Tim Keller: Psalm 1 The Search for Happiness

THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS Modern Problems; Ancient Solutions—September 12, 1993

Psalm 1 1 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. 2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. 4 Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. 6 For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

INTRODUCTION

Pray with me. Lord, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen. Until recently, most cultures put a lot of stock in their ancient traditions and also put a lot of value on their former and previous generations, and even their older folk, because for many, many years all cultures believed wisdom was something that was accumulated over the ages. Therefore, they cherished their ancient traditions. But we live in a modern age, and the modern age is characterized by an unparalleled scorn of the ancient, an unparalleled scorn of the past. How do we define modern? The cultural historians will tell you somewhere in the eighteenth century there was the French Enlightenment over here, and there was German idealism over here, and British empiricism over here, and they all kind of coalesced into the modern mindset which says, “Human reason and empirical investigation, that will get us the truth. Now we have the tools with which we will really be able to solve the problems and mysteries of life.” That’s what we were told. That’s what we’ve been told for a couple of hundred years. Let’s ask ourselves, “How have we done? Have we, in our modern, advanced age with all of our technology and with all of our empirical investigation, really made progress when it comes to the problems and mysteries of life?” I think all of us would say right off the bat technology has made life in this world physically safer, and that’s great. That’s very important. I think we can also say there has been a reversal of many of the grosser social inequities like slavery. It’s largely been abolished. Yet, though our ancestors had few or no economic choices like we do, few or no political freedoms like we do, though they had no vacations, no health benefits, and such a short life expectancy, in spite of all of that, let’s ask ourselves, “Are we happier than they were? Have we, in our modern age with all of these tools, actually made any progress at all?” In fact, if you read the journals and the diaries of our ancestors, ask yourself, “Do you see in those journals and diaries as much self-pity? Do you see as much boredom? Do you see as much meaninglessness? Do you see as much despair?” I think nobody could make a case that we are any happier than they were, but you could make a very, very good case that they were happier than we. I’m not trying to make a case either way. What I’m trying to say is the Bible has said from the beginning that human happiness is not subject, is not addressed at all, by empirical investigation or technology. It’s not addressed at all by psychology or sociology. Not really. It’s not addressed at all by urban planning or political science or biochemistry. Not really. They’re fine. They do all sorts of great things. They make the world more comfortable physically. They get rid of many of the grosser social inequities, but the Bible has always said what makes you happy or unhappy, the issues that make you happy or unhappy, are profoundly cosmic and profoundly spiritual, and have been unchanged for millennia. What I’d like to do this fall is go to one of the most ancient and one of the most famous ancient texts in the world, and that is the book of Psalms. It is very well known and very famous. I would like you with me to take a look at these ancient texts and bring them to bear on what we call the problems we have now that we were supposed to have addressed, supposed to have made progress against, because now we know in a way our ancestors didn’t, but we haven’t made any of that progress.

