“The First Step to Happiness”, Don't Worry - Be Happy! Part 1 of 8 – September 8, 2013 at SBC

 Matthew 5:3-12 & Ecclesiastes 2:1-26

What would it take, to make you happy? They asked that question, to 52,000 Americans, in *Psychology Today*. These were, their answers: friends, or social life; better job; being in love; recognition and success; personal growth; good financial situation; having a bigger house; being attractive and beautiful; my religion; recreation and exercise; being a parent, marriage; your partner's happiness.

The interesting thing, about this, . . . is that most of the attempts, to find happiness, are through, . . . external situations, . . . instead, . . . of internal.

The popular idea, of happiness, is this: having the, right circumstances. It's "when, and then", thinking. "When I get out of school, then, I'll be happy." "When I get a job, then, I'll be happy." "When I get married, then, I'll be happy." "When I have kids, then, I'll be happy." "When the kids leave home, then, I'll be happy;"

The classic chapter, . . . on the search for happiness, is Ecclesiastes 2. Solomon, in verse 1 said, *"I decided, to enjoy myself, and find out, what happiness is."* If you want to, save yourself a lot of time, . . . go home, and read, . . . Ecclesiastes 2.

Solomon said, I tried it all, . . . and, I found three dead ends: accumulating **things**, . . experiencing **pleasures**, . . achieving **success**. They were all dead ends, . . . and, those are the three things, we spend our life, trying to get. Solomon, was the wealthiest, he had all kinds of pleasure, . . . and, he was the most successful man, of his time.

We think, that by accumulating things, . . . we're going to be happy. "If I could just, win the lottery, . . . then, I'd be happy." Someone asked, Howard Hughes, . . . "How much does it take, . . . to make a man, happy?" He said, "Just, a little bit, . . . more." (Television lies, . . . you can't buy, happiness.)

We experience, pleasure, . . . we search for, the latest thrill. Go to the lake, go to the big game, . . . try the latest, extreme sport. Solomon said, I've tried, it all. Or, achieving, success. If I could just, get people, . . to look up to me, . . then, I'll be happy. We're very, status conscious, . . in America. We've got to have, all the right symbols. Solomon says, I was the king, of an empire. But, . . . that didn't, bring happiness.

Ecclesiastes 2:17b – *"All of it is meaningless, a chasing, after the wind."* The popular idea, of happiness, . . . is having, the right circumstances. But, **God's way, to happiness, . . . is having, . . . the right attitude**.

In Matthew 5, we have the opening lines, of Jesus' famous, . . **Sermon on the Mount**, . . . 8 positive statements, about happiness, . . . called **the beatitudes**. Of all the subjects, Jesus could have chosen, to speak on, . . when he started, the Sermon on the Mount, . . . He chose the subject, . . . “How to Be Happy.” Why? Because, He knew, that was what everybody, was searching for, . . but, very few people, actually, find it.

\*\*\* For the next, eight weeks, we're going to look at, . . . these Eight Beatitudes, . . . of “How to be Happy”, . . not, just principles, . . . for personal happiness, . . . but, also prescription, . . . for emotional health.

Each of these, begins with the word, . . . "blessed". The word "blessed", . . . is an Old English word. It simply, means, "happy". He says, in Matthew 5:3-10 – *"Happy are you, if you're poor in spirit, for yours is the kingdom of heaven . . . Happy are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted . . . Happy are the meek, for they will inherit the earth . . . Happy are those who hunger, and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled . . . Happy are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Happy are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Happy are the peacemakers, for they will be called, the sons of God. Happy are those who are persecuted, because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

When you read, these things, . . does it sound like, . . . contradictions? Happy, if you're sad . . . happy, if you're poor, . . . happy, if you're put down, and persecuted! That, does not, . . . sound like, happiness, to me.

Jesus was saying, that you can learn, to be happy, . . . in spite of, your circumstances. If you have, to have all of your problems solved, before you become happy, . . . will you ever, be happy? No. If you have, to have everything perfect, in your life, before you're happy, . . . will you, be happy? No.

Jesus said, I want to teach you, that happiness, depends not, . . on the right circumstances, . . but, it depends on, the right attitudes. My happiness, is not determined by, what's happening, around me, . . . but, rather by, what's happening, . . . in me. For the next, eight weeks, . . . we're going to look at, . . . what, that means.

