

## **“Happy” by Rev. Cameron D. St. Michael**

Heavenly Father help us to hear your word for us today. We know that your words are eternal, and that you can be found everywhere. Help us to grow in faith together, that as we hear your scriptures read, we learn to love greater in you and to seek you in all that we do. By your Holy Spirit in your Holy Church, through Jesus Christ our Lord. And let God’s people say Amen.

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up a mountain. He sat down, and his disciples came to him. He taught them, saying: “Happy are people who are hopeless, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Happy are people who grieve, because they will be made glad. Happy are people who are humble, because they will inherit the earth. Happy are people who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, because they will be fed until they are full. Happy are people who show mercy, because they will receive mercy. Happy are people who have pure hearts, because they will see God. Happy are people who make peace, because they will be called God’s children. Happy are people whose lives are harassed because they are righteous, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Happy are you when people insult you and harass you and speak all kinds of bad and false things about you, all because of me. Be full of joy and be glad, because you have a great reward in heaven. In the same way, people harassed the prophets who came before you. (Matthew 5:1-12 CEB)

I came to today’s scripture from a song that I have heard many, many times and it comes from the movie Despicable Me and it just so happens that my kids love it so I’ve heard this song a countless number of times and the song is called ‘Happy’ by Pharrell Williams and here’s a little bit of it and you’ll quickly understand how it lead me to today’s reading.

“Here comes bad news talking this and that. Well give me all you got, don’t hold it back. Well I should probably warn you I’ll be just fine. No offense to you, don’t waste your time, here’s why. Because I’m happy. Clap along if you feel like a room without a roof. Because I’m happy. Clap along if you feel like happiness is the truth. Because I’m happy. Clap along if you know what happiness is to you. Because I’m happy. Clap along if you feel like that’s what you wanna do.”

Now, you might’ve been a little confused with today’s reading if you are used to the more traditional version. “Blessed are, blessed are those who are weak in spirit.” But as I was thinking

about it, I realized that outside of quoting scripture, I have never once in conversation said, “Well, you know what, blessed are anybody.” When I talk about people, I notice that someone is happy. I don’t know that I have ever described somebody with a ‘blessed are’. And then it got me to thinking, what does it mean that all these people are happy? And if they’re to be happy then we should be happy, but then there came the hardest question of all – are we happy? That should be an easy question. It should be one that we should be able to go, ‘Well, yes, I’m happy.’ But when I look around, I don’t get the indication that many people *are* happy. Now, I used to be able to say, ‘if you watch the nightly news’ and now the news is on twenty-four seven so if we happen to turn on the news at any point in the day, we will likely find somebody who is unhappy. And the crazy part is that it might be the people who are winning right now and they’re unhappy because other people aren’t happy for their success and they don’t feel like they’re winning enough and so they’re unhappy because, though they’ve done all these things, they aren’t finished and they aren’t happy because there’s still so much to be done. And then there’s the people who feel they’re losing and they’re unhappy because they feel like they’re not being heard and feel like they’re losing an uphill battle and now is the time to strike back. And if I’m with the people who don’t seem to want to take a side are unhappy because they have to listen to everybody else complain.

You know, I started thinking about even the Methodists right now; we have a big conference coming up in February and there has been a lot of arguing from all sorts of people and not a lot of people happy that we are coming together to discuss important issues. I started thinking, ‘Gosh, there’s a lot of unhappy people and here’s Jesus saying, ‘be happy.’” Happy are people who are hopeless, happy are people who grieve, happy are people who are humble, happy are people who hunger and thirst for righteousness, happy are people who show mercy, happy are people with pure hearts, happy are people who make peace. I started thinking, ‘What is the best way to sum this up? All these people who we might not expect to be happy should be happy, but why?’ And the answer I came to is, ‘Be happy because God is still there. Be happy when you are hopeless because though you may have given up hope, God has not given up hope in you. God is still there, faithfully waiting. Happy are people who grieve because God has given us a promise of more than something than just this life, that while we grieve for life lost in this

