

Does God Want Me To Be Happy?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 November 2022

Preacher: Joshua Winters

[0 : 00] If you have your Bible with you, you can open it up to John chapter 15. We're continuing to plug away at this teaching of Jesus.

These words of Jesus were spoken to his disciples on the night of his betrayal. And this is after the Last Supper, but before they get to the Garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus has been using this analogy of vine and branches and fruit to convey some really important truths to these men.

As we've seen so far, all of this is about relationship. The relationship of the Father with his Son Jesus, gardener and vine.

And the relationship of the branches, those followers of Jesus with Jesus the vine. And last week we considered the sober warnings of Jesus about just how important it is for all his followers to remain in him.

[1 : 10] So that we might bear the fruit that God desires. And we took comfort in the assurance of Jesus that he will remain in us and hold us.

Well, this morning we're going to move fairly quickly through a number of verses here. And then we're going to camp a little bit on just one thought that Jesus said here in John chapter 15.

So let's pick this up in verse 7. Jesus said, If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

This could be a whole sermon right here, but I'm going to not do that. Again, we heard this earlier. Jesus promises to answer their prayers and give them the things that they ask for.

And again, it seems a lot like a blank check. It's almost like he's just encouraging them. You know, write whatever you want in that blank. Ask and I will do it for you. But then we notice again that there are some qualifications that go with that.

[2 : 23] Requirements for this blank check of prayer to be cash, to be delivered on. First, it requires that they remain in him. That they are walking in relationship with him.

Continuing to trust and obey and follow. And second, Jesus adds in something new. He says, If my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

If my words remain in you. Over the years, I've had a Christian brother or two who I've asked this question to. So what are you reading in your Bible these days?

And the answer has been, Well, reading is not really my preferred method of relating to God. It's not really my love language.

I feel closest to God when I'm just praying or out on a stroll in nature. I'm always glad to hear that someone feels close to God. And I'm always glad to hear that people are praying and enjoying the beauty of God's creation.

[3 : 34] But according to Jesus, our relationship with him, our remaining in him, has to include his words. Jesus gives us words.

And they're to be at the core of our relationship with him. He gives us words of truth. Words of encouragement. Words of rebuke.

Words of promise. Words of hope. Words of instruction. Commands. All kinds of words. And we have many of them right here in our Bibles.

And so this is one of the qualifications, the guarding statements to this whatever you wish. Ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

If my words remain in you. If you are holding on to the things that I say. If we're not continually surrendering ourselves to these words of Jesus.

[4 : 38] Obeying them. Trusting them. Then we don't have the assurance that Jesus will do for us whatever we ask. This is God's way of kind of guarding that whatever.

That seeming blank check of prayer. And ensuring that we don't just use prayer for our own selfish ambition. Or to satisfy our own greed or pride.

If you remain in me and my words remain in you. Ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory. That you bear much fruit. Showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Notice the flow here.

The goal of asking in prayer is to bring glory to the Father. The result of asking in prayer is that we might bear much fruit.

[5 : 37] Think about this. It's not just the words of Jesus that are indispensable to this relationship that we have with him. It's also this prayerful asking. How is the Father glorified?

How does this much fruit come in our lives? It comes as we ask whatever we wish. And receive it from God.

But sometimes I wonder if all too often we fall back into that faithless frame of mind. Where we just, you know, decide not to pray. Not to ask for things.

What's the point? God will do what he will do. But that's not what Jesus says here. He says God is glorified. We will bear much fruit as we ask for things and receive them from him.

One of the verses in the Bible that haunts me in a good way, I think, is a statement made by James in James chapter 4 verse 2. Now there's a context to that statement, but the statement's true either way.

[6 : 46] However you look at it, at the end there, he says, How many things do we not have simply because we have not asked God for them?

Now as I just mentioned, there are reasons why what we ask might not be given. If we're not remaining in Jesus, if his words are not remaining in us, and James will even go on here in this passage to give some more reasons.

If we're just asking to gratify ourselves or out of wrong motives, we ought not to expect to receive what we ask for. But those things aside, this is still true.

You do not have sometimes because you do not ask God. How many things do we not have simply because we haven't asked God for them?

Because we don't believe he cares enough. Or we don't believe that he can do something like that because it just seems so hard or so impossible. This is why prayer on Sunday mornings like we just did and prayer this Thursday evening are so important.