Jesus is saying, it's not, how much, we have, . . . it's what we **are**, . . that, makes us happy. Happiness, does not, depend on, . . . the external, the atmosphere outside, . . . it depends on, the attitude, . . . inside. It is not, determined by, external circumstances, it's determined by, my internal attitude. These are, the attitudes.

Happiness, is a choice. You choose, the right attitudes. Basically, right now, whether you're happy, or sad, . . . or, somewhere in between, . . . you're about as happy, . . . as you **choose** to be. Life, is tough. There are a lot of things, that don't go right, and don't go your way, in life. Happiness, depends on, choosing, the right attitudes.

\* Briefly, let's look at, the very first step, . . the very first attitude. The first step to happiness, is to be **humble**.

 Matthew 5:3 – *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

What does He mean, . . . by the poor, in spirit? He's not talking about, low self esteem. He's not talking about, putting yourself down, all the time. Jesus did not die, for junk, . . . He died, for people. You have value, . . . you have worth, . . . you have significance.

That doesn't mean, you're perfect, . . you're not. You have sinned, I've sinned, we all have. He's not saying, you run around, putting yourself down, all the time: "I'm lousy! I'm no good! I'm evil, wicked, . . I’m bad!"

What does it mean, to be poor, in spirit? It simply means, . . to depend, on God. He's talking, . . about humility, admitting, that I don't have it all together, . . . realizing, that I haven't arrived, . . . realizing, that I haven't learned it all, . . . that, I'm not the sum total, of the universe, . . . that, I'm not perfect.

The opposite, of poor in spirit, . . . is arrogance, or egotism. Jesus said, if you're full of arrogance, and egotism, you're never, going to be happy. The Good News Translation, . . . of this verse: *"Happy are those, who know, they are spiritually poor."* They know, they don't have it, all together, . . . they know, that they, need God. Living Bible says, *"Happy are, . . . the humble."*

\*\* The point, that Jesus, is starting off with, today, . . . is simply, humble and happy, . . go together. Humility, and, happiness, . . . go together. They're twins, . . . soul mates. If you want to have, lasting happiness, . . then, you need to learn, . . . to be humble.

**\*\*\* How can humility, . . . increase, my happiness?**

**1. Humility, . . . reduces stress**. When I'm humble, I don't have, to have all the answers, . . . I realize, that the world, does not, depend on me, . . . I can resign, as general manager, of the universe. When I'm humble, I realize, that I don't have, to solve, . . . all the problems, in the world.

When I'm humble, . . . I don't have, to fake it. I don't have, to pretend, that I'm perfect, . . . because, God doesn't demand, . . . that, I be perfect, . . . in order, . . . to be happy. I don't have, to play God, . . . and, assume responsibility, . . . that's, not mine.

When I'm humble, I can live with the tension, between the real, and the ideal -- the way I want, to live my life, the way I want, my career to go, the ideal for my family, my marriage, my kids, . . . and, then, . . reality, the way, . . . it really is. There's always, a tension in life, . . . between, the ideal, . . . and, the real.

Humility, accepts the fact, that you can be happy, . . . because, . . . you're depending, upon God, even though, . . things, aren't ideal. You may not, have the best job, . . . and, your marriage, . . . may not be perfect. It reduces stress, . . . when, I'm humble.

I'm convinced, that we take ourselves, too seriously. I think, we take ourselves, too seriously, . . . and, we don't take God, . . seriously, enough. I think, that is the crux, . . of almost, every one, of our problems. We're out there, trying to impress people, with who we are, . . . and, because, we know who we really are, . . . and, who we want to be, . . . there's stress.

When we become, a humble person, . . . when we walk, in dependence, upon the Lord, . . . it reduces, the stress, in our life. As the stress, goes down, . . . the happiness, goes up.

**2. Humility improves, . . my relationships**. How many of you, love to be around people, . . . with big heads? Prideful people, . . . are a pain. Selfish, self centered people, . . . are an irritation. Nobody, likes to be around them. They wreck, relationships. Self centered people, are never happy. Never! Because, they are unhappy, they make everybody else, unhappy. They spread, all their, gloom and doom, . . . simply, by their egotism.

On the other hand, how many of you, like to be around, humble people? Those, that don't think, they're so hot? They aren't always, . . . trying to impress you. When you tell a story, they don't always, . . . have to have, a better one. When you are humble, . . . you get along better, with other people.

Humility, doesn't mean, you think less, of yourself, . . . you just think more, . . about others. When you become interested in others, . . . you become interesting, to others. So, you have better relationships, . . . when you're, a humble person. You don't have to be right, all the time. And, it's easier for you to say, . . those two hard words, "I'm sorry", or, the three hardest words, "I was wrong", or, the other three hardest words, "I need help."

