



**SCRIPTURE:**

Isaiah 55:1-3

**SERMON:**

12 years ago, Pastor Erik gave me this book, *Desiring God*. Inside it, he wrote, “Brandon, this book will turn your world upside down...in a good way.” He didn’t know how right he was. For the last 12 years, I have been impacted by the ministry and teaching of John Piper. His teachings on joy and God’s glory have not only filled my own personal life, they have shaped my teaching ministry in serious ways.

I say that because, in today’s message, I am going to talk to you about satisfaction in Christ, and I would be lying if I didn’t say that Piper influenced this message. But I also want you to know that these truths I am about to share with you are deeply embedded in my heart and soul. I love these truths, and my prayer is that you will, too.

How many of you grew up hearing preaching like this: “God doesn’t care if you’re happy. He wants you to be holy.”? Or “God’s not concerned about your own personal fulfillment; He commands obedience.”

I think we all have.

I didn’t grow up in church, but I certainly grew up believing that I had to make a choice between my happiness and doing what was right.

I have told you about my struggles with drugs and alcohol, and how the Lord delivered from my addiction and saved me when I was 21 years old. Throughout my entire teenage life, I was constantly being told I wasn’t allowed to do what made me happy. Judges, police officers, teachers, probation officers, and my parents all ridiculed me for pursuing my own fulfillment.

Now, to be fair. They were right because I was a criminal. My happiness was found in drinking, drugging, lying, cheating, stealing etc. So, they were right to tell me to shape up and behave. But my problem remained: I had to make a choice. Do what you love or follow the rules.

I wonder how many people think those are the options God offers. Do you view Jesus as saying, you need to make a choice: You can choose to follow me, go to church, serve my cause, read your Bible, pray, and do all the things I require, or you can choose to go your own way and do what you want to do; do what makes you happiest.

I think that's what Adam and Eve believed. They got to live with God in paradise. He only gave them one prohibition. Don't eat from that tree. But what happened when Eve was tempted? Genesis 3:6, She saw that ***“the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”*** Do you see the decision they were faced with? Obey God and do the right thing or take the fruit and you will be happy!

That's what I thought for years: be good or pursue joy.

But do you know what happened? My pursuit of happiness away from God led to my misery and destruction. But then the Lord saved me and I made an awesome discovery. My pursuit of happiness and joy doesn't have to be detached from doing the right thing. The right thing for all men is to serve and worship Christ. And I have found that my highest joy comes when I am serving, loving, and worshiping Christ.

What that means is this: I don't have to pick between the two. I don't have to make a choice between doing what's right and pursuing my own joy, because the two are bound into one. My highest joy and happiness come when I am in a proper relationship to my Creator and serving His purposes for His glory.

That's what I hope to show you today in Scripture. My prayer is that you would walk away from this message believing you should pursue your happiness, not in the world, but in Christ Himself.

### **#1-All men desire happiness**

Our passage is Isaiah 55. The Lord is offering salvation to His people in Babylonian exile. He's offering them complete and total satisfaction in Him. But the people foolishly decide to choose other sources of happiness.

***1 “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.***

The language in this text is not literal. These are metaphors. The Lord isn't talking about physical thirst. He's talking about spiritual thirst. When He mentions wine and milk, He doesn't mean literal drinks. The Lord is saying, just as good food satisfies your stomach when you're hungry, so will I satisfy your starving soul. So come to me.

The problem is the people pursue satisfaction in the things of the world and not God.

***2 Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy.***

Remember, this is not literal. This is metaphorical language. He's saying why do you seek other sources of happiness and satisfaction when I offer you myself? Why do you seek happiness in the things that won't make you happy?

Notice, the Lord doesn't chastise them for pursuing satisfaction. He's chastising them for pursuing satisfaction in the wrong things.

We'll come back to that in a minute, but I want to stop and make this point: All men want to be happy. We desire happiness just as naturally as we desire food and sleep. And everyone pursues happiness. In fact, it could be argued that you desire to be happy in everything you do.

