

Worship in All Circumstances: Happiness

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[0 : 0 0] The scripture today comes from Psalm 1. Please follow along in your bulletin or on the screen. Psalm 1. Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers.

But his delight is in the law of the Lord. And on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season.

And its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. This is God's word. We're in summer.

I think you feel it probably outside. And that should remind you that life has different kinds of seasons. Being from the UK, there is a number of different seasons which are in.

[1 : 2 0] After Brexit, there's definitely a different season coming up for British people. But it's not just Brexit. It's also the weather. I don't know if you know about British weather.

But some people live under delusions that it rains all the time in the UK. That is not true. Okay? Let's clarify things this morning. That's not true. I have been through months without rain in the UK. But the problem in the UK is not the rain. The problem is the grayness. There is a myth that sometimes we actually believe that there's something called the sun in the UK.

You can go months without ever seeing it. And there's actually even a day which some people call Blue Monday, which is supposed to be the most depressing day of the whole year.

Where everyone in the UK is depressed. Do you know which day it is? No, it's not the first Monday of April. It's the third Monday in January.

[2 : 2 2] Okay? The third Monday in January. The reason why? There's been no sun for months. Okay? Everyone's broke because they've spent all their money at Christmas and New Year. It's a week before payday, so you've definitely got no money.

And all your New Year's resolutions have been broken already. And so everyone's depressed. Because the seasons affect you. Right? They affect the way you live.

But when it comes to summer, well, sometimes summer happens in the UK occasionally. But summer feels different. You know, there's this kind of holiday mood. People feel a little bit more relaxed.

I can see you even now. You feel a bit less tense. Even in your offices, sometimes there's a little bit less tense. More casual. More laid back.

And that's a little bit what life is like. Life goes through these seasons that we have. We have winter, spring, summer, autumn. And some people spend a long time living, it feels like, in the gray of winter in their lives.

[3 : 2 0] Life is tough. Life is difficult. Life is dark. Other people, it seems like they're always living in summer. They're always happy. Everything seems to be going well with them.

All of us go through seasons in life. And we're looking as a church over the summer at the Psalms. Because the Psalms, they're a collection of five books, 150 poems from at least seven different authors, including David, Moses, Solomon, who experience all the seasons of life and all the rollercoaster of emotions that go along with the different seasons that we face in life.

And someone once said, the Psalms are revelations of truth, not kind of abstract truth out there. They're actually wrought down in human experience.

They're truth revealed, wrought into the emotions, the desires, and the sufferings of the people of God by the circumstances through which they pass. In other words, the Psalms teach you how to

interact with God when the reality of life and the seasons and God meet.

It's a kind of prayer book of how to respond to God during life. So that's kind of where we're going over this next little while together.

[4 : 43] And how do you get to know God whatever season you're going through right now? How do you get to know God whatever season you're going through right now? That's what the Psalms are going to teach you.

Okay? And we're looking today at the very first Psalm. And this is basically an introduction to the whole book of Psalms. And the basic question that Psalm 1 comes up with is a question that drives probably most of what we do, which is how can I be happy?

How can I live a life that is truly happy? How can I live to the full? There was a Welsh preacher called Martin Lloyd-Jones who wrote a great book called Spiritual Depression.

I recommend reading it. And he said one of the main reasons that non-Christians get put off by Christians is that they're so miserable. And he says they go around telling everybody what they shouldn't do.

And then the non-Christians seem to be having so much more fun than they are. So why would anybody want to be a Christian if it's going to make you miserable? And this Psalm is going to tell us, well, actually, Christians should be the most joy-filled, happiest people in Hong Kong.

[5 : 59] So are you? Is the question. Are you? Are you? So we're going to look at this question. We're going to look at three things.

Deep happiness is possible. Deep happiness is possible. Why we don't get happiness and how we become truly happy. Okay? So if you want to know the answer, listen up.

This Psalm starts with one word. It starts, Blessed is the man. Blessed. I don't know what you think when you hear the word blessed, but the first word in the whole of the Psalms is a word which means happy.

