

The Mechanics of Happiness

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[0:00] I think a lot of you grew up in at least something similar to what I grew up in terms of church experience. And I remember the word worldliness being presented to me mostly as something out there that I could fall into.

Movies were, you know, certain movies were thought to be worldly. Certain music was thought to be worldly. Certain activities were thought to be worldly and so on and so forth.

And honestly, it's hard to diminish that, the value of that kind of teaching. It's good to hear those things. It's good to be encouraged toward discernment about all of those things.

And I would imagine that all of us could use a little bit more discernment as we engage with those sorts of things. But I think it's very important as we progress through Ecclesiastes for you to understand that worldliness is not fundamentally or primarily something that we might fall into. Worldliness is something we must grow out of. The day you were saved and set apart for the Lord Jesus, you were a worldly, worldly person.

[1:16] You had all of the instincts and inclinations associated with indwelling sin. All of the ways that the world thinks right now are the ways that you thought when you were saved.

And if you have grown in grace and pursued sanctification, then hopefully you're less worldly today than you were the day you were saved. But if you have not intentionally sought to put to death all that is worldly in you, if you have not intentionally offered your bodies as living sacrifices to the Lord so that you could have your minds renewed away from the world and into Christ, then the reality is, is that the worldliness that you got saved with may still be in there and needs to be handled.

What I'm talking about here is that you use the world's explanations for things, the world's playbook, the world's categories, the world's presuppositions as sort of more light than you realize.

They're guiding you more than you realize. And what Ecclesiastes seems to be doing, amongst other things, it is God's kind gift to say, hey, the world has really gotten inside of our heads when it comes to understanding the mechanics of happiness.

Now let's look at what the Bible actually says. Let's look at what God actually says. So the world's vision for happiness is almost always circumstantial, and it's almost always something like this.

[2:46] If I achieve X, if I accumulate this amount, if I accomplish this, then I'll be happy. Right? That's kind of the mechanics of happiness according to the world.

And Ecclesiastes is saying it's just way more complicated than that. Now, I was thinking about how many of these A words are words that are associated with this sort of thing.

I'm thinking of achieve, accumulate, accomplish, acquire, attain. And the reality is, is that those words are meaningful, and we as human beings are wired physiologically to feel good when we achieve something, or when we accomplish something, or when we acquire something.

But the reality is also that that feeling associated with those A words is not true, fundamental happiness.

It's a chemical reaction. Right? You're physiologically wired to feel a certain kind of way when those things happen to you, but that is not happiness.

[3:56] That is, you know, for lack of a better word, hormones. It's a chemical happening in your body, not actual happiness. The world simplifies the mechanics of happiness, and the Bible is saying, well, not so fast, Bucko.

It's actually quite a bit more complex. Here's how I would tell you just kind of broadly how the Bible talks about attaining happiness. I think there are at least four steps.

The first one is, number one, you need to want a good thing. Number two, you need to have the power to work toward the accomplishment of that good thing.

Number three, all of the external variables outside of your effort, the things that you can't control, they have to come together to help you accomplish this thing.

There's a ton of variables out there you can't control. And so one of the things that the Bible talks about when it talks about pursuing happiness, feeling good about accomplishing things, and so forth, is it always calculates for the stuff out there that you don't have any control over, whether it's the weather, the rule of law, your neighbor, your coworker, lots of stuff, right?

[5:11] So number one, you have to, like, want a good thing. Number two, you have to have the ability to achieve it. You have to have the energy, the health, the life to go out and earn the thing. Number three, even if you have those two things, you still need a bunch of outside variables that you don't have any control over to come together, serendipity, providence, etc.

And then finally, you have to have the ability to actually enjoy what you've accomplished or acquired or achieved. That would be at least four steps in the Bible's vision of happiness.

And the world's view is just super flattened, and it certainly doesn't accommodate for this concept that it's possible that you might accomplish something and not have the ability to be happy about it. But that's a major theme in the book of Ecclesiastes. I want to talk about these steps one by one, but we're going to spend most of our time thinking about this issue of having the ability to enjoy what God has given you.

