Finding True Happiness
(1/15/17)

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Psalm 1:1-6

1 Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path
that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; 2 but their delight is in the law of
the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night. 3 They are like trees
planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves
do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, but are
like chaff that the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the
judgement, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; 6 for the Lord
watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

1. Happy New Year

In the US, we start each year by saying "Happy New Year!" In Korea, people greet each other with a different greeting. At the start of a new year, the Korean people greet each other with the saying, "may you be very blessed this year!" These greetings are shared by almost everyone. And being happy and blessed is what everyone wants. But the definition of happiness or blessedness and how to be happy and be blessed seem to be quite different among people. How do you define happiness? And where do you think you can find happiness?

In general, the happiness is defined by what we like, enjoy, and are satisfied with. Some people think we will be happy when we achieve, accomplish, and obtain something valuable. If we have more money or good health, we may think we will be happier. When something is not going well, we may think we are not happy. People try a lot of different things to be happy. And while these things can make us feel happy temporarily, many of us know from personal experience that true happiness is very different than just feeling happy in the moment. Today, I'd like us to take a look at the meaning of true happiness and where our true happiness comes from.

2. True Happiness

Today's scripture lesson is from Psalm 1. Psalm one tells us how to be happy or blessed. Psalm 1:1 & 2 say, "**Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers. but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night.**" Before we talk about how to find true happiness, we need to understand the

deeper meaning of happiness in the Bible. The word in Hebrew for happiness and blessing is "**esher.**" "Esher" describes the happy state of those who live according to the word of the Lord. In the Greek Bible of the OT, "esher" is translated "makarios" which is found in Matthew 5. The happiness in Psalm 1 and Matthew 5 is different from what many people define as happiness.

In Matthew 5:10, the Good News Bible says, **"Happy are those who are persecuted because they do what God requires; the kingdom of heaven belongs to them."** Matthew says even though those who are persecuted can be happy because they do what God requires. The Psalms 1 and Matthew 5 clearly tell us that true happiness is found when a person knows what God wants and walks the road that God directs. Psalm one is known as the psalm of psalms, or the psalm that tells us the most important truth of every human being. The Today's English Version of the Bible titles the Psalm one as "True Happiness."

In Psalm one the author talks about two ways of life: the way of the wicked and the way of the righteous. Psalm one says that those who look for true happiness should not follow the way of the wicked but choose the way of the righteous. Who are the wicked? Some say this is Satan. But I believe that the wicked is every human being. We are all sinners. No one is righteous or perfect. But instead, we are all sinners who are forgiven by God. In 2 Corinthians 5:21, Paul says, "**God made him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God**." Although we are not righteous or perfect, we are seen by God as righteous because Jesus, who is perfect, died for our sin.

3. Delight in the law of the Lord

How do the righteous live their lives? The Psalm 1:2 tells us what the lifestyle of the righteous looks like. "**Their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night**." The law in the Hebrew language is "torah." The Hebrew word, "torah" is derived from a root that was used in archery, "yareh." "Yareh" means to shoot an arrow to hit a mark. The mark or target is the truth about God and how one relates to Him. The "torah" in this way, is designed to teach us the truth about God. So "torah" means direction, teaching and instructions from a father to his children. Therefore the "torah" is not meant to be restrictive, but instead is to bind the hearts and minds of God's people to the covenant that God has made with people.

Proverbs 3:1 says, "**My son, do not forget my teaching (torah), but keep my commands in your heart**." The "torah" is a binding tool to develop an

intimate relationship between God and his people. The “torah” helps us to understand the love of the initiator of the covenant, who is God. For the Israelites, in its limited sense, the “torah” refers to the five books of Moses: Generis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. But the word “torah” can also be used to refer to the entire Jewish Bible. For us, this is the Old Testament.

The writer of Psalms 1 says that those who delight the “torah” and meditate on it find true happiness because they will learn how much God loves them, keeps watching over them and is present with them always. As you know, my daughter came to visit us from Korea for about a month. She went back to Korea last week. My daughter’s visit was the greatest Christmas gift for me and Christine. But I believe that she also experienced our reaffirming love for her. In the same way, when we delight and meditate on the “torah,” we will confirm the love of God and our relationship with the Lord deepens.

4. Fish in the water

How important do you think is our relationship with God? When I was walking on the Canal service road last week, I was reminded of the relationship between fish and water. In order to live fish need water. Fish can not survive when they are taken away from water for a long period of time. In the same way, Torah is a lifeline for our soul. We breathe spiritually in the Lord when we meditate on the “torah.” Let me tell you the relationship in a different way. If our cellphones and computers are not connected with electricity, we will not be able to use them very soon. Their batteries will run out and die. They should be charged again and again if we want to keep using them.

5. Outcome

What is going to happen when we are connected with God? The psalmist uses a metaphor of trees that are planted by streams of water to explain this relationship. He says that we will be like trees, “**which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper**” (1:3). The image of the trees here is used to illustrate fruitfulness and prosperity. However, fruitfulness and prosperity should not be understood as success and achievement. Christians can fail, become sick, lose in competition, and lose the beloved ones, be persecuted, be put in prison, and even be killed. Yet Christians remember that the failure, hardship, sufferings, and death are not the end of our stories. We believe that the Lord is still in control and will give us the final victory.

Listen what Paul says to the Corinthians. “**We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not**

abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body." (2 Cor. 4:8-10). St. Paul's daily life was full of persecution, danger, and imprisonment. Yet he never complains about his hardship, rather he says to the early Christians, "**Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"** (Philippians 4:4)**.** He was happy always. I believe fruitfulness and prosperity in Psalm 1 also should be understood not as success or prosperity but as the positive influence of Christians to other people.

Last week I heard a song "the prayer" sung by two Korean singers. If Bill can show the video clip, I would like you to watch it. About five years ago the male singer became handicapped in a motorcycle accident. His doctor told his parents that he would not survive. But through his faith in the Lord he overcame all kinds of physical and mental challenges. Even though he couldn't sing without the help of a machine, he won the music competition giving many people hope and encouragement. Since the motorcycle accident he became a handicapped person, but his life is fruitful and prospers.

6. Conclusion

Some people believe they can find happiness in a better job, a new career, a different house, a different location, a different spouse, or a different church. But we all know from our experience that change, even good change, often brings only temporary happiness. We may feel happy when we feel like our dreams come true. But our happiness lasts for only a moment. Psalm 1 tells us that regardless of what happens to us or around us, we can experience true happiness in an intimate relationship with God. The intimate relationship with the Lord can be enhanced through participating in worship services, prayer meetings, Bible study, or our personal devotion times. As we grow deeper spiritually in the Lord and spend time learning about what the Lord wants, we can experience true happiness.

7. Application

The author of Psalms 1 shares with us his personal experience. He found true happiness when he delighted and meditated on the "torah" daily. That is the road to true happiness and such a lifestyle will lead us to streams of water, producing much fruit. And our leaves will never wither because the presence of Jesus Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of the Lord will be with us always. Amen. Let us pray.