It means happy. It's like, oh, the happiness of the man. It doesn't just mean kind of fortunate or a little bit holy. It means truly happy. Now, some of you have been in church for a while.

You think, okay, but there's a difference between happiness and joy. Okay? Joy is deep. You know? Happiness is something else. Well, Pastor John Piper, he says this.

[7 : 04] If you have nice little categories, you know, joy is what Christians have. Happiness is what the rest of the world has. Then, when it comes to the Bible, you can basically scrap those ideas.

Because the Bible is indiscriminate in its uses of the language of happiness, joy, and contentment, and satisfaction. It says, happiness is a state of well-being characterized by emotions from contentment all the way to intense joy.

That's a biblical view of happiness. And this psalm is all about happiness. And it's saying to us, true happiness for you is possible in your life.

Now, that may seem a little bit obvious. You may think, okay, thanks, Chris. But there are some people who, I think there's a different kind of, a couple of different ways we think about happiness. One is some people, generally younger people, or people who've kind of sailed through life easily, they think happiness is natural.

Okay? They think happiness should just come to me. Okay? I'm entitled to happiness in life, a happy marriage, a happy career, a happy family. Happiness is completely natural. If anything stops me getting happy, you know, relationship, a job, I need to move on so happiness can kind of flow into my life.

[8 : 19] Because it's natural. Other people think that happiness is just impossible. They're more cynical. They've been through life.

They've got married. They've had kids. They've experienced some of life. And they think happiness, yeah, right. You know, it's amazing. Some incredibly brilliant, intelligent people are very cynical about happiness.

Woody Allen. Do you know Woody Allen, the director? He said, the only way to be happy is to tell yourself some lies or deceive yourself. Okay? He's not got a great hope for happiness.

And so I see this as a little bit the difference between Hollywood movies and French movies. I don't know if you've ever seen a difference. Hollywood movies, everything's going wrong.

The love interest has died. The bad guy's winning. All hope is lost. But then, in the end, you know the love interest really isn't dead. The hero comes back, wins at the last minute, escapes.

[9 : 20] Everybody lives happily ever after. The right people get married to everybody else, right? You know it's going to happen halfway through the movie. French movies, on the other hand, I don't know if you've seen a French movie.

French movies, the love interest dies, the bad guy's winning, everything's lost, and you're waiting for the hero to come in and save the day, and the movie ends. And you're like, it's so depressing. And they call it realistic cinema. And some people think it's natural, like Hollywood. Some people think, no, you can never be happy, particularly in Hong Kong, with everything that's going on here. And then in between these kind of different range of ideas, is most of the rest of us, maybe, who are just so busy getting on with life, that we've never actually stopped to really think whether we can actually truly be happy or not.

Because we think that, well, our misery, grumbling, complaining, as well as occasional outbursts of happiness, you know, that's just the normal way for Hong Kong life. But this passage says something different.

[10 : 22] This passage says happiness is not just natural. It's not kind of unattainable, you can't get it, but it's possible for you right now in every season.

Because if you look in the passage, it gives this image of this blessed man, this happy man. And it's an image of a tree which is planted in all the seasons of life.

It bears fruit in its season. Now, what does that mean? It means it's not all the time blaring fruit. It goes through the pain of winter. It goes through spring.

It goes through the heat of summer. It goes through the winds of autumn. It does all of these things. It faces all the elements of life, and yet this tree is not blown over. This tree is not withering in the heat.

It's not a grumpy tree. It's flourishing. And what he's saying is, in you and me in Hong Kong, with your work schedule, with your present relationships, and all the issues, and even with the Brexit, happiness is not natural if it's not out of reach.

[11 : 34] It's possible for you right now, and for us as a church. Do you believe it? That's the first thing. Happiness is possible. Second thing, how we don't get happiness.

Okay? We fall into a couple of errors when we start thinking about happiness. The first thing, the first kind of mistake we make, is we think happiness means the absence of pain and sadness. That's not biblical happiness. If you read in 1 Peter 1 verse 6, it says this, to a small group of Christians who are suffering at the time. He says, in this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.