Blaise Pascal famously said,

*All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.*

His point is that, even though we may seek it in different ways, we pursue happiness in everything we do. And listen, there is nothing wrong with that. It's not a sin to desire happiness. It's how God made us. He made us creatures who desire happiness.

Listen to what another theologian said,

*Consider what man is. He is, (1.) A creature that desires happiness, and cannot but desire it. The desire of happiness is woven into his nature, and cannot be eradicated. It is as natural for him to desire it as it is to breathe. (2.) He is not self-sufficient: he is*

*conscious to himself that he wants many things, and therefore he is ever seeking something without himself in order to be happy.*

There is nothing sinful about wanting to be happy. The problem is that we seek happiness in the wrong places.

## **#2-We seek happiness in the wrong places**

Turn with me to Jeremiah 2:12-13. The context of this passage is Israel's idolatry and forsaking of the Lord.

**12, “Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the Lord.”** Alright...the Lord is about to reveal what His people have done that is completely evil. What is it?

**Verse 13, “for my people have committed two evils”** Number 1, **“they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and”** Number 2, they have **“hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”**

In ancient Israel, not everyone had a well. So, the people often had to create water cisterns. These cisterns were underground water containers that caught rainwater. They were made of rock and covered in plaster. When the people needed water for drinking or food, they went to the cistern. But if the cistern broke on the inside, it was worthless because any water that ran into it would just drain out. The cistern would be empty. And so, imagine that you're an ancient Israelite dying of thirst and you have two options. You can have an unlimited source of clean, cold, refreshing water from a fountain or...you can have a broken cistern. The choice is obvious. You'd choose the fountain. You'd be crazy to choose broken cisterns.

Yet that's what we do when we choose our sin over the Lord. Our souls are parched and dying of spiritual thirst. And the Lord offers us Himself, the fountain of living water, but instead of choosing life, we choose a dirt filled hole in the ground.

And the Lord calls that evil! When we seek satisfaction apart from, or in defiance of, the Lord, it's evil. We look at all the atrocities in the world like murder and rape and adultery and we call those evil. And rightfully so. But none of those things compare to forsaking God for broken cisterns.

How can you say that? 1) Because God is infinitely good and loving and holy and to forsake Him for lesser things is not only a slap in the face of the highest/most important being in the world, it's utter blasphemy. 2) All those other sins are the result of this sin. Why do men murder? Because they long ago turned their back on God and for some reason believed that their passion for anger and hatred would best be exercised in taking another person's life. Why do people commit adultery? Because they thought that their desires would be fulfilled by entering the bed of another. Men do what they want the most. They do what makes them happy. Whether it's killing or adultery.

Why do we settle for lesser fulfillment in the things of the world when Christ offers us total satisfaction in Him? I can think of a couple reasons. 1) We have believed the same lie Satan told Eve. You will be happier if you disobey God rather than if you believe His word. God is holding back from you. And so, we act on that lie. 2) I agree with CS Lewis who said, the reason we choose the things of the world over Christ is because we're far too easily pleased.

Listen to Lewis,

*"If we consider...the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."*

When we settle for worldly things and sin instead of Christ, we're like children who would rather play in the mud than go to the Ocean. We settle for things like drink, and sex, and tv, and money and fame, when the Lord offers us infinite joy in Him through Christ.

### **#3-Satisfaction is found in Christ alone**

Let's go back to Isaiah 55 for a moment.

Look at verse 1, **"Come"**, Come to me. Come to the Lord. This is an invitation to receive God, and it's to everyone. "Come, everyone who thirsts" in case you haven't figured it out by now, that's every man, woman, and child. We all have thirsty souls. That's how God made us. We're made to want, and desire, and seek, and pursue satisfaction for our greatest longings. And, remember, that's okay; so long as we go to God for our fill. Sin is when we seek other things instead of God.

He says ***“come to the waters; and he who has no money come, buy and eat!”*** Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. You can't buy this food! You have to come empty handed and acknowledge that Jesus bought it for you. He purchased this satisfaction on the cross. Peter said, “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.” Did you hear that? Why did Christ die? To bring us to God. That's why He says come without money. The price has been paid! I have spread a banquet for you, and you may eat until you are full. There's no cost to you. All you must do is come and be satisfied in all that God is for you in Christ.

