

1 Sermon, July 31, 2011

Texts: Mark 1:14-15, Romans 14:13-19

Title: "Holiness and Happiness"

Based on Wesley's Sermon #7, "The Way to the Kingdom"

Myth that holiness and happiness are contradictory

Holiness is not an outward thing

Holiness is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans)

Wesley sums this up in the great commandment:

a. Love God – receive joy and peace

b. Love others - righteousness

Social aspects of holiness

1. Myth that holiness and happiness are contradictory

There is a myth that if you want to be truly religious, you need to be extremely serious. The idea is that to be really holy you need to deny yourself every pleasure, forget about dancing or movies, and just sit in hard, straight-backed chairs and read the Bible.

If that were true, then Jesus wasn't very religious, because he had fun, or as the Bible puts it, he "ate and drank with sinners."

Those who believe that faith and enjoyment cannot go together have never really practiced their faith. That's because joy is the natural outcome of faith. If we truly believe that God is good, that God wants the best for us, it is a lot harder to look at the world with cynical eyes.

If we trust God, everything gets a little easier. Trusting God doesn't take away the trials of life, and faith adds its own challenges, but we can let go of the anxiety.

2. Holiness is not an outward thing

John Wesley, who with his brother Charles began Methodism, spoke of this in his sermon, "The Way to the Kingdom."

He began by quoting the passage from Romans, that the Kingdom of God is not about eating or drinking -- that is, about outward ritual. Indeed, the Kingdom does not consist in any outward thing whatever; in anything exterior to the heart.

2 Sermon, July 31, 2011

In fact, true religion, or the Kingdom of God, does not consist of ideas or opinions, because these are not in the heart. You can't get to heaven just by assenting to the truth of something.

3. Holiness is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans)

Instead, Paul in Romans wrote that the Kingdom is about "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."

But true religion, or a heart right toward God and man, implies happiness as well as holiness. For it is not only "righteousness," but also "peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." What peace? "The peace of God," which God only can give, and the world cannot take away; the peace which "passeth all understanding," all barely rational conception; being a supernatural sensation, a divine taste, of "the powers of the world to come;" such as the natural man knoweth not, how wise soever in the things of this world; nor, indeed, can he know it, in his present state, "because it is spiritually discerned." It is a peace that banishes all doubt, all painful uncertainty; the Spirit of God bearing witness with the spirit of a Christian, that he is "a child of God." And it banishes fear, all such fear as hath torment; the fear of the wrath of God; the fear of hell; the fear of the devil; and, in particular, the fear of death: he that hath the peace of God, desiring, if it were the will of God, "to depart, and to be with Christ."

hope both of the glorious image of God, which is in part and shall be fully "revealed in him;" and of that crown of glory which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him.

Dost thou thus believe? Then the peace of God is in thy heart, and sorrow and sighing flee away. Thou art no longer in doubt of the love of God; it is clear as the noon-day sun. Thou criest out, "My song shall be always of the loving-kindness of the Lord: With my mouth will I ever be telling of thy truth, from one generation to another." Thou art no longer afraid of hell, or death, or him that had once the power of death, the devil; no, nor painfully afraid of God himself; only thou hast a tender, filial fear of offending him. Dost thou believe? Then thy "soul doth magnify the Lord," and thy "spirit rejoiceth in God thy Saviour." Thou rejoicest in that thou hast "redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Thou rejoicest in that "Spirit of adoption," which crieth in thy heart, "Abba, Father!" Thou rejoicest in a "hope full of

3 Sermon, July 31, 2011

immortality;" in reaching forth unto the "mark of the prize of thy high calling;" in an earnest expectation of all the good things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

4. Wesley sums this up in the great commandment:

α. Love God – receive joy and peace

We cannot be at a loss concerning this, if we remember the words of our Lord, describing the two grand branches thereof, on which "hang all the law and the prophets;" "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength: This is the first and great commandment;" (Mark 12:30;) the first and great branch of Christian righteousness. Thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord thy God; thou shalt seek and find all happiness in him. He shall be "thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward," in time and in eternity. All thy bones shall say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee!" Thou shalt hear and fulfil His word who saith, "My son, give me thy heart." And, having given him thy heart, thy inmost soul, to reign there without a rival, thou mayest well cry out, in the fullness of thy heart, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my strong rock, and my defence; my Saviour, my God, and my might, in whom I will trust; my buckler, the horn also of my salvation, and my refuge."

b. Love others – righteousness

And the second commandment is like unto this; the Second great branch of Christian righteousness is closely and inseparably connected therewith; even, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." *Thou shalt love*, -- thou shalt embrace with the most tender good-will, the most earnest and cordial affection, the most inflamed desires of preventing or removing all evil, and of procuring for him every possible good, -- *Thy neighbour*; -- that is, not only thy friend, thy kinsman, or thy acquaintance; not only the virtuous, the friendly, him that loves thee, that prevents or returns thy kindness; but every child of man, every human creature, every soul which God hath made; not excepting him whom thou never hast seen in the flesh, whom thou knowest not, either by face or name; not excepting him whom thou knowest to be evil and unthankful, him that still despitely uses and persecutes thee: Him

4 Sermon, July 31, 2011

thou shalt love *as thyself*; with the same invariable thirst after his happiness in every kind; the same unwearied care to screen him from whatever might grieve or hurt either his soul or body.

Dost thou now believe? Then "the love of God is" now "shed abroad in thy heart." Thou lovest him, because he first loved us. And because thou lovest God, thou lovest thy brother also. And being filled with "love, peace, joy," thou art also filled with "long-suffering, gentleness, fidelity, goodness, meekness, temperance," and all the other fruits of the same Spirit; in a word, with whatever dispositions are holy, are heavenly or divine. For while thou "beholdest with open," uncovered "face" (the veil now being taken away) "the glory of the Lord," his glorious love, and the glorious image wherein thou wast created, thou art "changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord."

5. Social aspects of holiness

When Jesus appeared and proclaimed the Kingdom of God, it was not a somber sad thing. It was a contagious thing. Joy and hope. For you, and for the world.

"The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."
Mark 1:15

And this "kingdom of God," or of heaven, "is at hand." As these words were originally spoken, they implied that "the time" was then fulfilled, God being "made manifest in the flesh," when he would set up his kingdom among men, and reign in the hearts of his people. And is not the time now fulfilled? For, "Lo! (saith he,) I am with you always," you who preach remission of sins in my name, "even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28:20.) Wheresoever, therefore, the gospel of Christ is preached, this his "kingdom is nigh at hand." It is not far from every one of you. Ye may this hour enter thereinto, if so be ye hearken to his voice, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel."

On earth as it is in heaven.