

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Seventh Sunday after Trinity, July 26, 2009**

✠ ✠ ✠

Hymns: 39, 34:1, 38, 628, 391.

Lessons: 1 Kings 3: 5-12, Romans 8: 28-39, Matthew 13:44-52.

Text: Psalm 144. (See NIV and KJV)

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, dear Fellow Redeemed,

What is happiness? I think that most of you have seen some illustrations or cartoons, with the subject “happiness is ...” Even the United States’ Declaration of Independence speaks of happiness. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” The right to pursue happiness, to try to achieve it, to chase it is something that the founders of our country tried to guarantee for all its citizens.

So what is happiness? What makes someone happy? I think you could find many different answers for that question. But I think that every Christian would agree that the definition of happiness and how we achieve it will be the kind of answer we find in our sermon text. Today let’s ask

**WHAT IS HAPPINESS AND WHERE DO WE FIND IT?**

1. **King David and all believers in Christ praise the Lord for his glory, power, and gifts.**
2. **“Happiness is ....” “Blessedness is ....”**

David begins this psalm by praising and thanking the true God for all the gifts he has been given, particularly in war and leading his nation, God’s nation which was chosen to be the nation from which the Savior would be born. **“Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.”** (KJV) He points to and praises God for teaching him everything he has known, and for preserving and protecting him from all sorts of wartime dangers, and for subduing his enemies.

He admits that Man doesn’t deserve all that the Lord does for him: **“LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him! Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away.”** He admits that the Lord has enough power to destroy anyone and anything. **“Part your heavens, O LORD, and come down; touch the mountains, so that they smoke. Send forth lightning and scatter the enemies; shoot your arrows and rout them.”** We are reminded of God’s power in controlling volcanoes and all the power and destruction that they and things such as lightning can bring.

**“Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke. Cast forth lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them. Send thine hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children; Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.”**

But not only does David recognize God’s power over all things, he makes it a very personal thing. He speaks to God: **“Reach down your hand from on high; deliver me and rescue me from the mighty waters, from the hands of foreigners whose mouths are full of lies, whose right hands are deceitful. I will sing a new**

*song to you, O God; on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you, to the One who gives victory to kings, who delivers his servant David from the deadly sword. Deliver me and rescue me from the hands of foreigners whose mouths are full of lies, whose right hands are deceitful.*” God had the power and used it to rescue David many times in war and when people sought his life. He speaks of the deceitfulness of all men by nature: full of lies and deception. The right hand is often offered as a handshake of peace and friendship, but that is not always the case. The handshake supposedly has a history of showing that there is no weapon, no sword or knife in the right hand. But not everyone is so honest and upright, and which of us hasn’t learned that? Humans because of their sinfulness are full of lies and deceit. But notice that David thanks God for all sorts of deliverance!

This is David, the adulterer, the murderer of the husband whose wife he took. This is David who tried to cover up his sin. But he repented. He confessed his sins. He turned to God for forgiveness after his sins, and did it repeatedly. He turns again and again to God, just as each of us does. And God forgave his sins. Nathan, the prophet of God, assured him of that. And that all contributes to the genuine happiness he writes about in our text. At the end of our text he gets to the point we want to make today: **“blessed are the people whose God is the LORD,”** or as the KJV reads: **“happy is that people, whose God is the LORD.”** There you have God’s answer to true happiness: When the Lord God is your God, when you put your trust, faith, confidence in the true God, happiness and blessedness are yours.

God does not tell us that happiness is wealth, money, possessions, honor among men, praise from others, power on earth, good health. Happiness is putting all your trust in the true God. Elsewhere, and we are only thinking of Old Testament passages using the same Hebrew Word for Happiness and Blessedness, God uses many other examples and definitions for that word.

David also prays for the nation. When God is praised and honored, when God’s will as told to mankind in his Word is followed, then we will see and experience the kind of happiness and blessedness that the last part of this Psalm talks about. But even though the first part of this psalm talks about personal issues for David the king, the welfare of the entire nation is also involved. Why should a king be thought of as being concerned merely about his private and personal issues? The welfare of the king and the welfare of the nation go hand in hand. Without people, there can be no nation.