But just going back a little bit, we would see that mechanics of happiness are complicated because, number one, there's a problem of taste. There's a problem of having rightly ordered desires.

[6:28] You don't come out of the box with rightly ordered desires. That's a lie told through the philosophy of Rousseau and others. You don't come out of the box with rightly ordered desires.

Your desires are fundamentally noetically sinful, meaning this theological phrase, the noetic effects of sin, what it means is that sin affects the way that you think.

And so if you're born with indwelling sin, which is the truth, that's where each one of us starts our story, we don't have a compass that works reliably so that we don't even necessarily know what we ought to desire.

And we've talked about this a little bit over the past few weeks when we discussed Ecclesiastes 4.4 and how that verse clearly states that the majority of people work to get things not because they themselves desire them in any kind of original way, but in a kind of Rene Girard mimetic thing, they look to what everybody else wants, they look to what everybody else values, and they decide, well, that's what I should want and value too.

So one of the complicators in the mechanics of happiness is like we don't even have a compass that works. We don't even know what the good is that we should desire. The second one is the problem of energy.

[7:47] That is to say that we in and of ourselves do not control our heartbeats, the mitochondrial function of our cells. We can't actually produce the energy, the enthusiasm, the effort necessary to accomplish the thing that we want to accomplish.

So just because we desired the good thing doesn't mean we would actually be able to get it because we might not have the life, the health, the energy to get it. We also might be tempted at this stage to lie to get it or to steal to get it or to misrepresent something to get it.

And so there's a moral hazard at this path as well. And then the third problem is is that even if we desire the right thing and we have the energy to work for it and we work for it the right way, there's still millions of variables out there outside of our control.

You know, we walked together, a lot of us, for quite a few years. And you remember there was this season where my son felt like he was on the cusp of becoming a professional athlete.

And the further we got into that world and the more you heard stories, you realized, oh my goodness, the number of variables that all have to line up to produce one professional athlete.

[9:07] It's insane. I mean, you're talking genetics, health, work, and that's just the stuff that's in you. And then you've got to find the right people to come along at the right time to believe in you in the right way and you have to have the right opportunities and so forth.

And it's just incredibly complex that even if you have a few of those things doesn't mean that you'll actually get across the finish line. And the reality is like that's just how everything is.

The reality is that there are so many variables outside your control. So even if you have the right desire and you are able to work for it, there could still be all sorts of things happening on the outside that frustrate your plans, that don't come together and don't allow you to do the thing you desire to

do.

And then let's suppose that you get all three of those lined up. You know, the combination on the lock is almost set. Of all the possible variables, you want the right thing, you work for it the right way, and all the external variables come together in the right way.

Well, there's a fourth problem. And this is the problem that our text is handling. And that is that even after all that, you may not have the ability to enjoy what you've accomplished.

[10:22] You may not have the ability to be content. The mechanics of happiness are complex.

It's a complex system, as they say. And the piece that needs to spend, I think the piece that we need to spend the most time on is this question of contentment.

Understanding fundamentally that we are dependent on God for every step of this accomplishing chain, but we are really going to lean in today into how dependent we are on God just to feel happy about what he's done, about what we've achieved, about the life we have.

That's what I mean when I talk about contentment, feeling happy with what God has provided, feeling happy with what has already been handed to us.

So let's look at our passage, Ecclesiastes 5.18. We're covering two sections of this, two chapters, and they both speak to the same concept.

[11:28] Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun in the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot.

Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil, this is the gift of God.

Chapter 6, verse 1. There is an evil that I have seen under the sun and it lies heavy on mankind, a man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him the power to enjoy them.

But a stranger enjoys them. This is vanity. It is a grievous evil. Verse 3 is where we'll really hang today. If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with life's good things, and he also has no burial, I'll explain that, I say that a stillborn child is better than he.