**TUESDAY**

Today the first question is … What does the Bible tell us about the issue of happiness? Have you in this modern world learned how to become happy and stay happy? I hope there is nobody here who thinks that’s a trivial question, that it’s beneath you somehow. Because if you read the psychology books and the urban planning books and the sociology books and even the biochemistry books and the political science books, do you know what they’re really about? Oh, they have big words. They have paradigms. They’re all about the problem: we’re not happy. How can we be happy? As we take a look and see what the Bible says here, I want to say to my Christian friends … You may have read this psalm many times. It’s a very famous psalm. As we go through these biblical principles, you may have heard them before, you may have heard them many times, but ask yourself a question all through this teaching: “If I really know this, why am I so unhappy?” I’m especially asking the Christians, people who say, “I’m a Christian. I believe the Bible. I know these ancient texts.” I ask you to ask yourself, “Am I a fundamentally and consistently happy person, and if not, how come?” Would you please answer that question? Don’t sit there and say, “Well, I’ve heard him say that before, or I’ve heard somebody else say that before. I’ve read that before. Yes, I know that.” Don’t say that. Every time, say, “If I know that, has that made me a fundamentally and consistently happy person? If not, why not?” Psalm 1 is, in a sense, the gatekeeper for the entire Bible and especially the entire book of Psalms. It’s often been considered by many students and scholars to be a kind of summary psalm for the whole book. Its principles are extremely basic to everything in the Psalter and everything in the Bible. I’ve listed off the four principles I’d like to draw out of this text that address the issue of why people are happy or not happy. 1. Happiness is possible The word blessed, of course, means joyful. It means fulfilled. It means satisfied. “Blessed is the man …” who does these things. The first thing we see from this text is that blessedness is possible. Happiness is possible. That’s a staggering statement. That’s a thunderous statement. What do you think of that statement? It’s a way of testing where you are. Is there anybody here who thinks, “That’s not so staggering. Happiness is possible? I came out on a Sunday morning to be told this?” If you don’t think that’s staggering, if you don’t listen to that and say, “I hope so!” If you say, “Well, of course, happiness is possible,” it tells you something about you. Let me tell you what it tells you. Unless you’ve had an unusually harsh childhood, almost all of us start out thinking happiness is natural in life. “Yes, of course, there are unhappy people, but they’ve screwed up.” Most of us start out thinking happiness is natural. As you grow up you hear all these dire warnings from your parents about how hard things are out there. “You’d better save that money instead of spending it like that,” and “Life is tough.” You think, “If I’m good enough, if I’m smart enough, if I’m hard-working enough or whatever … Happiness is natural. There are people out there who aren’t happy, but they just screwed up.” That’s where we start, and as time goes on we migrate. After a while, as we begin to see and experience more and more life, we begin to realize happiness isn’t anywhere near as easy as we thought. After a while, we begin to realize most of the most successful people, most of the most experienced people, most of the most gifted people are the most cynical. Even the most successful people, go to them and find out. If you know any of them, you know they are the most cynical about the prospect of happiness. The great literature of the world is tragic literature. Here’s Shakespeare. Here’s Much Ado About Nothing, a wonderful play. Here’s Hamlet. Is life more like Much Ado About Nothing or more like Hamlet? What do you think? That tells me how much of life you’ve actually had. Is life really like Much Ado About Nothing, where in the end everybody comes back, and in the end everybody is happy, in the end everybody gets the person they want to marry, and in the end the person who everybody thinks is dead is alive? Or is life more like Hamlet, with everybody dying disappointed in the last scene? You need the literature of Much Ado About Nothing to get through life. It’s a wonderful play, but when you stand in the presence of Hamlet or Macbeth, you know you’re standing in the presence of a much more profound mirror of what things are like. Is life more like Much Ado About Nothing or more like Hamlet or Macbeth? What is life, Macbeth? “Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.” You say, “Well, that’s awfully, awfully bleak.” Fine. Yes, it’s pretty bleak, but here is Much Ado About Nothing, and here are Macbeth and Hamlet. Is life more like that or more like that? What is it? Don’t you see? The people who see most deeply into life, the people who have even been the most experienced, even the people who are the smartest, the people who have gotten to the top, the people who have the money and have the fame (all the things you think will make you happy), go to them and ask them. We start out thinking happiness is natural; we end up thinking happiness is unachievable. We actually have four kinds of people. We have the kind of people who think happiness is natural, unless you’re stupid. You’re either very young, or you’re very inexperienced, or you’ve had a temporarily unbelievably charmed life. On this corner, we have the people who think happiness is unachievable. They tend to be the best thinkers. In the middle, most of us are actually migrating from one to the other, and we’re kind of too busy to really notice how tragic and dangerous life is until it kind of comes up and grabs us. Then there is the fourth group: the people who understand what the Bible says. One of them is described in this psalm. The Bible says, and Christians who understand what the Bible says, believe happiness is neither natural nor unachievable; it’s possible. It’s possible to be in this world a fundamentally and consistently happy person. As the old hymn goes … Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin? The blood of Jesus whispers peace within Happiness is possible. It’s a radical statement.