When I'm poor in spirit, which means, . . I don't have to fake it, and pretend I'm perfect, . . it reduces, my stress, and, improves my relationships, . . . because, I am humble enough, . . . to ask forgiveness.

\*\*\* St Francis of Assisi, the monk, had a method, of **maintaining humility**. In his memoirs, he said any time, someone praised him, . . . in order to stay humble, he had a fellow monk, set down and tell him, all his faults.

He had to ask, a fellow monk, . . . because, . . . he never married. Most of us, don't need to, . . . go get a monk! We have our, heavenly sand paper, at home. We laugh at this, . . . but, ladies, it is not your job, to keep your husband, humble. Men, it is not your job, to keep your wives, humble. That's, . . . God's job.

Ruth Graham, . . . talking about Billy Graham: “My job is, to love Billy, . . God's job is, to keep him, humble.” God can do a better job, . . . than you. In your marriage, you need to be a supporter, . . and, encourager. Let God, . . . do the humiliating. He can do it, . . . easy enough.

It improves, . . . my relationships. I find that, when I'm full of pride, . . I bruise, very easily. I'm very sensitive, to other people's, comments. When I'm pumped up, . . . trying to impress people, . . . and, someone says something, that really shouldn't bother me, . . . it hurts. It's like, sticking a pin, . . . in a balloon.

On the other hand, I've discovered, when I'm walking humbly, before the Lord, and just being, who I am, being honest, and depending upon God, . . I'm almost, immune, . . . to insults. Almost nothing, . . can hurt me.

I'm walking, before the Lord, with the attitude, they may be right, . . they may be wrong, . . but, I'm just trying, to please the Lord. If you find someone, who is very sensitive, to criticism, . . . it's because, they haven't learned, this first principle, of happiness: **Be humble, in spirit, . . . before, the Lord.**

**3. It releases, . . . God's power.**

Humility, releases God's power, . . . in your life. James 4:6 – *"God gives strength, to the humble, . . but, He sets himself, against the proud."* Would you like to have, God's strength, in your life? The Bible says, that the secret of spiritual power, is to walk humbly, before the Lord, to realize, you have to, depend on Him.

Sometimes, I get overwhelmed, by the graciousness, of God in my life, . . . and, the goodness, and all the things, I don’t deserve. He allows me, to live in America, . . . and, be with a great group of people, who love me, and our church, and my family. I'm humbled, by that. The goodness of God, in my life, . . overwhelms me.

I also, have a deep sense of responsibility, . . pastoring this church, . . and, knowing from week to week, people are coming in here, . . . looking for a word from God, and saying, . . "What does God, have to say, about my life?" I sometimes, feel a deep, deep sense, . . . of inadequacy, and fear. "God, you've got, the wrong guy! I can’t do this, . . . on my own. I've got to totally, depend on You, . . . to lead, this church."

I sometimes, have to have a little prayer meeting, with God, "I want to remind myself, that this is, Your church. It belongs, to You. Although, You use me, to minister to others, in this church, . . . I give You the right, to move me out of the picture, at any point. If there's somebody else, . . . who could do, a better job." Every now and then, I think, "Lord, are You sure, there isn't somebody else, . . . who could do this?"

Sometimes, I have to say, . . . "God, I'm going to do this, today. But, if You don't want me, to do this, . . . next week, You work it out. I know this is Your will, today, but, I'm just living, one day at a time. I will not presume upon tomorrow, because, that would be arrogance." Then, I recommit my life, to the Lord, and ask Him, . . . to empower me, and help me. I humble myself, . . . voluntarily, . . . before, the Lord.

"Lord, as Your son, . . . I want to feel love. And, as Your servant, . . I need to feel, Your power. If this, is what You've called me to do, . . . You will empower me, to do it, even when I don't think, I've got the power."

I humble myself, before the Lord, and express total dependence, upon Him. I cannot do this, on a week to week basis. Nobody, can consistently, come up with fresh, creative ideas, . . week after week, year after year. Nobody can. But, . . . God can. And, *"I can do all things through Christ, . . . who strengthens me."*

When we take that attitude, before the Lord, in whatever area of ministry, that we are serving Him in, . . . there, will be many times, that the power of God, falls on our life. It's not, because of who we are, . . . but, it's because, . . . of Who, God is.