Okay, so how enjoyment works. Point one is something like the world versus the Bible on the mechanics of happiness. Point two is how enjoyment actually works.

[13:02] Remember, we're saying that there's at least four links in the chain. You've got to want the right thing. You've got to have the power to work for it. All the external variables you can't control have to come together. And finally, you have to enjoy, you have to have the ability, the power to enjoy what you've accomplished.

And within that final point, there's three kind of biblical ingredients you need to be able to enjoy what God has given you.

And they're all in this verse 3. The first one is longevity. Longevity. You need to be able to live long enough to enjoy the fruits of your labor.

I think one of the reasons I've gotten more serious about my health in the past couple years is, one, I want to be a better example. But two, I love my kids. I love my church.

I love my ministry. You know, I want to kind of be around and enjoy some of this. We went through a lot of stuff to get here. But you've got to have longevity. Of course, that's the whole idea in the parable of the man who built the barns.

[14:08] He had this tremendous harvest come forward, and he built more and more barns so that he could kind of rest on his laurels and enjoy life in a very Epicurean kind of way.

And that very night, the Lord says to him, you fool, do you not know that this very night your life will be required of you? He wasn't going to be able to enjoy all the blessings that he had acquired because the Lord was not going to give him longevity.

A second thing that you need is you need loved ones. The Bible is really clear, and Ecclesiastes is extraordinarily clear, that part of the chain of enjoyment is having people to share what God has done and provided, having people to share this with.

And so you need some kind of biological or filial relationship with people, and you need to have people to share your blessings with. It's an essential part of the mechanics of enjoyment.

And then finally, you need lucidity. And here all I mean is you need to actually have a right mind. You need to have a right heart. You need to be thinking well.

[15:23] And here, my friends, is where we'll spend the majority of our time and to show that this ability to rightly perceive God's gifts and to be grateful for them, that's essential.

And in many respects, it comes from God. Look back at verse 3. Chapter 6, verse 3. If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with life's good things, life's good things, and he also has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he.

So you see loved ones in there? The three L's. Loved ones, longevity, lucidity. You see loved ones in there? Yep, he's got a hundred children.

Probably not from the same wife. Spoiler alert. If so, she did not have long life. Got a hundred children.

What about longevity? Yep, it's right there. He lives many years. His days are many. And yet, his soul is not satisfied with life's good things.

[16:42] This is the lucidity element. The eyes of his heart, the way he thinks about his circumstances, is broken. And so it all exists.

He just can't absorb God's blessings in a way that satisfies his soul. It's the picture of a person who is dying of starvation with all the food around them because they have some sort of, you know, problem with their stomach.

They can't absorb nutrients or something like that. It's like tons of food, but you're still dying of malnourishment. And this is what, the text says that it'd just be better not to be born than to have this kind of gnawing discontentment.

Do you, I just wish that we would be more patient with pastoral warnings and that we would be more diligent to hear them?

Because I've talked about this for 10 years. That fundamentally, almost all of your life's problems will stem from ingratitude. And ingratitude is a grievous thing.

[18:01] Parenting tip, you can't teach your kids everything about everything. And you certainly can't control all the weird things they do and all the dumb things they do and so forth.

Do your best. Don't gentle parent your kid all the way to prison. But in reality, if you were going to do one thing, if you could do one thing, I'd say teach them to fear God and teach them to be grateful. Gratitude is a fundamental, my friends, to the good life. You can't think about this enough. You can't pursue it enough. I guarantee you, you have a deficiency here.

We all do. This is a sad picture of a person who's been given X, Y, and Z, but that final piece just can't be satisfied.

Just can't be satisfied. Now, let's talk about where this ability to recognize God's blessings and to be grateful for them and to be happy comes from.

[19:05] At one degree, the Bible teaches that it is from God. This is God's gift. Look at Ecclesiastes 519.

Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them. God gives the power to enjoy wealth and possessions.

And of course, that would be true of anything, not just wealth and possessions. The point here is that God gives people the power to enjoy the life that he has given them.