WEDNESDAY

Before we get to the second and third point, right away naturally the human inquiring mind asks, “If happiness is possible, why do so few people have it?” The answer of the text, and the answer of the Bible, is because people seek it wrongly. The next two points are two common mistakes virtually everybody falls into unless God comes and opens their eyes to it, and therefore, we’re never happy. 2. Happiness is fundamental not superficial Real happiness (the happiness that is held out and offered by the Bible and offered by God) is a fundamental happiness not a superficial happiness. Verse 3 tells us the happy man (the godly man) “… is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither …” Look at that. What a wonderful metaphor. This tree is subject to seasons. It’s not always fruitful. It’s not always blossoming. It’s subject to seasons: winter or a very dry summer. It feels them. It’s not always bearing fruit. It’s not always productive. It’s not always looking green and wonderful, and yet this particular tree is unlike many other trees because it has been planted on the riverbank. Its roots have access to a constant and unremitting stream of water that is there even when the heat comes, that is there even when the drought comes. That’s the image. What is the point? The first major mistake we make is we try to find our happiness in circumstances. The first major mistake we make is we think happiness is found in the externals. We expect it to come raining down onto us, and yet the Bible says the secret of happiness is if you find your happiness, if you seek your happiness in externals and circumstances, you’ll screw up because real happiness is found under you, inside you, where your roots are. Let me put it a couple of different ways. Happiness never consists in what happens to you but by what you are. Your happiness does not consist in what happens to you but in what you are. Do you remember the old couplet? “Two men looked out from prison bars; one saw the mud, the other saw the stars.” Have you ever heard that? “Two men looked out from prison bars; one saw the mud, the other saw the stars.” What is the difference? Circumstances are identical. Same bars, same prison. What is the difference? In the men. Is that common sense? Yes, I guess it is common sense, and yet we are like a tree that is not planted by the stream, a tree that is completely dependent on what comes down from outside, not what I draw from the inside. The Bible consistently tells us a godly person (a Christian) is not just a religious person, not just a nice person, not simply somebody who is doing good things. A Christian is someone who has been planted and rooted into something beside him or herself. That’s the reason why the Bible talks about the new birth, why in 2 Peter it says we are made “… partakers of the divine nature …” Something has been planted from the outside into us. Something has become part of us. We are rooted into God. Some amazing thing has happened. We’re going to look at that next week because we’re going to come back to Psalm 1 and ask ourselves, “What does it mean to be planted?” A Christian is not the chaff which has no root. A Christian is a tree. Something has planted you in. Trees can’t plant themselves. Something has come and planted you in, and now there is a power. Now there is an outlook. Now there is an understanding that wasn’t there before, and that is where you draw, and that is where the happiness comes from. Do you see what I mean by saying it is fundamental? The tree experiences affliction. It hurts. It’s affected by it. It doesn’t always bear fruit, and yet its leaf never withers. There is a balance here. There is something here people don’t understand unless you really dig in. First Peter 1:6 (the classic text on this) where Peter says you rejoice in him though you are now in great heaviness. Wow. The word heaviness means in pain. The word heaviness means in deep distress and turmoil. Yet, it doesn’t say, “You used to rejoice in him, but right now you’re in heaviness.” It doesn’t say, “You’re rejoicing in him and you’re avoiding heaviness.” Two present tenses: you are in deep joy even though you are in absolutely deep distress. How could that be? The metaphor is right here. Here is a tree in a drought … no fruit. Hurting. Grieved in a sense, and yet its leaf doesn’t wither. It’s an evergreen tree, because its roots are down into something else. There are people in the church who don’t get this. There are people in the church who say, when some terribly tragedy has happened to you, “You’re a Christian? Well, smile and praise God. Don’t let it get to you.” I will go so far as to say, not only is that radically unbiblical, but it’s unbelievably unhealthy. If you actually find Christians who go through tragedy with very few tears and without very much grief, without falling on the ground, that’s not God’s peace. That’s not the joy we’re talking about here. That’s a kind of brainwashing. The tree, because it’s going through a season of dryness, has to pull out of the bottom even more. The tree, because it’s going through dryness, has to put its roots even deeper down and draw even harder on it. Anyone in this room who has ever actually gotten this fundamental happiness knows that is exactly what happens. I tell you that you don’t know what it’s like to rejoice in the Lord unless you’re suffering. There is something about the drought and about the fruitlessness of your life that makes you, if you’re a Christian, put your roots down into him in a way you didn’t before. Happiness the Bible talks about is fundamental happiness not superficial happiness. Not a lightheartedness all the time. Not a jocularity all the time. Not a fun and frolicking type of person all the time. Oh, no! We’re talking about a joy that is permanent and is overwhelming and is overlapping and, actually, is stimulated by tragic circumstances. Do you hear? That’s how you know whether you have the circumstantial kind of happiness which, of course, only rains down from above, and sometimes it’s just not there, or whether you have the fundamental happiness which is actually stimulated by it. Those of you who have been in this boat, you know. You know it. Things go wrong, and you realize, “I believe these things, but do I really understand these things?” You go to him, and you put your roots down, and suddenly you begin to sense not the lack of pain, not the lack of grief, but an overwhelming glory and joy that comes up. “… your right hand upholds me.” There is a place in one piece of literature where a character is described like this: “… in [his] face he saw at first only lines of care and sorrow; though as he looked … he perceived that under all there was a great joy: a fountain of mirth enough to set a kingdom laughing, were it to gush forth.” There it is! Underneath the care and the sorrow, deep underneath, there is a fountain of mirth enough to set a kingdom laughing were it to gush forth. It’s under there. It’s always under there. Happiness is not based on circumstances. It’s not brought about by controlling your environment but by controlling your allegiances. This text teaches us there is a happiness that is possible. There is a happiness that is fundamental, not superficial. It’s based on what you are, not on your circumstances. If you seek it in your circumstances, you will always be unhappy. Back and forth. Manic.

