



SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE
FOR ALL SAINTS SMALL GROUPS

“Learning Contentment” | Rev. Craig Chapman | February 20, 2022

OLD TESTAMENT READING

Exodus 20:1-4, 7-8, and 12-17 And God spoke all these words, saying, 2 “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 “You shall have no other gods before me. 4 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them 7 “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.... 8 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ... 12 “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. 13 “You shall not murder. 14 “You shall not commit adultery. 15 “You shall not steal. 16 “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 17 “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

EPISTLE READING

Philippians 4:10-20 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. 11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me. 14 Yet it was kind of you to share

Discussion:

This last section in the letter to the Philippians, written from prison, covers what Paul wants the Christians there to know as they face a daunting future: there is no greater need than that they be a hopeful, joyful, alive church of Jesus Christ, living in contentment.

Their evident joy resulted in exponential growth, much like a wildfire. The peace, joy, and contentment of Phil 4:6, 7, 11, and 13 are the triplet sisters to guide them. Historically, this joy has held the church together through hard times. When Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley in England were burned at the stake for their faith, Latimer called to Ridley to have a good heart, that “By God’s grace, we will light a candle in England that will not be put out.” This same candle of contentment in the face of great suffering has lit the church’s progress through persecution, poverty, and fear, but we live in a society that has bountiful material resources, yet cannot seem to find contentment. Craig referred to Christians in Cuzco, Peru, and Ulan Bator, Mongolia, who show this godly contentment in the midst of great poverty.

The Mystery of Contentment

This deep-seated joy, no matter what life throws at you, is elusive but attainable, but not by dwelling on our own insufficiencies. By comparing our personalities, social philosophy, public self and physical appearance, accomplishments, or material situation to others, we only focus inwardly on what we cannot do, have, or be. John D. Rockefeller said, when asked how much money was enough, “A little bit more.” Tom Brady, when asked which of his many Super Bowl rings was his favorite, replied “The next one.”

The secret of contentment comes rather from dependence on Jesus Christ in all things (Phil 4:11-13). Jesus can enter into and work through each of us to bring contentment in any and all circumstances. Paul struggled to learn this contentment through experiencing God’s sufficient grace in adversity. In Rom 7:7, Paul speaks of struggling with covetousness, in II Cor 12:7 of suffering a physical “thorn in the flesh,” which God used as a severe mercy to teach him dependence, and in II Cor 4:17,18 of trials preparing him for the eternal weight of glory.

my trouble. 15 And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. 16 Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. 17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. 18 I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. 19 And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. 20 To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 6:25-33 “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

The Marks of Gospel Contentment

Godly contentment works out in compassion and generosity. A life of thankfulness moves us away from the project of satisfying ourselves to the privilege of glorifying God by generously giving to and serving others. We become like Jesus in our joy, kindness, and contentment. Only by reminding ourselves again and again of who we are and what we owe to Jesus, can we seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. The prescription for the sickness of discontentment is to trust him and recognize that he is at work in us, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Phil 2:13). Pray to him, worship him, serve him, listen to him, and then leave the rest to him. Let our lives so shine before others that they may see our good works [and especially our contentment] and glorify our father who is in heaven (slightly paraphrased from Matthew 5:15 and 16).

Discussion

1. Consider when you were most recently discontented and why. Where did this discontent originate and what can you do to hand it over to Jesus?
2. What trials do you encounter that test your dependence on God? Consider sharing these trials and asking for other believers for scriptural assurances that will help you endure them.
3. Where do you see discontentment in the world around you? Can you identify some of the ways of the world that endanger your dependence on Jesus?
4. What part does Christian fellowship play in your battles with insecurity? Material covetousness? Social and psychological doubts? What do you do to develop healthy relationships with other believers?
5. What future worries have upset your contentedness? What have you done within the bounds of your resources to prepare for these? Then can you leave the rest to God?
6. Consider your resources and commit them to God for his use.