So, in one sense, we would say, absolutely, that contentment is a gift from God, but as we broaden the biblical literature, and I think we'll see it here as well, we would also say that contentment is a secret that we must seek and discover.

Contentment is a secret that we must seek and discover. At a certain point in my aging, your emotional bandwidth for people, it just shrinks a little bit and you begin to realize, like, here's the deal.

[20:18] You did not seek wisdom like silver. And the Bible tells you to do that. And the Bible says that you should seek wisdom like silver, for instance.

And you just begin to realize, like, you just begin that, like, there's people that wasted tons of their life not seeking wisdom like silver. What does that mean? Well, it means, like, you do a ton of work, like, getting silver is not easy.

It's a ton of effort. It's a ton of investment. It's dirty. It's time-consuming. It's sweaty. And the reality is, it's like, man, it's rough to see, to join lady wisdom in Proverbs 1 and say, boy, you kind of wasted your life.

You could have really spent a lot more calories seeking wisdom. And you didn't. You just didn't. And there are other things like that, too.

And one of them is contentment. Paul says in Philippians 4, 11 through 13, read this with me, Philippians 4, 11 through 13, not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

[21 : 31] Look at the first person pronouns here. I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low.

I know how to abound. In every, any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. And you know, I'm a pastor. I mean, really, I have a pretty high compassion level. One of the reasons I'm a pastor is I really care about people. But the reality is, is like, there are just moments where you realize, oh, you're asking me to care for you because you neglected something massive and I don't know how to care for you because you should have been doing what Paul did and you should have been learning the secret of contentment.

And you haven't. And it's like, well, that's rough, but I can't fix that in you. God can give you this, but the Bible's also clear you should pursue it.

[22 : 40] Jeremiah Burroughs, who wrote The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment, says that here Paul is showing how far he has advanced in the school of Christ. Whenever I see my nieces and nephews, they're so smart and they're so well educated.

Hashtag classical. Anyway, they, I don't, you know, I see them a couple times a year and like, it's just a delight to talk to these kids because they just like, levels unlocked and you can hear it.

You can hear the levels unlocked when you talk to them. And the idea is like, they just keep advancing and it's just so delightful to see. And the reality is what Paul's saying here is that he has kept his continuing education up.

He has continued to learn and he's achieved something very few do. He has learned how to be content with little and with much.

And so, as with many wonderful things, friends, I just want to tell you there is a tension in the Bible between God's sovereignty and your responsibility and I can't resolve that for you.

[23 : 46] All I can tell you is, is that the Bible simultaneously says that he gives you contentment. It's a gift from him and also you, like Paul, are responsible for enrolling in the school of Christ and learning the secret of contentment and it is worth your time to invest in the secret of contentment.

There are two books that you should read multiple times in your life. Dove might need to help me with the titles here. Get your Google out, okay? All right. First one is, the one that I prefer more, is Thomas Watson and that's The Divine Art of Contentment.

Is that right? Okay. And that is in modern English. You can get that in modern English and there are audible versions of it and I want to let you know, do not, do not read that book quickly.

Read a little bit, pray and repent. Read a little bit more, pray and repent. It should take you a couple weeks to get through that book. And the other one is The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment by Jeremiah Burroughs and I, it's also tremendous.

I would probably tell you do Watson first. I think Dove and I are both on like the Watson bandwagon pretty big, so probably Watson first. But let me tell you something, do not ask your spiritual leaders, your parents, the government, or whatever product is out tomorrow, or social media, do not ask others to solve the problem that you are responsible for solving yourself and that is you must enroll in the school of Christ and you must learn, personally, you, you must learn the secret of contentment.

[25 : 28] And if you haven't invested that time in your spiritual health, I need to understand why I should or anyone else should.

At some point, you need to own the fact that with your life, you have chosen not to obey these simple commands to learn the secret to contentment, to seek wisdom like silver, and to understand that has been your choice and the discontent you feel now is a consequence of that choice and probably also God's discipline because there's a third layer to this issue.