[8 : 06] God in his wisdom and sovereignty has decided to give to those who ask. To bring fruit from prayers that are prayed and requests that are made.

Think back over some of those stories in the Old Testament. How many times did God act and intervene in response to the prayer of a man or woman?

Countless times. Now sometimes he graciously acts even when we don't pray. And that's a wonderful thing.

He is a gracious and compassionate God. And he loves sinners. But many times, often the pattern we see is that he acts and he gives and he does things in response to the humble prayers of his people.

Verse 8. This is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit showing yourselves to be my disciples.

[9 : 12] Now we talked about this verse already in a few messages, but I just want to note one more thing from this verse. God gets glory when we show ourselves to be Jesus' disciples.

You know, sometimes we get worried about what outsiders, people who don't believe in Christ, think of us and about our faith.

We worry that if we're too Christian, we might offend them, push them away. And the temptation can sometimes run very strong just to, you know, kind of hide our faith and to live as an undercover follower of Christ.

But God wants you and me to show ourselves to be disciples of Jesus. He wants it to be known. He wants it to be seen.

He wants it to be obvious by the much good fruit in our lives, which will include our conduct and our love, but also our words, our testimony to the King.

[10 : 19] And so I want to encourage you this morning don't let the fear of man intimidate you. And don't let the praise of man allure you.

Jesus is the King. And one day the whole world is going to see that when He comes. Verse 9. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in His love.

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and so that your joy may be complete. Love and obedience are the theme of these verses and we're going to come back and linger over them another day.

But for this morning, let's focus in on what Jesus says here in verse 11. This is one of my favorite verses in the Bible. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

[11 : 35] Do you know that Jesus wants you to be happy? And now I know that many Christian teachers out there have tried to make a distinction between joy and happiness and there's some truth to that.

There's some truth to how we use those words today. Sometimes we do use that word happy in a really fleeting and shallow way like Happy Meals at McDonald's. You know, buy this meal for your kids and it will make them happy.

But happy can still be used to refer to joy as a synonym for joy like in the hymn, Trust and Obey. For there's no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey.

At their core, happiness and joy are synonyms. They mean the same thing. They both refer to an inward delight, an inward satisfaction, an inward pleasure that we come to have or to feel.

The question is not so much about which is the right word but about what can make us truly happy or who.

[12 : 43] Ever since the Garden of Eden long ago, the devil has been preaching and one of his main messages is this. God wants you to be miserable.

He wants you to go unfulfilled. He wants you to be unsatisfied. He wants you to have less than the best. He offers you no inward delight.

Come, taste and see this fruit from the tree that he told you not to eat of. This will bring you great delight.

It's a lie. probably referring back to all that he said before. All this talk of remaining in Jesus and his words remaining in us and remaining in his love.

Referring to all that, Jesus says, I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and so that your joy may be complete. I want you to be happy.

[13 : 50] and embracing this truth, these core truths about my relationship with you, that's where you're going to find it. Give yourselves to me.

Give yourselves to my love. Give yourselves to my words, to prayer. This is what will make your joy complete. Complete.

Not just a little bit of joy. Not just some joy. But complete. Maximum. Full.

The meter to the top. Do you know that Jesus wants that for you? He doesn't want you to be miserable. How would that bring glory to him?

How does that show his matchless worth and beauty? No. God wants you to be the happiest that you can be. The challenge is will we trust that our life in Christ and our obedience to Christ and our relationship with Christ is the way to that fullness of joy?

[15 : 03] Or will we look for that joy instead in lesser things? Created things? Now don't get me wrong. The things of earth have been created for our joy.

I don't want to create a false dichotomy here. 1 Timothy chapter 5 verse 17 Paul says command those who are rich in this present world to put their hope in God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

And in 1 Timothy chapter 4 verse 4 everything God created is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving.

The things of earth have been created for our joy. But notice that they're meant to give us joy like gifts give us joy. They are good things that we're meant to enjoy as we acknowledge the one who gave them to us and the love that he has in giving them.

I love the way that C.S. Lewis captures this in his meditations in a tool shed. And I didn't have time to dig out the exact quotation and I'm taking some major liberalities in my quoting of this but hopefully the gist is enough to get by with here.

[16:26] Imagine that you're in a dark tool shed and you look up and you see this little beam of light coming through one of the cracks in the roof. That little ray, that beam of light, it's such a good thing in the darkness of the tool shed.

