

Part 41: Make me happy

Begin with three minutes of stillness, letting go of all the clutter that you have brought with you. Let all that the day has loaded onto you drain away. Share briefly from your week. (20 minutes)

Happiness and the quest for it are probably at the top of the list for most people in the world today. The search for the person or people, the things and the environment that will give one ultimate happiness is endless.

When the Jews heard that Jesus was the Messiah whom they had awaited for so long, their first reaction was to find out what he was going to do for them. When was he going to lead them to defeat the Romans and restore Israel to its former glory? Their expectations were heavy with desires. Yet he lived up to very few of them. He seemed to be speaking of something totally different: 'If they take your cloak, give them your shirt also'; 'love your enemies'; 'bless those who persecute you'; 'Happy are those who hunger and thirst, those who mourn . . .'.

Happy, (or 'blessed' in some translations of the Bible) here is used to mean something far deeper and more fulfilling than it is used to mean nowadays.

As with love, the prevalent idea today is that to be happy means to have good feelings. Again, this is far from the truth. How flimsy our love and happiness will be if they follow the fluctuations of good feelings.

Addiction to happiness comes from its apparent offer of total bliss and an escape from difficult issues, whereas Jesus spoke of happiness as being in that place in oneself where one is finding peace in facing life issues and through them in the awareness of God's presence and self-revelation.

If I am unhappy as a person, no person or thing outside of myself can change or affect that radically. At best it will cause a temporary diversion where I forget my unhappiness, but when the distraction passes, I am left with the same unhappy self. Many people therefore seek continuous diversion in people or pleasures or pastimes, but underlying all these is the constant anxiety that they will pass, leaving one to face one's inner self again, alone.

Take 20 minutes to **reflect** on the above and on your understanding of happiness. Then read Matthew 5:1–12 and see what you understand to be God's view of happiness.

How do you feel about all this?

Journal and share in the group.

During the week,

- Look at what you do and why you do it.
- What are your expectations of life?



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