

Phil. 3:10-21

Intro: Sing “If you’re happy and you know it clap your hands”

We live in a country where we believe that there is a God given right for us to seek out our own happiness.

In fact in our country’s Declaration of Independence, we are told that each person has been granted certain unalienable rights which include life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Not that I disagree with our founding fathers, in fact...I think they were very much on the right side of history; but even though we have the right to be happy I don’t think God wants us to be happy.

Did he just say that?

Rewind...God does not want us to be happy.

Don’t get me wrong, I’m all about being happy.

I was VERY happy last night at about 9:20pm when the Boston Bruins went ahead of Arizona Coyotes and won the game.

I’m hoping to be happy later today when the Patriots take on the Browns.

But is that all there is? Just those momentary glimpses of “happiness” that rely on circumstances?

I think there is and should be more.

Anyone here want to be “happily married”?

I don’t (sorry honey)

I want to have joy in my marriage because it is built upon the love of God that saved both my wife and I...but I don't want to simply be happy because things line up right and fall into the right place.

And sorry folks, but I have to confess...I'm not happily employed here at the LCN.

I find joy in my service here, and I find joy in the relationships that God has blessed me with; but I'm not going to be content with simply being "happy".

I want more...and we should all want more.

Yes, we have the God given right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness...Just because we have a right doesn't mean it is best for us.

I think there is more to life than just being "happy".

Transition:

This morning I want us to continue on with our study of Philippians called "The Pursuit of Joy" and consider our right to pursue happiness in light of God's word.

Read Phil. 3:10-21 from the message

"10-11 I gave up all that inferior stuff so I could know Christ personally, experience his resurrection power, be a partner in his suffering, and go all the way with him to death itself. If there was any way to get in on the resurrection from the dead, I wanted to do it.

"Focused on the Goal

12-14 I'm not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me. Friends, don't get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on

the goal, where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.

15-16 So let's keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us. If any of you have something else in mind, something less than total commitment, God will clear your blurred vision—you'll see it yet! Now that we're on the right track, let's stay on it.

17-19 Stick with me, friends. Keep track of those you see running this same course, headed for this same goal. There are many out there taking other paths, choosing other goals, and trying to get you to go along with them. I've warned you of them many times; sadly, I'm having to do it again. All they want is easy street. They hate Christ's Cross. But easy street is a dead-end street. Those who live there make their bellies their gods; belches are their praise; all they can think of is their appetites.

20-21 But there's far more to life for us. We're citizens of high heaven! We're waiting the arrival of the Savior, the Master, Jesus Christ, who will transform our earthy bodies into glorious bodies like his own. He'll make us beautiful and whole with the same powerful skill by which he is putting everything as it should be, under and around him.”

Let us pray.

OK, so if our life is not simply about the pursuit of happiness what should we be pursuing?

Our passage this morning tells us 3 things we should be pursuing as born again believers that are above and beyond the pursuit of happiness.

First of all...

1. Pursue Knowing Christ

Read vs. 10.

“I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,”

Keep in mind that the Apostle Paul is the author of this letter, and his conversion that we read about in the book of Acts led him to see that the pursuit of all that the world had to offer was nothing in comparison to knowing Christ.

Read verse 8

“What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ”

...this is the highest of all pursuits according to Paul and according to the Holy Spirit that penned these words through the person of the Apostle Paul.

In verse 10 Paul uses the word “Know”, this is a word of intimacy.

In “AT Robertson’s “Word Pictures”” bible commentary he says it means to have a personal acquaintance with or to have an experience with.

It means that there is a real relationship there.

What does it mean to “know”?

- It is more than a mere hobby
- It is more than just a weekend Jesus thing
- It is more than a passing interest to occupy time
- BUT...It is an all consuming passion and drive that totally dictates your life.

Paul said in verse 10 that he wanted to experience the power of the resurrection in knowing God...why is that?

1. Jesus exceeds all things...read that in Phil. 2:5-11 (Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess); and then there is...

2. The Power of the resurrection, this is pulsing through our veins as born again believers.

- At this point I do have an obligation and the honor of reminding you of what a born again believer is...

Now back to the resurrection power, this is what gives us life and gives life to all of the dead stuff we deal with in our lives:

- Dead hope
- Dead dreams
- Dead marriages
- Dead promises
- Dead Churches
- Dead people

This is the message to us, in pursuing God we find that knowing Him is life giving!

Knowing Jesus is life giving...and nothing else compares!

I know in my own life knowing Jesus has revolutionized my life because I now have He who overcame death living in me.

Christ brings life where this is death.

By believing in Christ, though you die physically you can live forever spiritually.

He brings life where there is death...and all we have to do is look to the cross!

The resurrection of Christ is not just a historical fact, but it is something that can and should drive your life.

Paul said we should pursue knowing Christ to the point of sharing in His sufferings.

Do you realize that there is a union with Christ that can only come as a result of suffering?

Those who suffer as a result of their walk with Christ have a new knowledge of Him and a new pursuit of Him that is indescribable.

Suffering drives us to the Savior.

Suffering brings to surface what is most important in our lives...and as born again believers that should be the person of Christ.