It lets you see a little bit of what's around you. As you pass your hand through it, you can feel the warmth on your skin. It gives you a measure of happiness, that little ray of light here in the darkness.

C.S. Lewis said that enjoying the good things of earth is like that. God has filled the whole world with all kinds of these little rays of light, good things that do good for us, that we can enjoy. But we need to remember that that little beam shining down in the tool shed does not exist on its own. It has a source and you can look up along the beam and trace it back to its source, something that's even more wonderful and awesome, the sun.

in the same way, the things of earth, all the good created things that God has given us, they have their source and we are meant to trace them back up to the source and to receive those things, to enjoy them as gifts from the God who has given them.

[18:02] complete and full joy comes from relationship with the source, with the vine, with Jesus, with the Father.

God does want us to be happy, but he is the source of all joy and happiness. That's what I want for you, says Jesus.

maximum joy, fullest of happinesses, and that's why I'm telling you all this stuff about my relationship with you and how you need to remain in me and my words and prayer.

How could this be, you might wonder? How could anyone be truly happy when someone else is telling them what to do? This is a question we can all sympathize with because the devil has another sermon that he loves to preach.

You can't be happy unless you are the boss, unless you are in charge of your own life, making the decisions, calling the shots.

[19:17] That's where true satisfaction and happiness is found. Freedom to do whatever I please. this too is a lie.

If we just look up one verse before this, we read, if you keep my commands, you will remain in my love just as I have kept my father's commands and remain in his love.

love. Even Jesus, the son of God, the word who became flesh, even Jesus lived as a man under authority.

He had the father's commands coming to him. He had God the father telling him what to do. Yes. But what does Jesus say?

He says, I remained in, I lived in my father's love by obeying his commands. Fullness of joy doesn't come from having this illusion that we are now somehow free to do whatever we want.

[20:23] If Jesus could so deeply enjoy his father's love in the place of submission and obedience with his father telling him what to do, so can we.

Most of you probably know someone in your life who's maybe a little younger than you, a little less experienced than you are. Maybe you've had a conversation with them where you see them and how they've kind of got their sights locked on something.

And if I can just get this thing, I'll be happy. I'll be set. And this is how I'm going to do it. And as you listen to them, you think back to maybe how you learned that lesson the hard way when you were younger.

It might be plain as day to you that they just aren't seeing clearly. This isn't the thing that will make them happy. This won't be a blessing in their lives. And the way that they're prepared to get it, it might even be damaging.

It might even have lasting consequences. And so you tell them, don't do it. do this instead. This is going to be much better for you. Is that not what Jesus is doing when he gives his commands to us?

[21:43] Is he not the one who sees clearly the consequences and the effects of our decisions? is it possible that all along he only commands us to do things because he loves us so much and knows what's best for us, what we truly need, what will really make us happy?

And so I want to just encourage all of us simply this morning, surrender your life to Jesus, the vine. it's only through him that we can have this fullest of joys.

Maybe you're here and you've never done this. If that's you, I want to encourage you, do it today.

Maybe you're here and you do believe, but not all the way, just kind of part way.

I want to encourage you, surrender your life to Jesus, be baptized, make that declaration that he is the king. hand the reins of your life over to him completely.

He is the good and gracious king. Maybe you're here and you've already done that, but the joy just isn't here. Have you drifted from Jesus' words?

[23 : 06] From prayer? Draw near to him again, and he will draw near to you. finally, there is a time to weep and mourn.

Even Jesus cried and wept at times. We do still live in a broken world. Sometimes this joy that Jesus speaks of, it has to coexist in our hearts with grief and sorrow.

But there is coming a day, Jesus said, when every tear will be wiped away. A day of no more sorrow, no more pain, no more crying.

Jesus will return, he will reign, he will defeat and silence the devil forever, and God will make all things new. And this fullest of joys will be all that's left.

It will be the only, it will be the always, forever, for all who belong to Jesus. I'll end with these words of Christ himself.

[24 : 21] Look, I am coming soon. And yes, I am coming soon. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, work this joy in us, we pray.

Draw us closer into fellowship with you, relationship with you. Take us deeper than we've ever been with you before, and open up this fullness of joy that we all long to have.

Strengthen us with that joy, we pray, for your glory. In Jesus' name, amen.