The first layer is is the Bible teaches that God gives contentment. The second layer is is that you are responsible for learning the secret. And the third point is is that there is a kind of discontentment that is God's discipline.

There is a kind of discontentment that is God's discipline. In Deuteronomy 28, this is the Deuteronomic discontent passage.

Deuteronomy 28, I think there's something like 54 curses in a row for those who will not obey the word of God. And a bunch of those curses are related to discontentment.

[26:58] Let me read those to you. Deuteronomy 28, 20. The Lord will send on you curses, confusion, and frustration in all that you undertake to do.

Verse 28, The Lord will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of mind. You shall grope at noonday as the blind grope in darkness and you shall not prosper in your ways. You shall only be oppressed and robbed continually and there shall be no one to help you. Verse 56, this one really stands out.

The most tender and refined woman among you who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because she is so delicate and tender will begrudge to the husband she embraces and to her son and to her daughter.

A woman becomes resentful and begrudging of her own family. Verse 65, But the Lord will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul and your life shall hang in doubt before you.

[28:11] Night and day you shall be in dread and have no assurance of your life. In the morning you shall say if only it were evening and at the evening you shall say if only it were morning.

Discontentment as a curse. Discontentment as discipline. Leviticus 26, 36, For as for those of you who are left I will send faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies the sound of a driven leaf shall put them to flight and they shall flee as one flees from the sword and they shall fall when no one pursues.

One of the disciplines of God that is most clear in Scripture is the loss of the ability to think right. It's often referred to as judicial hardening and it is very clear in Scripture from the hand of the Lord.

You have someone like Saul or you have someone like Debuachadnezzar. In 2 Thessalonians 2.11 Paul says that God sent a strong delusion to the people.

Romans 1 gives us a forensic recounting of the source of this foolishness this lack of ability to see clearly. Romans 1.21 says that people became futile in their thinking.

[29:41] If you look up the Greek word for futile here go to the Greek Old Testament the word futile is the same word as vanity in the book of Ecclesiastes. Why were they given up to this futility of mind this constant craving and never accomplishing this never feeling of being satisfied and whole because they knew God but did not honor Him or give Him thanks.

The reality is that there are three things the Bible teaches about contentment. Number one it is a gift from God. Number two it is a responsibility of man. And number three there seems to be a point of no return or a point of limitation where your consistent ingratitude produces God's discipline and you become even less capable of being satisfied.

Now go back to our text Ecclesiastes 6-3 If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years so that the days of his life are many but his soul is not satisfied with life's good things and he has no burial I say that a stillborn child is better than he what does it mean when it says also he has no burial?

Well at one level this is very easy to understand the Bible the Old Testament makes it clear that if a person doesn't receive a burial it's a sign that they were cursed by God so what the preacher is saying here and didn't have a burial is that this is a man who had been disciplined by God this is a man who God had turned his back on this is a man who had all of the gifts and none of the gratitude and he was done so it's a picture of a cursed life it's a picture of a life that ends in the anger and not the pleasure of God but if you go back to that verse you'll see that this is a man with a hundred children and apparently none of them could be bothered to provide pops with a burial and friends this is very important and very sobering so once you understand that when you lose the lucidity of contentment you will almost always alienate your loved ones when you lose the ability to be satisfied to be happy to be satiated and you live in a kind of chronic hunger for something else uncertainty and so forth you will invariably you will invariably isolate yourself from the very people God has given you to love and be loved by discontentment also affects longevity I'm going to get back to this loved ones thing in a minute but just real quickly I said there were three L's to this thing you need longevity to enjoy this stuff you need loved ones and you need lucidity and now I'm saying it's actually weird because if you don't figure out this contentment thing mentally spiritually emotionally attitudinally!