People who suffer find a merciful high priest and a faithful companion who has been there and in finding Him they find the power to live.

And dare I even say...you can find joy there?

It is true and it is real.

So first of all, pursue knowing Christ, but also...

2. Pursue what is Eternal

Read verse 14.

"I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Some translations might read “Heavenly calling”, some “high calling”, or “Upward calling”...the point is we don’t need to seek what this earth has to offer and what is temporal, but only what is eternal.

Please don’t think I’m trying to depress you or depress you this morning, but we need to understand that life is frail.

We are not promised tomorrow, we only promised right here and right now.

Every breathe we take has the potential to be our last.

Not only that, but anything and everything this world has to offer will never stand the test of time.

The biggest and most well built house in Western Florida could only stand for a few moments when the flood water and harsh hurricane winds blew through a couple weeks ago.

The almighty dollar that we depend on day in and day out is losing value in our global society and it hinges on what investors on Wall Street view as being valuable.

It is all temporary at best.

We are the closest we have been to nuclear war since the Cuban missile crisis.

Tomorrow it can come to an end.

That is why we are told to pursue the goal and pursue the prize of what is eternal.

The Greek phrase that we have translated as “the prize”, or as the KJV reads “unto the prize” is used only one other time in the NT, it is found in 1 Cor. 9:24 which reads, “Do you not know that the runners in a

stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.”

Do you see the image there, you need to run the race in a way that you can put yourself in a position to win the race.

Don't do it half heartedly...because we are doing it for what is eternal.

We are doing it for God's greater glory, His honor and His kingdom.

We are doing it because He has given us life and life more abundantly.

We are doing it for the joy of running and winning the race.

ILLUS: One of the times in my life that I don't think I can ever forget came from when I was 12 years old.

I was playing High school football up in NH...The year before we had won the state championship but most of our seniors and graduated and we didn't know how that year would go.

As we played through the season with some very close games we ended up going into the championship game undefeated going against another team who had only 1 loss...us

And after four quarters of gameplay the score was tied 0-0. A real barn burner I know.

To make a long story short...we won.

I can see the images in my mind of Danny Fallon knocking that last pass away to end the game and then running like maniacs all over that field celebrating what was probably the biggest moment in our lives.

I was 17 years old...nearly 20 years ago and it is like it was yesterday, I still remember the joy I felt that day.

Imagine how much more joy there is in the victory we celebrate in eternity in Jesus.

This is something we sing about quite often in our worship music even our own hymn books.

How about the last verse of Victory in Jesus...you know it?

I heard about a mansion, He has built for me in glory.

And I heard about the streets of gold, Beyond the crystal sea;

About the angels singing, And the old redemption story,

And some sweet day I'll sing up there, The song of victory.

Oh...victory in Jesus...

That is why we pursue what is eternal.

The victory has been won, we know that there is a great reward awaiting us...we just need to finish the race and finish it strong!

Finally this morning, I want us to see the third thing Paul tells us to pursue...

3. Pursue Transformation

Read verse 21.

“who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”

In 2 Cor. 5:17 we are told that we are new creations, the old has passed way, the new has come.

In Romans 12:1 we are told to not be conformed to the patterns of this world but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind.

And here in Phil 3:21 we see that ultimately we are going to undergo the mother of all transformations.

Do you realize that what we do here on earth as the LCN is preparation for eternity.

Too many people have this idea that since life is short God wants them to enjoy life and have all of the fun they can...to pursue happiness.

And there are some who have bought this lie and are living it straight to an eternity in Hell.

That is not what God created us for.

We were created by Him and for Him, His honor and His greater glory.

And as a result our salvation should bring a transformation into our lives.

We are new...

We are to be transformed...

We no longer live because Christ now lives in us...

And this is just a taste of eternity.

Basically, every day you are living eternally.

Eternal life doesn't start at death, it starts at faith.

It begins at the point of salvation.

And that eternal life should be transforming us from who we were before Christ more and more into the image of Christ.

Transition:

Let's be honest this morning as we wrap things up, are you different?

What was your life like before Christ?

Is your life different now?

“Well, I pray now...sometimes; and I go to church”

That's fine, but is your life transformed?

Is it different as a result of your faith that leads to repentance?

Listen to the message of Christ in Mark 1:15, *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe in the good news!"*

Our faith and repentance go hand in hand...faith should lead to a life change.

Jesus said in Luke 9:23 that if anyone would come after Him we must deny ourselves, take up our crosses daily and follow Him.

That in and of itself is a transformation from who we were without Christ.

With out Christ we are all about appeasing ourselves, taking up our own causes and following our hearts, our mind or our noses...not the things of God.

So, is your life different?

If not, you are missing out on the joy that comes from the pursuit of knowing God, the pursuit of what is eternal and the pursuit of transformation.

Transition:

And it all starts with knowing Christ.

Do you know Him this morning?

If not, you can pursue life, liberty and happiness all you want...but it is a chase that will lead you nowhere but away from God and His purpose for you.

But to pursue knowing God and to know Him, that is where eternal life is.

For our born again believers...I'll ask you again, do you have joy in your life?

Are you running after the wrong things?

If you have the joy, are you sharing it with others.

Did you invite them here this morning.