

The True Nature of Happiness

Matthew 5:1-12

Some years ago the Raleigh, North Carolina News & Observer published an article entitled: "How Do You Measure Up As A Man? The article stated that some extensive research had been conducted on the 20th century standards for measuring a man. The criteria were quite interesting and I thought that I might list them for the men here this morning just to see how they measure up.

1. His ability to make and conserve money (That lets me out already).
2. The cost, style and age of his car.
3. (This is my favorite) How much hair he has.
4. His strength and size.
5. The job he holds and how successful he is at it.
6. What sports he likes.
7. How many clubs he belongs to.
8. His aggressiveness and reliability.

Jesus Christ also once set down eight principles for the measure of a person. His standards stand in stark contrast to the aforementioned. There would appear to be a wide gulf between the popular image of the successful person and what God sees as the successful person.

Here's what happened: Jesus had just started his ministry and was gaining in popularity. Large crowds were gathering. He had just picked out his disciples. And in the quiet of the rolling grassy hills of northern Israel by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus delivered a sermon to a multitude. Acres and acres of human faces. The crowd represented a cross section of humanity.

There were rich and poor, young and old, doubtless varied races, those who were astute business men and those who were failures. In fact, the crowd that Jesus spoke to that day represented the world in miniature.

Yet, as different as they all were, Jesus understood that they were all on the same quest. They were all after the same thing. They all wanted happiness. Well, we are just like them aren't we? Isn't that what we want for ourselves. Isn't that what we ultimately want for our children:

Happiness.

The problem is that we really don't grasp the true nature of happiness, and because of that it so often seems to elude us. You see, we think that happiness deals with our outer circumstances. We think that the truly happy man is one who has achieved outer success. Thus our beatitudes read:

1. Blessed is the man who makes a fortune.
2. Blessed is he who earns six figures.
3. Happy is the man who has a palace in the city and a summer home in the mountains.
4. Blessed is he who has won the applause of his peers.
5. Blessed is the woman who is recognized as a darling of society.

But on this special day Jesus shared with disciples and, indeed, with all of history, that the concept of happiness is...

The rest of this sermon looks at three of the verses from the Beatitudes:

1. Blessed are the Poor in Spirit
2. Blessed are those who Mourn.
3. Blessed are the Meek.