

Pentecost 18; October 9 & 10, 2022

1 Timothy 6:6-16

What would make you happy, like really happy? If you were asked and you didn't have to admit it out loud, what would you say? Would you be happy if you had a little more money? What about a full head of hair? Would you finally be happy if you got a promotion or if your grandkids called you more often?

For most of us, happiness is a concept that's off in the distance. We're here. It's way out there. To find happiness, we try out different bridges to reach it. Have you ever tried a diet or gone shopping? Have you ever tried to plan the perfect holiday family dinner, and have it turned out like the Griswolds in Christmas Vacation? Have you ever had the perfect vacation planned, only to be ruined by cancelled flights? Have you ever had the picture in your mind about how retirement would look like, only to have it changed by health problems?

Are you happy? Theoretically, we should be happy. Correct? God has blessed all of us with so much. Most of us have a place to live. Most of us own a car, maybe even more than 1. Most people have a job if they wish to work. We look at what we have, and theoretically, we should be happy. Picture this scene in your head. As you were growing up, your parents placed a plate of peas, or broccoli in front of you and said that you should eat. It's good for you. You said that you didn't like that vegetable and weren't going to eat. Then they pulled out the trump card: *"You should be grateful for the food you have, after all, there are kids in Africa who are starving. Eat your peas."* Your parent's intentions might have been good. They wanted you to be thankful for the food you have. Yet, those peas were not going to make you happy.

Are you happy? Happiness is kind of this elusive thing that hangs in front of us like a carrot on a stick. We seem to just keep chasing happiness, and we just don't seem to get there. Maybe that is the picture that Paul is painting for us in the words of our text this morning. Paul begins: **"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that."** Maybe the problem is that we are looking at the wrong thing. Maybe instead of looking for happiness in everything, we should be looking at how we can be content. In order to see how we can be content; we need to start at the beginning.

"We brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it." When we came into this world, we had nothing. We were a helpless little baby. We couldn't feed ourselves. We couldn't change our diapers. We couldn't crawl into bed or out of it. The only way that we could communicate is to scream as loud as we could. We trusted our parents, even if they weren't perfect, we needed them. Somehow, they figured out what we needed. The same thing is true with God. He knows what we need. He gives us what we need. However, we live in a world that tries to convince us that we don't have what we need. Whether that advertising is found on TV, on the radio, on our computer screens, there are companies that are spending millions of dollars to convince us that we don't have everything that makes us content. We need more.

Instead of looking at what we don't have, let's take a few minutes to look at what we do have. Paul writes: **"Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called."** Paul's point is simple. We already have the greatest treasure in this world. We have him. He gives us eternal life. He did that by sending his Son to die on the cross for us. We have something that no one or anything can take away from us. We have Jesus. Because we have Jesus, we can **"fight the good fight of the faith."** Yet, we forget that at times, don't we?

The devil wants us to forget that. So, what happens? We have sleepless nights. We worry about a whole host of things in our lives. We think that we have to solve all the problem of the lack of contentment in our lives. Where do we look? **"Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."** First, let's be clear. Money is not a bad thing. It can be a very good thing. God gives us blessings in our lives to enjoy. However, if we think that money alone can buy happiness, we will always be disappointed. We will never have enough.

Yet, we also need to recognize that the things that we have in our lives are not ours. They belong to God. He gives us those blessings to use. We need to be grateful to God for those things that money can be. How do we use money? We

support ourselves and our families. We use it to enjoy God's blessings. We use it to support his work in the church. We use it to bring that message of the Gospel to people who don't know it through the work of the church. We use it so that our families, our neighbors and our friends will be standing next to us in heaven. Yet these words of Paul remind us just how easy it is to take the good things that God gives us to use in very God-pleasing ways and put them above God. God knows how easy it is for us to make idols out of things that are good. When that happens, let's remember who our God is. This is **"the King of kings and Lord of lords"** that is promising to go with us on our journey of life.

So, we'll start where we began. Are you happy? It depends, doesn't it? Or does it? Happiness often centers around the circumstances of things happening in our lives. Think of Peter. Jesus shows up and asks Peter to walk on water to come to him. At first, Peter does it. As he focuses his attention on Jesus, he is doing something that is quite impossible. But then, Peter begins to notice the waves and starts to sink. Ever do that? Instead of looking to Jesus for hope and peace and ability, we get distracted by the waves (the circumstances) that are around us, and we lose contentment. I don't think that we do that on purpose. But real life is messy. Some days there are real challenges that we face. If we don't have an anchor holding us in place, we find ourselves drifting aimlessly.

We may not always be happy in life, but Jesus promises contentment. He promises that he will always be with us. The key to contentment is recognizing that we are just too weak by ourselves to find it. But our Savior is not weak. Things are not always going to go our way, but it will go God's way. So, hold on to Jesus. With him, we can **"fight the good fight of the faith."** With Jesus we can **"take hold of the eternal life to which (we) were called."** May God grant it. Amen.