This is what Jesus meant in John 6:35 when He said, ***“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”*** Jesus is doing the same thing Isaiah did. He's using bread and water metaphorically. Except this time, He explicitly says, I am the bread. I am the living water (John 4:10). If you come to me, you will never be hungry. If you drink from me, you will never thirst. He says this because just as bread satisfies your belly when you're hungry, Jesus will satisfy the hunger in your soul. Just as water quenches your thirst when you're thirsty, so Jesus will quench the thirst of your soul. This is why the Psalmist said, ***1 “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul longs after You, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, the living God. When shall I come and appear in God's presence?”***

This is what I didn't understand when I was lost in my addiction. I was constantly going from one source of pleasure to another. It was drugs, then it was sex, then it was drinking and gambling, and sports, and on and on it went. I could never find satisfaction. Until I found Christ.

You and I were made for God, and He made us to desire Him. But sin has distorted everything, especially our desires. After the fall, we don't stop desiring satisfaction, but we seek it in all the wrong places. I did this until it about killed me. I finally hit rock bottom, and then nothing I did could bring me happiness...until I feasted on the bread of life. And now my whole life is one big fight to constantly go back to Him instead of worldly pleasures.

### **Objection: This seems self-serving**

Now, I realize that some of you might be thinking: this seems a bit self-serving, doesn't it? “I know we need to seek the Lord, but all of this pursuing your own happiness stuff seems a bit self-serving. A bit selfish.” I understand that. But think of it this way.

Have you ever seen the show The Bachelor or Bachelorette? I hate those shows. Can't stand them. The only reason I bring it up is because I am sure most of you are familiar with what I am talking about.

Imagine you're on that show, and he or she has narrowed their choices down to three people and you're one of them. In the end, you get picked as the winner. When you're alone, you ask your new companion, "Why did you pick me over all the other people?" And he or she says, "Because I love you. You make me happy." You wouldn't respond by saying, "Oh, it's all about your happiness, huh? You only picked me because you want to be happy!" No, you would be honored by that. You would feel good that this person is happy when they're with you.

And the Lord is too. When His sons and daughters say, "Father, I want to be with you more than anyone else. I want you over all the riches and pleasures of the world. Nothing can make me happier than you." God is not saying, "Oh it's all about your happiness, is it?" That's why you want me? No, He's honored when you pursue Him because you know that in Christ you will find your highest joy.

In fact, you must pursue God this way. Listen Hebrews 11:6, ***"And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."*** Did you catch that? If you want to please God, you must do two things. 1) Believe He exists. And believe 2) that He rewards those who seek Him.

If you go to God and say, "I am reporting for service" but have no desire to receive Him as a reward, you aren't pleasing Him. God is only pleased when you go to Him expecting to be blessed.

### **Commanded to Delight**

If you're still not convinced, maybe this will help. You are commanded to be happy in the Lord.

Psalms 32:11, ***"Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!"***

Psalms 37:4, ***"Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart."***

Philippians 4:4, ***“Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice.”***

These are not suggestions. They’re commands. These aren’t verses for the spiritual elite who have arrived. You are ordered by God to be happy in the Lord. It’s not an option. God commands us to rejoice in Him because He desires our highest good. God wants your joy more than you do. And He knows the highest source of joy and happiness is found in Him. And this is what honors Him.

And so, this brings me back to my original point: our highest joy and performing the will of God, namely glorifying His name, are not at odds; they are one and the same. God commands us to worship and obey Him because it brings Him honor, and when we do that, we find our highest satisfaction in Him.

### **Application**

If you grasp this truth, it will change everything. If you understand that God commands us to worship and obey Him, and in doing so, we will find our highest joy, it will change how you view,

### **#1-Coming to Church**

I am referring specifically to worship.

