

Minister's Message – September 2011

Glory and Joy

Did you take part in the latest happiness survey? The old question of money and happiness is again the topic of discussion. Money of course is only good for what it can buy but the world offers heaps of things to buy. Many seek happiness in bodily pleasures; others go full on at work, while others try to do good to others or to the planet. Yet lots of people are becoming lonely and unhappy. Where is true happiness to be found?

'Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever'. The first answer in the Shorter Catechism is very profound. It links joy or happiness with the glory of God. At a recent conference the speaker said 'God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him'; which is another way of saying what we have in the Catechism. Because we are created by God and made in his image, our true happiness is bound up with God and his glory. We cannot be happy in loneliness – is anyone truly happy living on an island all alone? Our happiness comes in relationships and supremely in relationship with our Maker.

The heavens declare the glory of God (Psalm 19). This word 'glory' is not easy to understand but we find it over 300 times in the Bible. We use it in many songs but rarely in our speech. The more we focus on the glory of God the more joy we will have. God's glory is seen in the creation. We see his power and his majesty in the things he has made. 'The heavens cannot help declaring the glory of God. But we are given the wonderful privilege of doing it because we want to'. How are we to declare the glory of God?

Jesus glorified God when he was on this earth. How? By doing God's will; by finishing the work God gave him to do (John 17:4). Jesus was without sin so could do this. Believers are not without sin but still it is our aim or 'chief end' to glorify God. *He who glories let him glory in the Lord* (I Corinthians 1:31). Paul twice quotes Jeremiah 9:24. Let us not glory in our own wisdom, riches or power but in this – that we know the Lord who is loving and righteous and the judge of all. God delights in being acknowledged and worshipped. He is a jealous God.

Moses had it all in terms of worldly pleasures but he turned his back on these ephemeral pleasures. He chose to suffer by following Christ. He sought to glorify God. He once asked God to show him his glory (Exodus 32). God made his goodness pass before Moses and declared his name. Paul saw a very bright light and heard the voice of Jesus. He saw the glory of the risen Jesus. Jesus actually revealed the glory of God in the earth, *full of grace and truth* (John 1:14). He prayed 'Father glorify me together with yourself'. Jesus will come again on the clouds with power and great glory.

Sin is falling short of the glory of God. To be righteous means to give glory to God. It is in doing this that we have our greatest joy. We were made to glorify God so it follows that in doing this we find true joy. *In the presence of the Lord is fullness of joy and pleasures evermore* (Psalm 16). Come into the presence of God's glory with exceeding joy (Jude). Delight in the Lord and he will delight in you. God will be pleased and he will be glorified when you find your total joy in him.

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