**“Then our sons in their youth will be like well-nurtured plants, and our daughters will be like pillars carved to adorn a palace.”** The next generation, the children, are essential in the history and in the development of any nation. Without children, there can be no future for a nation. David prays that their sons and daughters may be healthy and strong and morally upright. If the sons are like **“plants full grown”** they have not been stunted in their growth. If the daughters have enjoyed a healthy development, they will be **“like corner pillars carved fit for a palace”**.

David, speaking by God’s will also tells us **“Our barns will be filled with every kind of provision. Our sheep will increase by thousands, by tens of thousands in our fields; our oxen will draw heavy loads. There will be no breaching of walls, no going into captivity, no cry of distress in our streets.”** He speaks of an abundance of grain in the granaries, and prospering herds. This reminds us again that all physical blessings come from the Lord. There is a broad list here of blessings that mark times of peace and prosperity. He speaks of oxen transporting various types of goods, giving the picture of a prosperous nation transporting its material possessions. The lack of breaching of walls suggests peace, with no enemy attacking. In addition, he says that there will be no outcry, any exclamation of pain or alarm, no **“cry of distress”**.

But David is not obsessed with the importance of physical things, possessions. Possessions, things, are only tokens of the Lord’s favor and gifts. The real gifts are spiritual. Spiritual issues are most important. Only if they are **“a people whose God is the Lord”** will there be true happiness. People must build their lives and

thinking on God, and gladly walk in his ways. This is the true source of success and lasting happiness for a nation. But even if a majority of people in a nation do not choose to follow the true God, believers can. You cannot control other people. You do have control over what you do and think.

One excellent commentary on our text had this to say: “Peace, prosperity, and moral strength are the greatest blessings for a nation. During the years they first lived in the chosen land of Canaan, Israel rarely had any of these three blessings. The lack of moral strength led to the lack of peace and prosperity. During the reigns of David and his son Solomon Israel enjoyed a measure of peace and prosperity which exceeded that previously experienced. Although David fell into sin and the downward slide of the entire nation into idolatry began already in Solomon’s reign, their reigns were a time of relative moral strength which contributed to the well-being of the nation.

“One of the most important products any society can produce is a generation of children who have not only physical strength and health, but also moral and spiritual strength. Children who have such strength are like well-nurtured plants. They are healthy, well-nourished plants: nourished with the word of God. Without rain, plants won’t grow but will die.”

Rain this past week helped nourish our plants in the Mankato area. Fed with the Word of God, people will be steady pillars, since they will be a joy and a blessing to their parents and to the society in which they live. We have reason to fear that our society is increasingly failing to provide such moral strength for its coming generation.

Although our nation is not God’s chosen people in the sense that Israel was, we are a nation richly blessed with material prosperity and religious liberty. But already in earthly life nations tend to reap what they sow. If we stress material things and neglect the moral and spiritual training of the next generation, we can expect to reap a sad harvest of lawlessness, disrespect and selfishness. If a nation trusts in economic and military might as its salvation, nothing will save it from the judgment of God. God alone is the true source of blessing for any nation. In the past year, our nation has even seen and experienced that trusting in economic might is no guarantee of lasting happiness and success!

True happiness comes from God. He forgives our sins, he heals our diseases. Because of what Jesus Christ did – obeying God’s Word perfectly in our place and suffering the pains of hell in our place – we have the gift of eternal life just by believing that fact. And that faith comes from the word of God. Your sins are forgiven for Jesus’ sake. God tells us in Psalm 32:1-2: ***“Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.”*** God forgives your sins. Believe it and live in happiness and blessedness!

There are more than 40 passages in the Old Testament which use the word in the last verse of our text translated “blessed” in the NIV and “Happy” in the KJV. The theme that runs through them is that happiness and blessedness comes from trusting in the Lord God, from putting all confidence and hope in him and from obeying his will

In a few minutes we are going to be singing these words from Psalm 51:10-12: ***“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.”*** This, too is a psalm written by David by the inspiration of God the Holy Ghost. Where do we find this “joy” of God’s salvation?

***“Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.”*** Are you getting your share of happiness? Trust in the Lord, look to him, follow him for true happiness and blessedness. Amen.