

Elusive Contentment

Good Morning!

Today we are going to look at contentment.
Please turn with me to Philippians 4:4-12a. NIV

Here we are joining the apostle Paul as he sits in prison and writes to the church at Philippi.

“And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me--everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

Now I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this out of need, for I have learned to be content regardless of my circumstances....”

Let's look at a couple of things here... Paul tells the congregation to focus on several keys to contentment:

- The truth
- Things that are worthy of Honor
- Things that are correct in the sight of God
- Things that are pure
- Things that are lovely
- Things worthy of admiration

Paul tells them to follow what he has preached to them and has told them that in so doing the peace of God will be evident in their lives.

Then we see Paul being gracious to the congregation because in modern English what he is saying is:

Thanks for finally remembering me. This fills me with joy and I appreciate your concern. Unfortunately, you didn't have an opportunity to help me. I am not currently in need, because I have learned to be content regardless of what is happening to me in this life.

Paul is saying that although he is in prison and his situation is dire, it doesn't matter because he has learned to tie his contentment to his faith and not his circumstances.

This morning, I am putting out some questions for you to consider. Ask yourself:

- Am I content or dissatisfied?
- Am I content or anxious?
- Am I content of feeling unfulfilled?

If you are not feeling content this morning there are many factors as to why.

Perhaps this morning:

- You are grieving
- You are in pain from a physical ailment
- Your marriage is on the rocks
- Your finances are in shambles
- Your job isn't making you feel fulfilled
- You simply look at everything from a negative perspective
- Your family member is ill
- You feel fat or your body image makes you feel inferior

In short, there are a myriad of reasons why someone will feel discontentment... What makes it even harder is that our culture promotes it. It is part of consumerism. If you think about most Ad's, social media, TV programs, some movies etc, you will find a common theme...

That theme is:

- We don't have enough
- We deserve more
- Everyone is living a better lifestyle than you
- If you just manage to acquire X you will be happy

Are you content this morning with:

- Your house – is it great or do you want something better?
- Your Job – does it meet the need or must you have that promotion?
- Your Status – do you have the prestige you need to make you feel important?

What brings you joy?

When I was a martial arts master instructor, I used to come into the school, which was called a Dojo or Dojang and a class was in session, the whole class and the current instructor would stop the class and say: "Saboom ge ha tye yo, kinje" and bow to me. At first this was a real ego boost and I felt honoured and that I had arrived. I was respected. That year I was asked to participate in the half time show for the grey cup game. I felt on top of the world.

Soon... I came to realize that the majority of the people weren't bowing because they respected me, they were bowing because it was what they had to do to get to where I had. It wasn't bowing for my accomplishment or honor, it was because of what I

could do for them instead of who I was. It wasn't because they respected me, It was because I could give them a black belt.

Next, it was apparently obvious that there were other schools and other master instructors who had advanced beyond my level and quite honestly had superior skills. Soon I discovered that no matter how much I did or how hard I worked there would always be someone better and so I became dissatisfied with myself. I discovered that no matter what I had achieved or the honors granted to me, It was never going to be enough. It was never going to fill the need. 16 years of my life invested to be content with myself and it was not going to meet the need.

Next I changed occupations and thought that if I had lots of cash and a good job... Well, you get the idea. No matter what I did or accomplished it was never enough.

Recently, I was with a young man who is doing very well for himself. He is 26 and the foreman in the Heavy Duty Mechanic shop of one of the local companies. He was making over \$200k which is quite respectable from most persons point of view. He was excited when I visited him and he showed me his new Razor quad and his toy haller with 9' ceilings...

His dad came over and he was beaming to show his dad what he had bought. He father walked around the trailer with him and pointed out all the things that were inferior to his trailer. That young mans countenance fell. He later confided in me that all he wanted was his dad's approval. He worked hard, got a good job, bought a nice toy or two and wanted his dad to say well done son. His happiness and contentment fled because of a few words from his father.

This morning where are we putting our treasure?

Matthew 6:19-21 says:

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Are we being deceived by consumerism and the rewards of this world or are we looking to be content with the eternal?

We all like to have nice things and that's okay, but where is your joy coming from?

Scripture has told us that where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

I put my treasure in getting others respect... Then in money... Then in job position and so on... This morning I can tell you that no matter what stuff you have or don't

have. No matter what job you have or don't have. Getting it is not the answer. True happiness comes from finding our contentment in the eternal.

I would love to drive a Ferrari or have a new side by side quad, but life and insight from the Holy Spirit has taught me that although that would be fun it is transient.

When I compare my life to others, contentment becomes ever more elusive.

So... I have told you of the road to discovery this morning, but what have I learned though God's guidance:

- Don't delude myself – Speak truth to myself no matter what
 - Our hearts and emotions can mislead us
 - For example: Let's say one is down and says to himself: "My wife doesn't love me" now I can either let my emotions talk to me or I can speak to my emotions. You may not always feel like she loves me but I know for a fact that she does. I need to tell my heart what is true. If we allow our emotions or feelings to override the truth we find ourselves in a miserable state.
- As a Christian, I need to live by the truths I have had established in my heart through the reading of Gods word instead of always relying on the feelings I feel.
 - This is more than just remembering what God's word says it is living it.
 - For example: Let's say I didn't feel that Julie loves me. Pretty soon I would start to be resentful and talk to her rudely and perhaps be unkind because I believed what my emotions were telling me. I would be choosing fear over faith because I did not speak truth to myself. I would live in the fear that she doesn't love me and so I would be living in a lie of my own creation.
- As a Christian, wherein do I place my hope, in my self, in my accomplishments, in my wallet? If in any of these places when I feel overwhelmed or downtrodden by circumstances, It would be overwhelming... So where do I place my hope:
 - Not in my Successes

- Not in my Finance
- Not in my Stuff
- Not even in myself
 - So where: Every single one can fail as I have already shown this morning. If I try and it fails, my foundation is rocked because it is built on nothing more than worldly sand.
 - I must place my hope and joy on a foundation of immovable rock. That rock being my faith in Jesus. Remember that old but precious hymn. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand...

- Let me ask you this morning, have any of you ever heard of St. Augustine? He was born the 13th of November 354ad In 386ad he became a Christian and was baptised. He said something so profound that I believe it is relevant here this morning. He said: “only love of the Immutable (unchanging) can bring tranquility” and a modern author named Tim Keller is profound in finishing the thought, he said: “There is one thing that is immutable. It is God, His presence and His love. The only love that won’t disappoint is the one that can’t change, that can’t be lost, that is not based on the ups and downs of life or of how well you live.”

- How do you remain content in every situation?
- Tie your contentment and joy to your faith and not your circumstances

Let’s close with looking down a bit lower in Philippians 4 to verses 12&13

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

We find strength and contentment in Jesus.

Prayer