Worship is where we feast on all that God is to us in Christ. Through singing, prayer, hearing the word of God read and preached, by participating in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, we are to glorify God through our participation in these things, and at that the same seek to find fullness of joy.

So, when you sing amazing grace, God doesn’t want you to merely sing the words. He wants you to truly be amazed by His grace. The heart’s affections are essential to worship. God is not interested in mere duty. He wants you to delight in Him.

This is one of the reasons Jesus criticized the Religious Leaders. He said they worshiped God in vain. Why? Because they didn’t show up for Sunday church? No. They showed up, but that’s about all they did. They went through the motions. Jesus said they honor me with their lips, but their hearts are from me. In other words, they sang the songs and said the right words, but their hearts had no true affection for the Lord.



Imagine it's Father's Day and you get your dad a gift. And he says, "what's this for?" You say, "It's Father's Day. I am supposed to get you a gift. It's the right thing to do." That doesn't honor him. It doesn't honor him when the gift is given out of mere duty. But imagine if you said, "Here's my gift. You've been the best dad. I love you so much.

Thank you for everything you've done for me." That honors Him because the gift is an expression of your heart. And in giving it to him, he is honored, and you get the joy.

That's how worship works. We come to church to bring God the sacrifices and offering of praise because we love Him. He's done so much for us in Christ. He's been so good to us, and I want to do nothing more than express my gratitude to Him, because when I do, I enjoy Him.

## **#2-Reading the Bible**

I started a new Bible reading plan this year. I am sure many of you did, too. I like reading plans because I am a list guy. I like checklists and ordering my day around tasks. It makes me feel good when I get things done.

But if we understand this God glorifying/joy concept I've been talking about, you will not read the Bible merely to finish but to delight.

Listen to how the Psalmists talk about the word of God.

Psalm 119:103, "***How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!***"

The reason we like to eat sweet food, like honey, is not only because it tastes good, but because by experiencing the sweetness we also experience happiness. I don't know about you, but I am happy when I get to eat ice-cream. I am happy when I get a big piece of cake or cookies. The psalmist says, your word is sweet. I want to savor it. I want to enjoy it.

So, when you go to the Scriptures, go looking for sweet food to delight in. Don't leave until your heart is satisfied in the Lord. Don't read to be finished. Read to enjoy!

## **#3-Saving Faith**

For years, I was told, and believed, that saving faith was believing the right facts about the gospel and trusting that Christ would save me. In fact, that's basically the classical definition of saving faith. The reformers would have broken it down into three parts. They would have said, we must know the gospel, believe the gospel, and entrust ourselves to Christ.

So, first, I must **know** that Jesus Christ lived, died, and rose for me and that in Him alone I can have eternal life, reconciliation with God and the forgiveness of sins.

Then I must **believe** those truths. I must take Christ at His word and believe that He indeed is the way, the truth, and the life.

Then finally, I must **entrust** myself to Christ. It's not good enough to merely know and believe the truth. Demons can do that. I must trust Him for salvation.

I agree with all that, but I think Scripture takes it at least one step further. I think included in the classical definition of saving faith—knowing, believing, and trusting Christ—is also receiving Him as our highest joy and treasure.

Think about how Jesus described conversion in Matthew 13:44. *“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”* This is a parable about salvation. This is a man who is getting into the Kingdom, and how does Jesus describe it? It's like finding treasure. The treasure is Christ, and the man receives Him in his joy.

So, saving faith is joyfully receiving Christ as our treasure. Not only do I know, believe, and trust Jesus. But I treasure Him. I delight in Him. I enjoy Him. And I would argue that if your faith doesn't include enjoying the Lord in this way, at best it is deficient faith, at worst it isn't saving at all.

#### **#4-Heaven**

If you asked the average person on the street, “Do you want to go to Heaven?” 99.9% of people would say, yes. I say 99.9 and not 100 because I have had one guy tell me he'd prefer to go to Hell, but even he didn't know what he was saying.

Everyone wants to go to heaven. Who wouldn't? Perfect health. No more death, disease, or suffering. You get to see loved ones again. Sounds great.

