

# Psalm 131

## 1. Introduction

### **How can I be happy?**

The fundamental question – the answer shapes all our actions

The search for happiness is the reason why people marry ...and why they divorce

Why some to seek promotion... some to settle in their lowly job

Why some turn to drink and others never touch a drop

Blaise Pascal (1623 -1662)

"All men seek happiness. There are no exceptions. However different the means they employ, they all strive towards this goal. The reason why some go to war and some do not is the same desire in both, but interpreted in different ways. The will never takes the least step except to that end. This is the motive of every act of every man, including those who go and hang themselves..."

Noone ever does anything except that they think it will make them happier.

"All men complain: princes, subjects, nobles, commoners, old, young, strong, weak, learned, ignorant, healthy, sick, in every country, at every time, of all ages, and all conditions... What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace?"

### **I want to talk about what will make us happy because we live in an unhappy culture**

Lots to be happy about: Technologically advanced, Great freedom, Wealthy

But our culture is unhappy and getting more so

Last 50 years at least – less happy

“Affluenza” – popularised by Olive James’ book.

### **The Songs of Ascents have explored the mes of unhappiness**

Psalm 126 – sowing in tears

Psalm 130 – opposition from within, personal sin which has brought great unhappiness – “out of the depths I cry”

Psalm 131 – he has found contentment

## 2. Humility – v1

### **Of the heart - “My heart is not proud”**

Notice – this is king David speaking

Defeated innumerable enemies

United Israel

Established Jerusalem as the capital city

As if that was not enough

Nationally acclaimed musician  
one of the greatest poets of the ancient world.

**Of the eyes - “my eyes are not haughty”**

Does not look down on other people.

How does he achieve that?

Psalm 130 – a forgiven sinner

- Many here very bright, very able, from relatively wealthy backgrounds
  - In God’s eyes – not particularly better than the drunks that gather in front of the church building.
  - Sinners equally in need of God’s grace – Psalm 130:3-4

Why does humility make us happy?

Because one of our most destructive drives is the drive to persuade ourselves that we are better than the next person.

The destructive drive to “look down on other people”

- Friend “At the end of the day happiness is sitting down and knowing that you have just a little bit more than the next door neighbour.”
- Answer: the happiness of doing what God calls you to do
  - May be great things – David was king
  - May be to forgo greatness in the world’s eyes – forgotten missionaries – they speak of their happiness
  - May be that you are not gifted for an impressive task – will you be resentful? Will you consider yourself a second class citizen?

**Of the mind – “I do not concern myself with great matters....” V1b**

Our culture becomes furious with this attitude

Kant “dare to know”

Nietzsche faith is “a protracted suicide of reason”

But slowly we have come to realise that the deepest things we cannot know – at least to the satisfaction of philosophers.

Why do things happen as they do?

Why is there suffering in the world?

What does the future hold?

Why am I like I am?

- Concern yourself with the great things you should know
  - God is the creator and controller of all things
  - God is good – God is light in him there is no darkness at all 1 John 1:5
  - Jesus Christ died on the cross for all of your sins – if you trust in him
  - God has promised resurrection life, eternal joy, everlasting communion with him – to those who fear him.
- Don’t concern yourself with questions to which you will never find an answer
  - You say “but I must use my mind” – Yes by all means probe, question, think – but recognise a limit to what you can know.
  - Some say “this is just the sort of obscurantist nonsense that confirms that Christians are fools” – the fools are those who think that they can know everything.

- On the most fundamental issues philosophy has made virtually no real progress in 2000 years!
- Find contentment in this humility of the mind
  - Karl Barth – “Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so”
  - You don’t know the future ... so don’t concern yourself unduly with it – “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever”
  - You don’t know the ultimate reason for your circumstances ... “God works for the good of those who love him in all things”
  - You don’t know exactly why you sin – but
    - you know “with God there is forgiveness”
    - you know that “God has poured out his love into our hearts by his Spirit”
    - you know that “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”
    - you know that God will “conform you to the likeness of his son”
    - So enjoy his love and forgiveness – and let him worry about how he is going to change you! – this will transform you!

**How can I be happy?... be humble!**

3. Free dependency – v2

**The most beautiful picture**

Not the dependent baby

Shakespeare “mewling and puking in his mother’s arms”

Not the “terrible twos”

Desperate need to contradict but insecurity as well

Not the stroppy teenager

Wanting to be an adult but not quite ready to be

Not even the adult

An independent self-sufficient person with no sense of dependency

**“The weaned child”**

In need of regular nourishment, but not milk – now solid food, learning to hold a spoon!

In need of emotional security and protection “in his mother’s arms” – but not utterly vulnerable

Not dominated by the next meal, or the state of its nappy

- God has given you a life to lead
  - Not independently of him – he calls you to daily dependence and obedience
  - But not as an infant – “in understanding be men”
- Committed Christians consistently score highest in polls about personal happiness

**The secret of happiness?**

**Trust in the real God.**