

Sermon Series: “Celebrating Life–Catching the Joy Stealers”–Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN – 5/24/09
Title: “Celebrating the Present: Catching Discontent”
Text: **Philippians 4:10-20**
Intro.: *Illus. Enjoying Life*
Theme: When we know that for Jesus’ sake, the Father has our tomorrow, we can enjoy the present by trusting that His provision is exactly what I need for this moment.

What makes you happy? (vss. 10-12)

- Beware of the discontentment joy robbers
- 1. **Comparative dissatisfaction** — viewing what God has given others and coveting it from an entitlement attitude
 - a. *"If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." John 21:22*
 - b. **Ills. Amish Advice**
- 2. **Worldly hysteria** – mistrusting God that he knows what he is doing and can take care of your need
 - a. Paul uses the Greek word *hysteria* in his description of need –
 - b. Often we focus on lack of gift and not on Giver and so work ourselves into a flustered and frustrated puddle
 - c. *If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Matthew 6:30*
- 3. **Circumstantial happiness** – allowing our definition of success/satisfaction be driven by current events in our life
 - a. Paul sitting in prison when he wrote this — yet in the middle of this rejoiced for opportunity for Philippians
 - b. When my life is about my 10 year plan, my retirement comfort, my adventure, I become disappointed quickly
 - c. *Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. James 4:14*
- The difference between joy and happiness starts with God—not you
- 1. Understanding how and why God supplies our every need
 - a. Life is more the sum total of what we have
 - b. *"A person's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." Luke 12:15*
 - c. Our richness is that we have been given an eternal life of forgiveness and purpose never to be taken away
 - d. *He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you. 1 Peter 1:3-4*
- 2. Along with my life’s circumstances God has someone else in mind in the midst of my wealth or poverty
 - a. *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 1 Timothy 6:17-18*
 - b. Paul rejoices in the spiritual maturity of the Philippians being *"blossoming anew"* (vs. 10)
 - c. Finding joy in your circumstance being used by God to supply another or to allow him to supply you thru them

The secret to living in and through daily contentment

- Looking in the right place to supply your contentment and joy (vs. 13)
- 1. While ancient and present philosophers point you to inner strength, Paul points you away from self to Christ
- 2. *Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." Nehemiah 8: 10*
- 3. Reminding each other in the home to refocus off of what you think you don’t have to what you do have in Jesus
- Learning to give more away than you receive (vs. 14-18)
- 1. When you and I learn the “freedom” for contentment in God’s care, we are able to generously give without regret
 - a. *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" Hebrews 13:5-6*
- 2. A side benefit is that we don’t have all the worries and work of maintaining/protecting/saving excess things
 - a. **Illus.: a lesson learned from our churches move and pitch**
 - b. Learning to rely upon the Father for the moment-to-moment needs of our life
- Changing your life’s focus to a purpose worthy of your time (vss. 19-20)
- 3. When I stop living for myself and in its place living for God’s credit and glory, I get to see more miracles happen
- 4. **Illus.: The Power of Prayer**

Enjoying Life

The story is told of a rich industrialist who was disturbed to find a fisherman sitting lazily beside his boat. "Why aren't you out there fishing?" he asked. "Because I've caught enough fish for today," said the fisherman. "Why don't you catch more fish than you need?" the rich man asked. "What would I do with them?" "You could earn more money," came the impatient reply, "and buy a better boat so you could go deeper and catch more fish. You could purchase nylon nets, catch even more fish, and make more money. Soon you'd have a fleet of boats and be rich like me." The fisherman asked, "Then what would I do?" "You could sit down and enjoy life," said the industrialist. "What do you think I'm doing now?" the fisherman replied as he looked placidly out to sea. *Our Daily Bread*, May 18, 1994.

Amish Advice

Leaning on his fence one day, a devout Quaker was watching a new neighbor move in next door. After all kinds of modern appliances, electronic gadgets, plush furniture, and costly wall hangings had been carried in, the onlooker called over, "If you find you're lacking anything, neighbor, let me know and I'll show you how to live without it."

The Power of a Prayer

Louise Redden, a poorly dressed lady with a look of defeat on her face, walked into a grocery store. She approached the owner of the store in a most humble manner and asked if he would let her charge a few groceries. She softly explained that her husband was very ill and unable to work, they had seven children and they needed food. John Longhouse, the grocer, scoffed at her and requested that she leave his store at once. Visualizing the family needs, she said: "Please, sir! I will bring you the money just as soon as I can." John told her he could not give her credit, since she did not have a charge account at his store. Standing beside the counter was a customer who overheard the conversation between the two. The customer walked forward and told the grocer that he would stand good for whatever she needed for her family. The grocer said in a very reluctant voice, "Do you have a grocery list?" Louise replied, "Yes sir." "O.K." he said, "put your grocery list on the scales and whatever your grocery list weighs, I will give you that amount in groceries." Louise hesitated a moment with a bowed head, then she reached into her purse and took out a piece of paper and scribbled something on it. She then laid the piece of paper on the scale carefully with her head still bowed. The eyes of the grocer and the customer showed amazement when the scales went down and stayed down. The grocer, staring at the scales, turned slowly to the customer and said begrudgingly, "I can't believe it." The customer smiled and the grocer started putting the groceries on the other side of the scales. The scale did not balance so he continued to put more and more groceries on them until the scales would hold no more. The grocer stood there in utter disgust. Finally, he grabbed the piece of paper from the scales and looked at it with greater amazement. It was not a grocery list; it was a prayer, which said: "Dear Lord, you know my needs and I am leaving this in your hands." The grocer gave her the groceries that he had gathered and stood in stunned silence. Louise thanked him and left the store. The other customer handed a fifty-dollar bill to the grocer and said, "It was worth every penny of it. Only God Knows how much a prayer weighs."

Philippians 4:10-20

¹⁰I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹²I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

¹³I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

¹⁴Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. ¹⁵Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; ¹⁶for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. ¹⁷Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. ¹⁸I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

¹⁹And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. ²⁰To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. [NIV]