one, we can be happy of life gained in the next. Happy are people who are humble, that when we bring ourselves low, it will be Christ himself that raises us up. How can we not be happy knowing that? Happy are people who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, that people who seek justice should be happy that God is on their side, that they seek the kingdom itself by seeking what is good and what is right. Happy are people who show mercy because we know that God has shown us great mercy, that God continues to show us great mercy, so we should be happy that God is there for us. Happy are people who have pure hearts because they don't get hung up on all the terrible things and all the negative things. They don't get hung up on all the things that should bring us down because that, above all else, that God is with them. Happy are people who make peace because they will be called God's own, because they bring peace to a broken world, they fulfill God's mission. How can we *not* be happy?

Too often, we don't think about that happiness because we're so caught up in our worries; worry about what we're going to lose, worry about if we're going to gain enough, worry about if we have enough to give, worry about if we have enough to gain. We worry about losing so much that we're not happy about the one thing we cannot lose – that we cannot lose God. Sure, we can turn from God, but if we turn back, God will be there with open arms, saying, "I have been waiting for you." That we have a God whose steadfast love endures forever, waiting for us around every bend, who's waiting for us through every trial and temptation, who's waiting for us through every heartache and grief, a God who is there to say, "I am still here to comfort you, I am still here to lead you, I am still here...I am still here." They could outlaw Christ tomorrow. They could come and shutter the doors of the church, they could arrest me and throw me in jail. They could threaten all of you with jail if you speak the name of God. And still, no one will have taken God from you. God is not this building, God is not this book. God is the God who is active in our lives this very moment, the God who hears our prayers and answers them, the God who guides us and leads us by the Holy Spirit, the God who died on a cross to forgive our sins. Nobody can take that from us. Shouldn't that make us happy? Shouldn't we be overjoyed that we have that? Always, in everything that we do, we have God.

It made me start think about the things that I have to be happy for; I'm happy that I woke up this morning, that in itself is something that, maybe, we should be a little happier about. I'm

happy that I woke up at three AM because a toddler decided that his bed was no longer made correctly, and the sheets needed to be in the right order and I went and remade his bed so sleep. I was happy knowing that he relies on me. I'm happy that I got to wake up and have breakfast with my family and spend time with people I love, happy I get to come here and spend time with people that I love, celebrating a God that I love. I'm happy that I have all these experiences and maybe we should be happier about the things we often fret about. Maybe we should be celebrating that we have conference coming up and it's gonna be special and it's gonna be crazy, but God bringing us together – his bringing us together as God's children. We can discuss things that are important in our lives. We can discuss things that are important in the world and we can hear each other out so that we may understand each other better, so that we may serve God better. Maybe it's how we look at these events; maybe if we don't look at it as an upcoming conflict, that we look at things as a gift that we may be able to work more closely together for God, that even when we disagree with each other, if our focus is on making the world a better place, even if we disagree about to do it, we can be happy that there are people who are trying to make the world a better place, that we can be happy to share in something and we share in a God whose grace and mercy outshines us all, whose love will outlast this life whose care has been from of old. Maybe we need to start celebrating those things that we dread, that maybe my schedule is rather hectic, but maybe I should be happy that God's keeping me busy. Maybe if we turned those things on their head, those things that make us stop and worry if we turn them around and say, 'Well, you know what, God will help me, and I don't know exactly how and I surely don't know why he's gonna help me, but I'm happy that he is.' And maybe we should be able to say, 'I'll be just fine. Don't waste your time with all of that negative because I'm happy, because God is with me, that wherever I go, God is there. Where ever I go, God will be there. Whatever I do, whether I fail or succeed, God will be there to either pick me up off the ground and dust me off and say, "you tried" or he's going to be there to say, "and now you did". But God will be there celebrating with me. Maybe we should all find more opportunities to be happy. That we should be the happiness we seek in the world. That we may be the joy that Christ brings to our lives, that we may be that joy to a broken world. May we say, "happy are those that go

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with God, because surely God's light will shine on them all the days of their lives." And happy are we that we bear witness to such a wondrous love. Amen.