

Sunday Morning Message

November 24, 2018

What Makes You Happy

Text – Acts 26:1 - 23

Congregational Reading – Acts 26:1 - 2

Introduction

The Apostle Paul was thrilled on this particular day because he was given the opportunity to share with King Agrippa II (*see note below) and his wife, Bernice, the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me back up a little bit and provide a little context to the story. Back in Acts 21, we learn of Paul's arrest in Jerusalem, being accused of the Jews of bringing Gentiles into the Temple, which was a false accusation. The chief captain of the Roman Guard, Claudius Lysius, after hearing that some of the Jews had covenanted together to execute Paul, delivered him to Caesarea to protect him, and also to bring him before Governor Felix. Felix holds on to Paul for two years, but had the opportunity himself to hear the gospel story and Paul's testimony. When Festus becomes the new governor, he attempts to bring Paul back to Jerusalem to re-try his case before the Jewish religious leadership. But, Paul would have none of it and instead appealed his case to Caesar, which he had the right to do as a Roman citizen. Before he leaves Caesarea, however, he is given the opportunity to witness to King Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus.

Paul's life was consumed with sharing the message of salvation with people. Paul was constantly rehearsing his testimony to whoever would give him an audience, and this made him very happy. It is interesting that a Spirit-filled Christian like Paul receives such joy out of sharing his faith and influencing people regarding salvation. Most of us are only happy when we are receiving tangible rewards or positive circumstances, but not Paul. Paul was in prison, but as long as he was telling people about Jesus, he was very happy.

Happiness Is Not Found In Circumstances

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;" (James 1:2)

Read Acts 16:11 – 25 – Here Paul was filled with joy in the midst of very negative circumstances.

Read Matthew 5:1 – 12 – The word, “blessed” (μακάριος - *Makarios*), means “o how happy.” Notice that Jesus said that these various people in Matthew five were happy even in the midst of negative circumstances.

Happiness is Found in Fulfilling A Purpose

There are two great mandates given to man, each one given at the very beginning of each testament. The first is given at the beginning of the Old Testament.

Dominion Mandate

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." (Genesis 1:27-28)

This mandate is given to all of humanity and includes populating the earth and being good stewards of its resources. This mandate is very broad, and it would include such things as making sure that people have enough to eat, and that they are healthy. It would also include maintaining order in society through laws.

In George Peters book, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*:

It includes the natural and social aspects of man such as habitat, agriculture, industrialization, commerce, politics, social and moral order, academic and scientific advancement, health, education and physical care. In simple words, it is the qualitative and quantitative improvement of culture on the basis of the revelational theism manifested in creation. Such culture was to benefit man and glorify God. The Bible expresses it in the following terms: to populate, to subjugate, to dominate, to cultivate, and to preserve (Gen 1:28; 2:15). Here are the basic concepts and directives for an ordered and progressive society based on principles of sound morality and ethical monotheism. The Bible does concern itself with social and cultural welfare. It has ethical principles for society and nations which form the cornerstone of God's judgment of the nations. It is man's responsibility to build a wholesome culture in which man can live as a true human being according to the moral order and creative purposes of God.¹

Fulfilling this mandate by making earthly life better for the people living on this earth will produce joy and happiness. Helping people is definitely something that is good for all of us as humans to be involved in. Doing our part to see that people are fed and clothed and warm is a good thing. Making sure that we do not exhaust or destroy the natural resources that God has given us is wise, and it will make life better for people.

¹ George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1972), 166–167.

Great Commission Mandate

While the Christian is still responsible to fulfill his role in the first mandate, his ultimate purpose comes in fulfilling the second mandate – the Great Commission. The Great Commission involves reaching people with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel is the good news message that *"... that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures"* (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). The gospel is the central, foundational message in the Christian faith. It is the main thing. People who have put their faith in the message of the gospel are saved people, they have passed from death unto life; they are new creatures in Christ; they are going to Heaven when they die.

The Great Commission is found in all four of the gospels and in the Book of Acts:

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matthew 28:18-20)

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."
(Mark 16:15)

"And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24:46-47)

"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." (John 20:21-23)

Note – Christian do not have the power to forgive sins, but we have been given the privilege of communicating the message of salvation to a lost and dying world.

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

The church's primary responsibility is obedience to Christ's Great Commission through the propagation of the gospel message. We offer people the hope of eternal life when we tell them that Jesus died for them and that they need to put their faith in Him.

Conclusion

Paul stated to King Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus that he was “happy” because he was given the opportunity to tell them about what Jesus did for him on the road to Damascus.

Practical Note – Don’t compliment the central message of Christianity.

All of us are sinners.

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. ... For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" (Romans 3:10-18, 23)

All of us are deserving of eternal judgment for their sins, ultimately in the Lake of Fire.

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

Christ came to earth to die for our sins. He died and suffered in our place.

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:" (1 Peter 3:18)

He offers eternal salvation to all those who put their faith in Him.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:16-18)

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ... For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:9-10, 13)

Living for others by trying to make their earthly life a little better is a good thing, and it will give you a degree of happiness to do it, but if you want to be completely happy, and filled with joy, take it up another notch and tell people about Jesus. Do what Paul did, give people your testimony. How did God save you? How did God communicate the gospel message to you?

Many Christians today are anything but happy, even though we are, for the most part especially in America, living very luxuriously. Perhaps, we should try doing what Paul did to amuse himself: witness to people. The good news of salvation is the greatest news on the planet, and there is no greater joy than sharing that news with someone who will listen. We may not see everybody that we speak to trust Christ as Savior, but we will receive joy knowing that they have the information they need in order to make that decision. Soul winning will make you happy. Try it today!