He says there are people who are rejoicing, and they're grieving at the same time. At the same time. He's saying you can be happy and sad at the same time.

Now, maybe you haven't thought about that. You know, this is not the happiness, the kind of superficial happiness we're talking, that I got when England beat Wales in the football the other week. That's not the kind of superficial happiness we're talking about.

[12 : 48] We're talking a deep, rooted happiness that can cry real tears, and doesn't just say, oh, trust God and smile. You know, Christians, we can give people a great guilt trip, you know, that you're meant to be grinning from ear to ear all the time.

That's not what he's saying. He's saying there is a license for feeling down, and we'll talk about that next week. But don't miss this. He's saying Christian happiness is what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6.

He says, sorrowful yet rejoicing. Sorrowful yet rejoicing. That's the kind of happiness you can have. On the night my brother died, we were in the room.

We went downstairs together with my parents, and we wept deeply together. It was painful. It felt empty.

It felt numbing at the time. And yet I saw my parents in the midst of all the tears that we were crying, and do you know what they did? They started thanking God for the life of my brother.

[13 : 50] And I saw in them this confidence in God in the midst of the pain and joy that they had in a father that they could trust.

You see, this isn't just the kind of glass half full kind of person who, you know, says, oh, I just move on with life. You know, I just kind of go with the flow, put it down to experience.

Because if you're like that, you know, you actually deny the real pain and the real emotions that people experience in life. When God is talking about happiness, he's not saying sweep real pains

under the carpet.

He's not saying that. He's saying in the pain, in the hurt, you can experience a joy and a contentment and a strength and a happiness which will sustain you.

And do you not think that this city, which is classed as the 75th state in the world in happiness, needs a group of people who know not to deny feelings but still have happiness in their lives because of Christ.

[14:59] So that's the first mistake. We think that actually it's just about the absence of sadness. Second mistake we make, we think happiness is based on external circumstances.

Okay? This tree in this passage here is remarkable because it doesn't part, it passes through winter and yet it's still flourishing. Right?

It passes through winter. It's still flourishing. Passes through summer. Still flourishing. What the rest of the society says is happiness is basically having control over your life. So you can keep it summer all year round.

You know, you can put yourself in a little greenhouse. That's what society wants it to be. But there was a New York Times article which said when you take the top philosophers and academics today and people like the Dalai Lama, okay, they're fundamentally sound, surefire, top five components for happiness.

Okay? Here's how they would say, this is how you get happy. Okay? Number one, be in possession of the basics, food, shelter, good health, safety. Okay? Pretty good. Two, get enough sleep.

[16:03] Anyone tracking with me? Okay? Three, have relationships that matter to you. Okay? It's not bad. Four, take compassionate care of others and of yourself.

Pretty good. Five, have work or an interest that engages you. If you have all of those five things, you can be happy. That's pretty good, right?

I mean, you can't argue with that. There's nothing even as superficial as money in there which most Hong Kong people think will make you happy. But even in this kind of rather nuanced list, Tim Keller points out that actually this is quite ridiculous.

Because most people in most countries in most of history have never had all of those things. Don't you realize that? Engaging in interesting work. Think about that. You know, some of you on that criteria are doomed to misery for the rest of your life.

You know, you feel it. But that's what society says. You've got to have this to be happy. So that's why we keep changing our jobs all the time, right? But the psalm says, if you go by society's standards of happiness, many of us will be miserable a lot of the time.

[17:15] But Christian happiness is not based on your job satisfaction. It's not based on an external situation. It's based on being rooted in something outside of yourself. Did you notice in the passage, this tree, and it's an image of a Christian, is planted by streams of water.

It's planted, rooted, anchored in this source of water that no matter when the drought comes, no matter when the heat comes, this tree is still fine.

because it's got this flood of water going through its internal root system all the time. To be happy, you've got to be rooted in something, an anchor for your soul, which is outside of yourself and your circumstances.

