richly bless our partnership
in generating happiness and blessings in Jesus Christ.

Written and preached by the Rev. Dr. Brian Fraser
Minister with Brentwood Presbyterian Church
Burnaby, BC
www.brentwoodpc.ca

Sept 5, 2010