THURSDAY

3. Happiness can never be found directly Happiness can never be found directly. Happiness is always and only a byproduct of seeking something else more than happiness. Whenever you see the word blessed it never, ever says, “Blessed is the one who seeks blessedness. Blessed is the one who hungers and thirsts after blessedness.” Never! Never, ever. It always says, “Blessed is he who hungers and thirsts …” after something more than blessedness. If you’ve heard this before, ask yourself right now, “If I know this why am I not happier?” Seek happiness or seek righteousness. Which should you? If you seek righteousness more than happiness you’ll get both. If you see happiness more than righteousness you’ll get neither. That’s the teaching of the text. The teaching of the text is the person who is happy is always the one who has stopped trying so hard to be happy, who sat down and said, “What am I really living for? What are my fundamental allegiances?” Jesus says in Matthew 6, “You, who are worried, don’t have anxiety over these things.” “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness …” What does that mean? “… seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness …” He’s saying the reason you’re unhappy is because, as we talked about in Jeremiah 17, you’ve made something else your trust. As long as you decide to seek happiness as your highest priority … Why is it that sometimes you cheat? Why is it that sometimes you lie? Think about this. Why is it that sometimes you do? Why is it that sometimes you break your promises? Why is it that sometimes you have standards and you break them? Why? Because in most of our cases, unless God comes and shows us another way, the normal and natural habit of our hearts is to say, “I believe in principles. Honesty is a good idea. I believe in purity. I believe in honesty and integrity. All these principles are very good, but sometimes you have to make an exception.” What do you mean? It means there is one principle that is over all the other principles, and that is, “I have to be happy. I believe in telling the truth, but not if I’m going to have to lose my job over it. Then I wouldn’t be happy.” “I believe in doing this, but not if I’m going to lose that girl over it. I want to be happy.” What do you mean, you believe? There is only one thing you believe, and that is, “The top priority I’m seeking is my happiness. Everything else comes second and third. The kingdom of God is great, but first seek happiness. Honesty is great, but first seek happiness.” The Bible say, though that is the fundamental bent and bias of our souls, you’ll never find happiness that way. Jesus says if you seek happiness it will always escape you; it will always elude you. Always. If you make a happy marriage your number one priority, you will never have it. If you make your number one priority a successful career, you’ll never have it because you will be killed by the anxiety. People say, “I want to make this moment last forever.” Go ahead. Try and you will see you have polluted it in far worse ways than if you had realized this is an ultimate. Try to be happy? Make it your main objective in life? Let me put it another way. Is God committed to your happiness? Absolutely, and yet if you come to him to make you happy, you’re coming to a false god. If you say, “Well, I’m interested in this Christianity, and maybe I’ll come and bite on it if I can see it will help me reach my goals and make me happy.” You’re not coming to God; you’re coming to a butler. Either God exists or he doesn’t exist. If he doesn’t exist you can’t come to him for happiness, right? But if he does exist, you have to realize you must come to him because he created you, and therefore, he owns you. To not come to him and obey him would be an injustice. The only way to come to God rightly, the real God, is to come without conditions and to say, “Forget happiness. I owe you everything.” There are only two ways to come to God. You can come to God on the basis of saying, “I owe you everything; you owe me nothing,” or you can come on the basis of saying, “I’m going to come to you, but then you owe me a lot.” The only way for you to know on what basis you have come is to see what happens in the bad seasons. When things go wrong, do you get upset and say, “What good did it do me to come to church? What good did it do me to read the Bible?” Do you know what that shows? You came to him on the basis of saying, “I will do this and this, as you owe me.” In other words you’re saying, “My number one priority is happiness, and I’m using God as a way to get there” as opposed to saying, “My number one priority is to serve God, and if happiness happens, great. To the degree it happens, great.” Here is the irony: the less you’re concerned about your happiness and the more you’re concerned about him, the happier you get. This is not a trick. You can’t say, “Oh, great. I have it. I come to God, and I say this and this and this.” You cannot bandy with the omnipotent and omniscient Lord of the universe. “Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither.” Happiness is a byproduct. Happiness is possible. Why don’t more people have it? Because, first, we look for it in circumstances and secondly, because we go after it directly and we make it the non-negotiable. We say, “I’d like to serve God,” or “I’d like to be a good citizen,” or “I’d like to obey the Ten Commandments, but the non-negotiable is my happiness.” As long as the non-negotiable is the happiness, you’ll never get it. It has to be a byproduct of making something else non-negotiable. It has to work that way.