So what are you rooted in? What are you rooted in today? Like, where are you finding your happiness today? Just think about it. Because in John, in John 7, Jesus says, whoever believes in me, streams of water, living water, will flow out of his heart.

You say, if you're a Christian, if you're a Christian today, God says, through Jesus' death, he's planted you in a relationship within itself with a God who is fundamentally happy.

[18:44] And there is an overflow of his happiness that is meant to flow into your life as you are in relationship with him. He's like a gardener. I used to work in a garden center.

You know, we used to take little cuttings and plant them into other areas, into new areas, so you get new, fresh soil, and then the plant would grow. What he's saying is, God has taken you out of soil which never grew, which was going to dry up, and he put you in a new plant pot.

He's put you against a stream of water, the Holy Spirit, his word, that will always constantly nourish your roots. Whatever storm hits, no matter whether the drought comes, you can flourish.

Hebrews 12, it says about Jesus, for the joy that was set before him, for the joy, not for the kind of, oh, reluctance, the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross.

Have you thought about that? For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross. I mean, how does he have joy when he's going in the Garden of Gethsemane and he's saying, God, I don't want to go through this? How does he have joy when his disciples betray him, deny him, and he gets arrested?

[20 : 00] How does he have joy when he's on a cruel cross and people are mocking and spitting him? How does he be able to say, Father, forgive them when he's full, facing the winds of winter that are flying at him on the face of the cross?

The only way he can do that is because he's sustained in a relationship with his Father, which is where his joy is found. That's where his happiness is.

And he says, Jesus is this perfect, happy man in the psalm. Because he's the one who prospers in every season, even on the cross.

In the winter. And if you're a Christian, you are rooted in him and in a relationship with him. So his joy can become your joy.

And his spirit is poured out for your happiness. Because he wants to remind you of the gospel. He wants to remind you of the depth of Christ's love for you.

[20 : 59] That he's working every situation for your good. that he cares for you right now. Right now. Whatever you're going through. So it's not about, it's not about just an absence of sadness.

It's not about your external, relying on external circumstances for your happiness. Because here's the other thing. I mean, if you think about what the psalm says here. He says, verse 4.

If you don't have that anchor outside of yourself, the wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Do you know what chaff is? Have you seen chaff recently? Chaff is what you get if you get a load of grain, okay, and you throw it up in the air, and then the wind comes and he blows it away and what's left is the heavy grain, the nutritious grain drops to the ground.

Okay? The rest of the stuff, it's useless. You don't want it. Okay? Chaff has no lasting roots. It's got no substance to it. It's useless. It's like lighting a barbecue in a typhoon.

You know, it just kind of goes out. That's what chaff is. And sooner or later, the winds of life, the storms of life will blow on you. And will everything that you have done and placed your happiness in be worthless because you were just chaff.

[22 : 18] That's what the psalmist is saying. So I don't know if you've thought about this, whether you're a Christian, whether you're a non-Christian, what today is determining whether you're happy or not? You know, I get my, I get happy when I've done my to-do list.

Okay? If I get the to-do list I've got here, I feel great. But when people start interrupting me and stopping me getting the point of even getting number one on the list done, and then the internet breaks down just at the last minute, I feel miserable and frustrated because my happiness is based on achieving stuff.

Right? Some of you, I think, may be the same. And it's not wrong. I can feel joy at achieving things. That's not the problem. The problem is if I'm basing all of my happiness there, if it gets blown away at a moment, I'll feel like, I'll be like chaff that I've wasted all my time because my to-do list hasn't got done.

And God may be saying, have you got nothing more that is rooted deeper to put your joy in than that? Tim Keller says, no amount of money, power, planning can prevent bereavement, diet illness, relationship betrayal, financial disaster, a host of other troubles from entering your life.

And you say, thanks for telling me it's summer. Okay? But human life is fatally fragile and subject to forces beyond our power to manage. And if you haven't experienced those things in life, sometime, sooner or later, you will.