The secret, . . . of strength, . . . is admitting weakness. The secret, of power, . . . is admitting, helplessness. The secret, of happiness, . . . is humility. The secret, of victory, is total, . . . surrender to God. The secret, of independence, . . . is dependence, upon God.

Matthew 5:3 (Ph.) – *"Happy are those, who know their need for God, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs!"* That means, that all that God has to offer, . . . is available to the person, who walks humbly, before the Lord. All that God has to offer, is that person's, . . . when we live in dependence, before the Lord.

The fact is, that everyone of you, need Jesus Christ, in your life. You need God's power, to make it, next week. If you think, you don't, you've got something coming. His power, is available. And, God is just waiting, to pour out, His power on you. But, you've got to ask. And, you've got to admit, that you need His help.

If you walk out of here, saying, "I don't need God, in my life, this next week, to make it", . . . then, Good Luck! You'll have to solve, all of your problems, . . . on your own power, your own ability, your own strength, and, then, wonder why, . . . you're tired, all of the time.

When you walk before the Lord, and say, I can do all things, through Christ, who strengthens me, . . . apart from Him, I can do nothing, when you have that attitude – then, He will give you supernatural power, to work on those problems, you can't change, . . . those areas of your life, you can't get control of, . . . and, those relationships, that are falling apart, and you can't do anything about it. That's what it means, to be poor in spirit.

John 13:17 – "Now that you know the truth, how happy you will be, if you put it into practice!" Ask yourself, a question, . . . where do I need, to practice humility, this next week? Where do I need, to depend on God, more, . . . this, next week?

The greatest thing, about the presidential inauguration, . . . several years ago, was when our then, new president, George Bush, . . . after taking the oath of office, and he stood up to give his inaugural address, he walked to the podium, and the first thing he said was, "For my first official act, as president, I'd like to offer a prayer." And, he prayed. That spoke volumes, to me. All true leaders, . . . find their strength, . . . on their knees. (9/11)

You need, God's power, in your life. But, it only comes, when you humble yourself, . . and, say, "God! Help!" The person who says, "Help!", is the humble person, . . . and, the person, who is the humble person, God says, "There's nothing, I won't do, . . . for that person! The kingdom of heaven, . . . will be theirs."

Invitation: Would you pray, this prayer, in your heart? God, I'm not making it in, . . . [whatever, . . . the area]. Maybe, God, . . . I'm not making it, as a parent. Or, I'm not making it, as a spouse. Or, I'm not making it, as a professional. And, I need Your help, in my life. I must decrease, . . . and, . . . You must increase.

I admit my need, for Your power, in every area, of my life. Not just, some areas. I need Your power, and Your guidance, . . . in every area, of my life. Today, I humble myself, . . . before You. The Bible says, *"Humble yourself, in the sight of the Lord. . . . God resists the proud, but gives grace, to the humble . . . Before honor, is humility."*

Those, that humble ourselves, God lifts us up, . . . and, gives us power, to do what He's called us, to do. Is there an area of your life, . . . you're trying to get control of, . . . and, it's out of control. Say, God, I admit this, . . . is not working! I need Your help, in every area of my life, . . . including, this one.

Father, we thank You, for Your precious Word. We look forward, to this series on happiness, with anticipation. This very first, foundational principle, . . . of realizing, . . . we need You, . . . in every area, of our lives.

“The First Step to Happiness”, Don't Worry - Be Happy!, Part 1 of 8

Matthew 5:3-12 & Ecclesiastes 2:1-26

1. The popular idea of happiness: Having \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Ecclesiastes 2:1-26)

(Solomon) "I decided to enjoy myself and find out what happiness is . . ." (vs. 1)

Dead Ends:

\* Accumulating \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 7-8)

\* Experiencing \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 3, 10)

\* Achieving \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (vs.4-6, 9)

"All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind." (vs. 17)

2. God's way to happiness:Having \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Matt. 5:3-12)

"The Beatitudes" - 8 Secrets of Happiness

"BLESSED" means

The point of these "contradictions":

My happiness is not determined by what's happening \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ me but rather what's happening \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ me!

3. The first step to happiness: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

"Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (vs. 3)

How Humility Increases My Happiness:

\* It reduces \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\* It improves \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\* It releases \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

James 4:6 – “God gives strength to the humble, but sets himself against the proud.”

Matthew 5:3 – “Happy are those who know their need for God, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs!”

John 13:17 – “Now that you know the truth, how happy you will be if you put it into practice!”

 Next week’s Sermon: “How to Heal a Broken Heart”, Matthew 5:4