

## WHATEVER MAKES YOU HAPPY

Matthew 5:3

July 20, 2008 Sunday am

### INTRODUCTION

- A. Psychology Today magazine polled 52,000 Americans asking them what would it take to make you happy. Some of their answers included...More friends, better social life, better job, success, more money, bigger house, more attractive looking, marriage, parenthood, and so forth.
- B. How would you answer that question? What would it take to make you happy.

### I. THE WORLD SAYS THAT HAPPINESS IS AN “OUTSIDE” JOB.

- A. We're happy, according to the world, when our circumstances are right.
  - 1. This might be called “when and then” thinking.
  - 2. For example....
    - a. When I get out of school, I'll be happy.
    - b. When I get a good job.....
    - c. When I get married....
    - d. When I have kids.....
    - e. When the kids leave home....
    - f. When I retire....
- B. Solomon tried all of the pleasures, wealth and accomplishments the world can offer and reached the conclusion these aren't where happiness can be found—Ecc. 2:17.

### II. THE BIBLE SAYS THAT HAPPINESS ISN'T AN OUTSIDE JOB, ITS AN “INSIDE” JOB.

- A. In other words, happiness doesn't depend on right circumstances, but right thinking.
  - 1. This means that being happy isn't determined by what's “around” us, but what's “in” us.
  - 2. Happiness isn't determined by how much we have, but who we are.
  - 3. Happiness, then, is a choice, not a circumstance.
- B. Jesus says all this in the opening lines of what we call “The Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew 5-7).
  - 1. Why would he talk about happiness first? Because it was on everyone's mind then and still is today.
  - 2. The first eight statements of Jesus' sermon are called “beatitudes”. This is a Latin word that comes from the word “blessed” at the beginning of each statement.
  - 3. “Blessed” is an Old English word meaning “happy”. So Jesus is telling us how to be happy.
  - 4. Why would Jesus want us to be happy? Because God is happy—1 Timothy 1:11. “the happy God”.
- C. For the next several weeks let's consider how we can be happy according to Jesus.
  - 1. We start with verse 3 (READ).
  - 2. What does it mean to be poor in spirit?
    - a. It doesn't mean having a poor self image or low self esteem.
    - b. It means to recognize and acknowledge our dependence on God.
    - c. The Amplified Version translates it as “humility” or “humbleness”.

### III. HOW CAN HUMILITY INCREASE OUR HAPPINESS?

- A. First, humility reduces our level of stress.
  - 1. Its not easy being the center of the universe and when we stop pretending we're God our stress level goes down.
  - 2. We do this by acknowledging our need for God.
  - 3. When our stress goes down our happiness goes up.
- B. Second, humility improves our relationships.
  - 1. No one likes to be around a “know it all” or self-centered person.

2. Humility doesn't mean we think less of ourselves but that we think of ourselves less. This happens when we think of other people more often than we think of ourselves.
  3. When we become more interested in others we become more interesting to others.
- C. Third, humility releases God's power in us—James 4:6.
- D. How can we stay humble?
1. Whenever someone said something complimentary to St Francis of Assisi he would ask another monk to remind him of all his faults. Remember, monks aren't married!.
  2. Its really not our spouse's job to keep us humble. Ruth Graham once said of her famous evangelist husband Billy, "Its my job to love Billy, its God's job to keep him humble."

## **CONCLUSION**

- A. God wants you to be happy because he is happy.
- B. We all want to be happy, but many of us are either looking in the wrong places or have adopted that "when and then" kind of thinking.
- C. Jesus tells us how to be happy in his Sermon on the Mount. The first step is to be humble.
  1. Humility reduces our level of stress.
  2. Humility improves our relationships with others.
  3. Humility releases God's power in us.
- D. Let's take the first positive step toward happiness by learning to be humble.