FRIDAY

4. Happiness is something you choose It’s not something that happens to you. You notice it starts off with a negative. “Blessed is the man who does not …” That proves if you want to be happy, you have to, first, see things you’re doing wrong and make a change of allegiance. If you look carefully at the verbs … Walk. “Blessed is the man who does not stand …” It talks about listening to the counsel of the ungodly, which talks about the intellect. Then it talks about walking in the way of sinners, which is the behavior. Then it talks about sitting in the seat of the scornful. In Semitic language, where you sit is where you belong. If you sit with the men, if you sit with the Greeks, if you sit with the Romans, if you sit with the slaves, that’s who you belong to. That’s what the word sit means usually in these contexts. It’s really trying to say, first, do you want to be happy? Let’s look at it negatively and positively. Negatively, you have to find out who you belong to. Everybody has to be converted, which means at some point you have to see that something else besides God is what owns you. Something else owns you. Other things own you. Christian friends, when Paul says, “We are perplexed, but not driven to despair,” or “We’re struck down, but we’re not crushed,” do you know what he is saying? He’s saying, “I am like the godly man. I am subject to seasons, but I have roots,” which means, of course, if my career is about to go through a new barrier and yet suddenly, my success gets snatched away, or if I’m at the altar and suddenly, the person I’m supposed to marry doesn’t even show up, am I supposed to be happy about that? No. Why? I should be downcast, because these are desires God gave me: to be happily married, to be vocationally fulfilled. Paul says there is a difference between trusting in your spouse and making your spouse your trust. Right? There is a difference between wanting something and having it own you, sitting in it, putting all of your weight on it. That’s when you sit in a chair. If there is anybody here who says, “I’ve been a Christian for a long time, and I know I’m not a fundamentally and consistently happy person,” then you have to ask yourself this question: What piper are you really dancing to? Who calls the tunes in your life? What owns you? What do you belong to? What are the fundamental allegiances of your life (the things you listen to, the things you walk in, the things you sit in)? You have to start. You can’t be happy unless you start with the negative. You can’t be happy unless you see, “Not, not, not. I have to turn away from things that have me by the heart, that have me by the mind. I have to turn away from things I belong to.” Even if you’re a Christian by saying, “Well, I believe all these things,” you can still be operating on the old ways. If you are not fundamentally happy, the profound analysis of this point is you are still sitting in some other seat than in God’s lap. If you’re not just perplexed, but you are in despair, if you’re not just hurting, but you are totally destroyed … That’s what Paul says doesn’t happen. He’s not talking about brainwashing (“I’m always happy”), and he’s not talking about being in despair. He says, “I’m struck down, but I’m never in despair.” Look at Jesus Christ. He had great peace, great joy, and the perfect relationship with the Father, yet he was always crying. There you have it. “… a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief …” yet never in despair. If you are in despair, if life isn’t worth living, it means you’re sitting in some other seat. That’s the negative, but then there is the positive. “But his delight is in the law of the Lord …” The trouble with these words, the law of the Lord¸ is many people think, “Oh, well that means he’s looking at the part of the Bible where the rules are.” No. The words, law of the Lord, are not talking about the part of the Bible where you find the rules; it’s talking about the whole message of the Bible as your rule of life. This is not a man who says, “Oh, yes. The laws of God. Honesty is the best policy, and I want to get on in life so I’m going to be honest.” That’s not what he is saying. His delight is in the law of the Lord. He can’t stop thinking about it. Day and night, all the time. What is he looking at? He’s looking at the essential message of the Bible. The essential message of the Bible, which we’ve been talking about all during this service, is that the great, powerful God sent his Son to die for you, so that great God can become your Father. The parable of the prodigal son puts it all