

Real Christianity: The Sermon on the Mount

#2: Real Christianity is feeling happy

At the beginning of Jesus' teaching ministry, what was His first topic in His sermons? HAPPINESS.

Unfortunately most versions translate *makarios* as "blessed." This merely means to most people to "be fortunate." But the word more fully means: to feel happy because you are fortunate

We could paraphrase Jesus in all the Beatitudes as repeating the following basic statement 9 times: "My people who suffer now on this Earth, should always feel happy because they are so fortunate to have what is coming on the New Earth.

Primary point this week: Real Christianity is feeling happy.

Real Christianity is feeling happy

Jesus' purpose in this sermon was to reestablish what godly religion really looked like because the Pharisees and religious leaders of His day had created a false, hollow, and harmful version of what God intended. That's why throughout this sermon, he is correcting the Pharisees.

The first thing Jesus wanted to correct was to teach that real Christians are happy. The Pharisees completely missed this. (Matt 6:16; 23:1-4).

What about the humanism and capitalism that is the primary religion of America today? Has it made people happy? In last years' World Happiness Report, America was ranked 19th, just ahead of the Czech Republic. And yet Americans are less than 5% of the world's population but enjoy about 1/3 of all the products produced in the world. We are all millionaires compared to most of the world, and we are still not happy.

A concern is that modern translators of the Bible fail over and over again to properly translate Hebrew and Greek words that mean feeling happy. Using words like blessed and rejoice obscure these meanings.

Unfortunately, some Christians think a desire to be happy is selfish or worldly. Thank God for C.S. Lewis who exposed this error when he said: "It is a Christian duty for everyone to be as happy as he can."

And Christians should have known this. Why? Because the NT repeatedly commands us to always feel happy. (Phil 4:4; 1 Thess 5:16; Rom 14:17-18)

Our desire for happiness

Because God wants us to be happy, He did something to help us. He created us with one ultimate, over-powering, and constant desire: to be happy.

Happiness is the ultimate goal of our heart, because happiness is the ultimate goal of God's heart! (Rev 21:4).

The "deny yourself" verses have often been misinterpreted. God does not want His children to deny their deepest and greatest desires.

Why does God want His people to feel happy?

First, it glorifies Him.

It imitates Him. (Eph 5:1; 1 Tim 1:10-11).

It can help us be more holy. (Ps 119:2; Luke 11:28; John 15:11; Gal 5:22).

God's great concern for you is primarily your happiness. And if we can be convinced of that, that God wants us to be happy and that holiness is the only way to truly be happy, then our God-given ultimate driving desire to be happy can be a powerful motivation to be holy.

But unfortunately, it is our desire to be "happy" that is the ultimate reason we sin. We get tricked into thinking that disobeying God will somehow give us the most pleasure, significance, acceptance, or security.

Sin is stupid for people who are seeking happiness. (Acts 20:35).

If your life often feels frustrating, discouraging, and depressing, then God has more for you.

Discussion ?'s

- 1) Pastor Kurt argued that the first topic, even first word, of Jesus' first sermons was happiness? If this is so, what does that mean to you?
- 2) Why is it important to correctly translate *makarios* and *chairete* as "feeling happy" instead of being "blessed" or "rejoicing"?
- 3) How do you feel about the primary point: Real Christianity is feeling happy? Does this fact make you feel more encouraged or more condemned? How does God want you to feel about this?
- 4) Have you experienced any examples of the belief among some Christians that pursuing happiness is selfish or worldly?
- 5) Pastor Kurt suggested that God has created you with one ultimate and driving desire: to feel happy. What does this mean to you?
- 6) 1 Tim 1:10-11 says God is a happy God. Did that correct any views you may have had of Him?
- 7) What was most meaningful to you about the Sunday sermon?