[23 : 52] You will. So if everything that's precious to you right now was stripped away, even like Wendy and Stefan were talking about, even in transition, so much is get stripped away.

You know, even if it's your kids, your spouse, your parents, your reputation, your EU citizenship, do you have a root system that can stand and anchor you and sustain your happiness in all of it? to be like that tree. If you're a Christian, you know that sometimes the winter seasons are actually the time when you find greatest joy in God because it forces you to run back to Him when you're stripped down and you come to a new depth of relationship, right?

Some of you know that and have experienced that. That's what he's talking about. Happiness is possible. Why we don't get happiness? How do we become happy?

That's what you've been waiting for. Well, research suggests that happiness and feelings of happiness are shaped 10% by circumstances, 50% by your temperament.
[25 : 03] Some of you are just kind of like more positive. 40% by choice. But it's that 40% of choice which is very interesting. And it's shaped by where you choose to focus your life.

Counselor Paul Tripp says, human beings don't live life based on the facts of their experience but their interpretation of the facts. We never respond objectively to the situations of our life. We respond based on the lens through which we see those situations. Now, you know that's true. You were getting here this morning to the service and you're running late. Okay? Some of you know what it's like.

And you're getting to the service. One person thinks, oh no! What's everyone going to think? We're going to be late. Somebody else thinks, oh it's okay. It doesn't matter.

Everyone else is going to be late so it's fine. Same situation. Different perspective. Right? All depends on the lens through which you're looking at it. And I'm not saying that either of those are right.

[26 : 03] Okay? So don't quote me on any of that. But what shapes your perspective is what you focus on. And what you focus on becomes what you delight in.

Listen to what this psalm says. Happy 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.

But his delight is in the law of the Lord. And on his law he meditates day and night. There are two key things that shape your focus.

What you meditate on and who you hang around with. What you meditate on and who you hang around with. You see this happy man, his happiness comes out of a delight in the law of God.

Now I don't know if you've thought about law. C.S. Lewis once said, he said, I just never got how anybody could delight in the word law because who can delight in a rule book of do's and don'ts?

[27 : 11] That doesn't sound like much fun. My wife studied law. I didn't get any fun reading any of the law textbooks. But that's not what he's talking about here. When he's talking about law, the word law means instruction and he's referring to everything that God reveals in his word both in all of the Psalms, in all of the Old Testament and he's saying he delights in it because it reveals God to him.

And if you delight in God, then you delight in what he says. Now have a listen to this. Jonathan Edwards, he's an American preacher from the 19th century.

He said, 18th, 19th century, he said, when he talks about the Bible he says, sometimes only mentioning a single word will cause my heart to burn within me.

Only seeing the name of Christ or some attribute of God will suddenly make my heart burn and God suddenly appears glorious to me making me have exalting thoughts of him.

When I enjoy this sweetness it seems to carry me above the thoughts of my own condition. It seems that at such times I'm at such a loss that I cannot bear it.

[28 : 22] I cannot bring myself to take my eye from this glorious present object to turn it to myself or to my own interests. Wow. If you're a Christian here today, do you have any experience of what he's talking about?

Because if you've never experienced a joy in God's word, let me suggest that you may never have truly read God's word.

What do I mean by that? You may have read it with your eyes but you may not have read it with your heart. You may not have allowed it to read you, to examine you, to capture you because that's what the Bible's meant to be doing in your life.

And the reason I know for myself and I know for many of us struggle spiritually is because deep down we actually think that following God is not really going to give us true happiness.

And the idea of putting like pleasure, the word pleasure and God's word together is a bit like putting Chris Thornton and ballet in the same sentence.

[29 : 32] They just don't go together. Okay? But you don't want to go there because if you want to live as a Christian, you will only escape the pleasures of sin by finding pleasure in God and His word.

You know, when I got married, I wasn't thinking about all the other women who were there on my wedding day that day. I was thinking about Fiona, my wife. I wasn't consumed with everyone else that I wasn't marrying.

I was focusing on the one that I was. The psalmist is consumed with God so His delight is not elsewhere and some of us have no idea what that means.