[33:13] you will absolutely affect the other two else a person who struggles with satisfaction will almost always hurt their own health in one way or another I mean back in the you know growing up in the 80s and 90s I remember the day that Magic Johnson was announced to have AIDS like your mind you remember that we have categories the prodigal son being one of a person who spins his health to some degree on his discontentment but the reality is that overeating as I would know many people who struggle with their weight like me have in some sense in the past at least had a struggle with being still with feeling satisfied and the tendency to use food as a numbing agent for your discontent or as the one thing you can control or the one thing you can give yourself and of course there's many other substances substance abuse and other addictions and we're all familiar with this people who haven't learned how to be content are constantly looking to chemistry or shopping or something else to numb the gnawing hunger in their souls overworking worrying giving giving yourself stomach problems elevating your cortisol losing sleep

I've done almost all of these I don't think I've ever done drugs but the day is still young my ID keeps hurting like this we might have a different conversation you understand though like the gnawing dissatisfaction actually hurts your health and of course as I said a moment ago it absolutely fundamentally hurts your relationships 2 Timothy 4:10 is a good example of that Paul in that passage he's facing the end of his life and he says I'm basically alone and you look at why did people leave you Paul and Paul says real clearly 4:10 Demas in love with this present world has left me people who can't be properly satisfied in God can't be loyal can't be faithful they can't be still there's uh

Viktor Frankl's got this concept of like if a person can't find fundamental meaning they waste their lives with pleasures they waste their lives with pleasures if they can't find fundamental meaning they waste their lives with pleasures but you know there's a guy there's a person who's the exact opposite of that they can't just be happy with simple everything has to be complicated and meaningful and 12 layers of deep again this is all confession hour for me and so that guy he's the opposite he just can't be still and happy at a family gathering he just can't think that Sunday dinner is good enough he can't be content with the small things and so he's constantly estranging people around him because he can't just chill reality is is that this you have every reason this is all I'm doing you have every reason to prioritize enrolling in the school where you learn the secret every reason and that's what this text is saying it just breaks my heart to realize how often a discontented person dismisses the loved ones in their lives

I was thinking last week about how Naomi you know she moves away and a terrible tragedy strikes her she loses her husband and her two sons but there's this gloriously profound gift that this woman named Ruth who doesn't have any reason to do this says she says to Naomi listen don't put me don't send me away your people are going to be my people your God is going to be my God where you go I will go and I'm going to do that until the day we both die a few verses later after hearing that wonderful pledge of love Naomi arrives in Bethlehem and the women say is that you Naomi Naomi and Naomi says don't call me Naomi call me Mara which means bitter for I went away full and I have come back empty who are you totally taking for granted right now whose love are you just totally taking for granted right now if you haven't learned contentment it's just inevitable that you are doing that and friends there are like pieces of your life where this comes out more if you haven't learned sexual contentment if you haven't learned financial contentment you're going to alienate people most importantly discontentment affects your relationship with the

Lord we don't talk a lot about the concept of apostasy or shipwrecking your faith but the Bible's got a number of those examples and the very parable of the seeds and the sower present the same kind of concept as someone who started out in the right direction and then didn't finish well didn't endure to the end and the Bible says you must endure to the end to be saved the seed gets choked out by what well in short cares the most likely way a person shipwrecks their faith is because they just simply couldn't be satisfied with what God had done most importantly what God had done in Christ not only does it affect the longevity of your relationship with God it certainly just affects your personal relationship with God fundamentally fundamentally the basic mechanics of your relationship with God are gift giver and recipient that's the fundamental so if you don't know how to be content you don't know how to be a

[40:02] Christian God the most fundamental thing about you and God is he gives you things and you receive them with gratitude so just as a summary firstly the biblical mechanics of happiness are more complex and more accurate than the world's things the world's approach is very caveman like

I see thing I want thing I get thing I me now happy you know that's the world's message biblical messages it's way more complicated than that this thing is fraught with problems and you should humbly call the Lord and say God I don't even know what I should want and if you don't give me through your Holy Spirit and your word direction I won't even know what I should want I won't even have the right priorities and God