But here's the problem. Everyone wants that. You don't have to be a Christian to want all those things. The question we should be asking isn't, do you want to go to Heaven? We need to ask: Do you want to spend eternity worshiping Jesus Christ? That's the question because the average Joe on the street won't want that. That sounds egotistical and boring.

But if you ask the born-again believer, who has come to realize that God is their highest joy, that's all they'll want. In fact, we'd say, if I get to Heaven and there is no more sickness, no more death and I get to reunite with loved ones, but I don't get Jesus, I am going to be really disappointed. I don't know if I want to go if I don't get to be with Jesus. Why? Psalm 16:11, ***"in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."*** Even if we get perfect health and reunion w/loved ones, Heaven is going to be really boring if God isn't there.

Do you know Revelation 4:8 says there are angels who fly in the presence of God, day and night, and never cease to sing, ***"Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"*** That's all they do. They just fly before God and sing. How does that not get boring? Because God is inexhaustibly glorious! He is infinitely beautiful. You can't get tired of worshiping God.

I went to the Grand Canyon a couple years ago and spent four hours staring at a hole in the ground, and I never got tired of looking at its majesty. 1) because it is breathtakingly awesome. 2) I kept seeing new things.

You will never get tired of being in God's presence because 1) He will enthrall your soul as you stare into His beauty for all eternity. There will be nothing but joy and satisfaction and 2) You will continually see and learn new things about our God who is infinite in His greatness and immeasurable in value and worth.

## **#5-The battle against sin**

This is really what this message is all about. I think Scripture's most basic definition for sin comes from 1 John 3:4, ***"Sin is lawlessness."*** Sin is breaking the law of God. That's simple. To be considered a criminal you must commit a crime by breaking the law. To be considered a sinner, you must break one of God's laws.

But law-breaking is only the result. It's not the core. When Adam and Eve ate the fruit, that was the act of disobedience, but it wasn't the core of their sin. What was the core?

The core of their sin was preferring other things over God. The core of their sin was seeking happiness in disobedience rather than in obedience to God.

This is the fight you will face every day. Are you going to seek joy and satisfaction in Christ or the world? Will you indulge your flesh or are you going to believe Christ—that those hunger and thirst for righteousness shall be satisfied?

If you believe you must choose between obedience to God and your own happiness, it didn't come from Scripture. God is not asking to choose between serving Him and being happy.

But He is asking, where will you go for happiness? Will you go to the things of the world or will you go to Christ in whose presence is fullness of joy?

#### **REVIEW:**

- Who did you have a spiritual conversation or share the gospel with last week? How did they respond?
- Who is this invitation for and what is the invitation for in verse 1? John 4:14
- What do we normally spend our money on and labor for in verse 2? Romans 7:18-20 What should we do? 1 Corinthians 15:57
- How do we find life in verse 3? Matthew 11:28-29 What is the result of listening?

#### **REFLECT:**

- Why do we desire happiness? Zephaniah 3:17, Philippians 4:4, Psalm 118:24, Psalm 16:11
- What are some things you seek to find happiness in apart from God? Why is this sinful? Exodus 20:3-6, Jonah 2:8
- Where do we find true satisfaction? Why? John 6:35, Isaiah 58:11, Psalm 16:11

#### **RESPOND:**

- How can you find more joy and happiness in:
  - Worship
  - Bible reading
  - Saving Faith
  - Heaven
  - The battle against sin
- Who do you know that needs to hear the gospel or more about this teaching this week?

### **MEDITATE:**

- ❖ Zephaniah 3:17 - The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

### **MEMORIZE:**

- ❖ John 6:35 - *Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*

### **PRAYER FOCUS:**

- ❖ TJC Elder: **John Page**
- ❖ NAMB Church Planter: **Jonathan Moore** - Salt Lake City, UT - *Resonate Church*
- ❖ Unreached People Group (UPG): **Malay** in Hong Kong, China
  - Population: 20,000
  - Christian: 0.5%
  - Evangelical: 0.45%
  - Primary Religion: Islam
  - Primary Language: Malay
  - Status: **Unreached**