perfectly. When the son has left the father and he feels like his life is falling apart, he comes back and he doesn’t ask for happiness. Do you remember? The Prodigal Son in Luke 15, comes back and says, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight …” “Just make me a servant. I don’t want comfort. I don’t want happiness. I owe you.” Then what happens? Once you come to God saying, “Forget the happiness. Forget the joy. Forget doing all these wonderful things for me. I owe you because of what you did for me.” The minute he comes to the father and says, “You don’t have to be my father anymore; just be my king,” the king turns into a father, and he says, “Get out the robe. Put a ring on him. Put my robe on him. Kill the fatted calf. We’re going to have a party. He’s my child.” That message, that in Jesus Christ this great King becomes your Father, is what you have to delight in. If you look carefully when it says, “But his delight is in the law of the Lord …” and then it talks about the godly man being a tree that puts down its roots into the river, what is the river? What is the water down there? It’s the law of the Lord. He’s delighting in it day and night. That’s how he keeps his leaf green even in the heat. Do you know how to do that? Christian friends, do you know how to do that? There is a flute on the ground. It might as well be a pipe. It might as well be a bear trap unless you learn how to play it. Do you know how to play the gospel? Do you know how to rehearse its beauties? Do you know how to talk to yourself about Luke 15, about the Prodigal Son? Do you know how to think about and rehearse the beauties of it until it makes your heart sing? Do you delight in it day and night? If you do, you’ll be like Jesus, often crying. I tell you the gospel (Christianity) makes you a sadder person and a happier person at the same time. You get more sensitive. One of the ways non-Christians have to deal with life, because they don’t have this great consolation, is they deny how hard life is. They deny it. Like me and my car. Kathy is always saying to me, “Something is wrong with the car. I never heard that knock before.” I say, “Everything is fine. We can’t afford anything else.” Unless you have this consolation in your life, that is how you deal with life. “It will be all right. That could never happen. I’m sure it could never happen.” Are you kidding? Don’t you see? When you become a Christian, you get this consolation, and it allows you to be honest and no longer repress how hard life is. You feel the pain of the world more than you did before, but you have a joy and a consolation. “My sins are pardoned. They will never be brought against me, and I’m going to go live with God forever in a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” You’re happier and sadder at the same time. The happiness overwhelms the sadness. That’s what it means to be a Christian, and it comes by learning to play the gospel: listening to it, singing it to yourself. That’s the only way you put your roots down and deal with the heat. Are you doing that? Can you do that? Do you remember that hymn, “Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken?” See! the streams of living waters Springing from eternal love Well supply thy sons and daughters And all fear of want remove Who can faint while such a river Ever flows their thirst t’assuage? Grace, which like the Lord, the giver Never fails from age to age You can be happy. It’s possible. Don’t look to circumstances. Don’t seek it directly. Instead, look at what you really, really are living for and accept and admit your need for the great gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and learn to delight in that and to play it and to listen to it day and night. There are probably some people here who are irked at me because you’re in pain and you don’t want to get your hopes up. You don’t like me telling you it’s possible to be a fundamentally and consistently happy person. You don’t want to get your hopes up. I will not apologize. I cannot recant. You need this. Come and get it. Let’s pray. Our Father, we pray now that you would grant that, as we take this moment to consider what you are going to be doing in our lives if we come to you and seek you and not happiness, you will show us how we can turn away from the way of the world, from the counsel of the ungodly, from the seat of the mockers and the scornful, and delight in the law of the Lord, so that on it we can meditate day and night and be like a tree planted by waters. Keep our leaves green in your Son. In his name we pray, amen.