I definitely won't have the life the breath the energy the hustle the good attitude the skills to go out and work for what I should want so I need that too also Lord your word says in a thousand different ways that unless the Lord blesses builds the house those who labor labor in vain we understand that we can't actually bring any of this into being so not only do I need you to help me want the right thing I need you to help me to work for it the right way and also there's a million things I have no idea how they happen but you have to figure all that out too and finally God give me the ability to enjoy and if I were God I would just say we can do that one right now that one is not forward facing that one does not depend on you accomplishing anything right now you could just start being thankful for what is now you could start being grateful today and I would recommend that we zealously pursue gratitude secondly as with all the great things in this world there's this weird mixture between

God's sovereignty and our responsibility and contentment is one of those things I would just tell you this you should absolutely plead with the Lord to give you a heart that is content you should understand that you may be in a cloud right now for a past season of ingratitude repent ask the Lord to lift that cloud if it exists and ask him to bring true gratitude to your heart now I've told you before that in Ecclesiastes there's seven rejoinders I think maybe I've said ten a couple times but I'm just bad at math it's seven and it's the seven rejoinders that always just say the same thing what I have found the preacher says is that there's nothing better than for man to be happy with his toil it happens seven times and I've told you two weeks ago that the baseline for us as new covenant believers is that we have to do a little word scrambling there and our life starts by saying there's nothing better for me than to be grateful for the work of Jesus

Christ and the fruits of his toil that's your foundation as a Christian before you can ever rejoice in all the basic things of working hard and earning and having a family and all these things fundamentally your heart must delight in the work of Jesus Christ and the fruit that that work has borne in your life and that work is this he though equal with God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but took on the form of a servant and became subject to all of the fundamental problems with humanity he was tempted in many ways yet without sin he had to sleep and eat and ultimately had to die he lived a perfectly righteous life under really difficult conditions and that righteousness wasn't simply actions but also attitudes if the Lord this morning has given you a big attitude check first of all that's why I'm doing that's why I'm here for sure and if the Lord's doing that praise God but understand this

Jesus had a perfect attitude perfectly content foxes have nests the son of man has no place to lay his head he wrote the secret to contentment walked through this life perfectly content perfectly satisfied perfectly happy totally undeterred walked all the way to the cross to bear the burden of your great sin which the Bible describes fundamentally Romans 1 as in gratitude he died for you so that you could be forgiven and so that you could receive the spirit of God be transformed and day by day get better at the secret of learning to be content with much and with little but let's make sure we know this before we celebrate the table today ultimately it's it's

[45 : 32] God's plan for you is much God's plan for you is much and it starts with the fact that he did not spare his own son but gave him freely to us all and so when we celebrate the table today we ask God do the miracle in my heart give me what I need to be content lift your discipline off me if I'm in a cloud of discontentment I don't want to be there and let it start by me taking this cup and this bread and saying look what you gave me and look how often I have taken it for granted or today would you please help me not to be that guy that girl help me not to take this for granted let's pray it is it is absolutely essential father that we can embrace the hardest darkest realities of who we are with one hand and with the hand of faith also say and my

God is everything I am not and he loves me and he's offered Jesus for me we don't want to repent in a way that leads to despair that's not repentance we want to look to the cross and say you have made a way for me not only to be forgiven but also to become more and more like you and less and less like the world so I just pray for everybody in this room father may you just do a work in our church just as human beings father in our in our jobs in our conditions in our relationships even in

our interaction with one another would you just do a work God to make us a more grateful and content and satisfied people Lord would you remind us on Tuesday and on Thursday and on Friday that we have work to do we are to pursue this not merely to pray for it but father you would just be good to us and give us this great gift Lord you you sent a guy like Jeremiah Burroughs to command a people going through war and plague and famine to be content you did not do that because you were telling these people to stop whining you were doing that because you wanted them to be sensible lucid aware of your goodness even in those conditions would you please do the same for us in Jesus name we pray amen so if you're a follower of Jesus Christ today I'd encourage you to come and grab a cup and some bread return to your seat and we'll partake of the table together