Some of us are thinking, oh, I'd love to experience that. I'd love to feel like that's just not my experience of reading the Bible or of God in any way. And the thing is, you can't kind of work that up.

The place to start if you want to experience delight in God and His word is simply in repentance and saying, God, and you know, I have to do this regularly because I've learned I need to confess sometimes I'm cold to God.

[30 : 47] You know, other things I'm more consumed by than God. And I've learned that when I come to God and confess, God's incredibly gracious to me.

He's not beating me up and saying, oh, you're not joyful enough. He's saying, come to me. And I just come and sometimes I say, God, I need your grace in this. Forgive me that I'm cold even in my desire to read your word.

I know I should, but actually, I don't really believe it's going to make me happy because I find it difficult. I don't understand it all the time. But I want to experience that kind of joy in your word.

So please change my heart. Change me so that your word and you becomes a joy to me. Because that's a prayer God delights in answering.

So will you pray it? Will you pray that prayer today? But notice in the psalm, it's not just reading the Bible once a day. You see the happy man, what does he do? He meditates on it day and night.

[31 : 52] Now that word meditate, it means chew, ponder, mutter. It's like a cow. You know what cows do? You know, they get a bit of grass. They start chewing it.

They have a nap. They sit down. They wake up. They chew it a bit more. They have another nap. They then wake up again. They chew it a bit more. They chew all the goodness out of that grass until there's nothing left.

That's what a cow does. What you're supposed to do, you're supposed to read the Bible like a cow. Okay? Did you get that? If somebody, if somebody comes to you afterwards and says, how do I read the Bible?

I would just say, like a cow. Okay? You see, you're meant to have the truth of the gospel coming into your lives day in, day out.

But how do you do that? How do you do that when you're busy and life is crazy? I mean, Hong Kong's crazy. My Lord joins again. He said this, have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life, this is so true of me, is due to the fact that you're listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself.

[32 : 56] Let me say that again. Most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you're listening to yourself more than talking to yourself. You know, you and I have this, this record that plays in our minds throughout the day.

You know, mine sometimes goes a bit like this. When it's a bad day, I'm like, oh man, I'm going to be late. Why is that guy in front of me so slow? I can't believe that idiot just doesn't know how to do this.

And I'm thinking, oh, why is it always me who has to end up doing all of these things and all of this kind of going on? And sometimes it's like, oh, I can't believe I did that. What an idiot. You know, these guys play through my mind throughout the day.

Other times when it's a great day, I'm like, man, I'm a pretty good, responsible husband. Yeah. You know, I really deserve a bit of respect for the job.

I wish somebody else could see what I'm doing right now. Wasn't it good of me to just kind of give up my time to serve when I didn't have to?

[33 : 57] Aren't I a good person? That's kind of what kind of plays on it. And it's not conscious, not outside, but actually subconsciously that's what I'm thinking. And this kind of MP3 is playing in your mind throughout the day.

And if you haven't realized it is, just stop and listen to yourself occasionally. Record yourself.

Because you'll find a very interesting track. But when I do that, you see, I'm listening to myself and what other people have said, I take it on myself and then I find it's all about me.

You notice that? My thoughts are all about me. It's either how good I am, how bad I am, how bad everybody else is, how good everybody else should be if they did things my way. It's all like that.

That's the track that's going on in my mind.

And the gospel says if you meditate on that, you're going to root your happiness in your external circumstances, in yourself. And when the winter winds blow, you're going to be crushed. But if you preach the gospel to yourself, man, we're going to be late.

But my heavenly Father is in control of this. I can trust Him. God, help me to trust you because I'm annoyed. Aren't I great at this job? Yeah, but I, Chris, remember that this is just a gift from God.

[35 : 08] It's not about you. It's about Him. I need to preach to myself because, man, I just believe so much, so much crap. And it goes on in here.

Have you ever noticed when you actually verbalize something to someone, sometimes how crazy it sounds? Well, that's why you need to preach to yourself. And in summer, if it's summertime for you, build habits where you're actually, throughout the day, having something, a verse of God's Word that you're speaking to yourself.

because when it comes to winter, you'll be able to root deep down into that stream and you'll be fine. It's not positive. This is not positive thinking.

Okay, positive thinking kind of just says, it's going to be all right. You can do it. You know, I can overcome cancer even if the cancer is killing me. It denies reality. But the truth is you can find happiness regardless of your circumstances in a trustworthy God whose Word is true and reliable. That's what He says. And it's not just a solitary exercise. You know, because if it's up to me, I just keep listening to myself. But do you notice it says, those who stand in the way of sinners and those who sit in the seat of mockers, they're surrounding yourself.

[36 : 28] You know, the company that you surround yourself impacts your happiness too. You know, who do you gravitate towards? Who has got say in your life?

Is it your parents? Is it your spouse? Is it your work colleagues? Who is it? Is it Taylor Swift? I don't know. Who do you follow on Twitter?

Who has say in your life? Because someone once said, sermons might inspire you, but it's your community that shapes you. You know, if you want to know what you're going to be like, look at the friends that you develop around you.

Your friends are your future, is what somebody said. Because you know, they'll shape and influence you. They'll shape and influence you.

Think about, who are you listening to? That's why we have community groups. That's why, and listen, as guys, I think guys, like, the women in this church, you do pretty well.

[37 : 32] You do so much better than many of us guys. Like, we're terrible, and I know that. You know, that's why, guys, if you don't have any real deep relationships with any Christian guys, who's going to point you to Christ, rather than just pointing you to the football score, then you're going to struggle to actually really know anything of what I've been talking about.

Because you're never going to truly grasp that happiness that God wants you to have. And he's saying, because you know, we listen to our own lies, our own crap.

And we get caught up in what everybody else around us is saying. So if you want to get serious about your happiness, we have a bunch of guys who meet on a Tuesday morning in Central. We have a bunch of guys who are going to go for a steak dinner.

You know, I mean, it doesn't get better than that. Like in a week's time, come and see me, come and see Graham, because we want to build a community where we walk alongside each other, because community is about our happiness in God.

The way you engage with God's Word, the way you engage with community, shows whether you want to be about like that tree or not. So let me close. I can tell you of a 92-year-old I know, she's suffering terrible pain.

[38 : 54] She's really honest about it. She's not kind of grinning and bearing it. She's very real. It's very painful. But when you talk to her, she'll say to you, I want to shout about Jesus from the rooftops.

I have this joy in my heart that sustains me. She's a tree who is planted by streams of water and her leaf has not withered at 92 years of age.

Let me ask you, do you have roots in Christ, in the gospel, in His love for you that will mean that will be true of you too?

Preacher Charles Spurgeon said this to close. The half-committed Christian is the most miserable person on earth. He's just enough in the world to be miserable in the presence of God.

He's just enough into God to be miserable in the world. Go all the way, one way or the other. Either drive your roots deep into God and get serious about finding happiness in Him, happiness in His Word, happiness in community of people who are pointing you back to Him.

[40 : 09] or walk away. Don't be a half-committed Christian because you'll be miserable. Let's pray. Father, I just realized that you actually want us to find happiness in you.

Sometimes I know that I don't actually really believe that. I think other things will make me happier. Like, really, I know what I should think.

I know what I should say, but my actions often show that I'm looking elsewhere. Father, help us as we even look out and we see the beauty of your creation and the sea and the sunshine and all the amazing things you've given us.

Help us to see you in whatever we're going through, whether we're going on holiday, whether we're staying here in the heat, whether we're struggling, whether we're doing well.

Lord, help us to realize that you are the source of living water that desires us to find true happiness in you.

[41 : 34] Help us as a church to be a church which, Lord, sometimes we struggle, sometimes we're wintertime. Help us not to be unrealistic, but help us to find and encourage each other to see just how beautiful you are, that you are what we need.

We trust you. We love you. Help us to be happy in you. In your name. Amen.