

A CONTENTED LIFE
Philippians 4:6-7
August 12, 2018
Holiday Island Presbyterian Church

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (NIV)

INTRODUCTION:

In this portion of Paul's letter to the Philippian church,
Paul says "rejoice" twice.

I can think of times when all I could do was rejoice.
When my wife said: "I do."
At the birth of my children;
There was this one trout in Colorado . . .

Sadly, there were times
when the last thing I thought about as rejoicing.
At my father's funeral;
when I was turned down for a job I really wanted.
When I lost a trophy trout right at the net.

We've all been there . . .
. . . moments of great joy and rejoicing
and moments of deep grief and weeping.

In Ecclesiastes
we are told there is a time for rejoicing
and a time for weeping.

**Most of the time, thankfully,
we live somewhere between the two extremes.
That is an area I call “contentment.”**

**I think that is what Paul is referring to
when he said:**

**“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation,
by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your
requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which
transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and
your minds in Christ Jesus.”**

**One of the greatest achievements in my life
has been to *finally* achieve contentment.
Often when my head hits the pillow at night
I think how blessed I am to be so content.**

**This morning,
we’re going to examine how to live a contented life.**

**In my opinion,
there are four keys to living a contented life;
a life free from anxiety.**

BE CONTENT WHERE YOU ARE:

**One of the first skills we have to learn about contentment
is to be satisfied with where we are.**

**If you are on the computer ap called “Next Door Holiday Island”
you can’t help but notice there are people who live here
who are not happy about their life here -
- and spend far too much time complaining about it.**

**They don’t like the streets,
they don’t trust the Commissioners,**

they don't think they are getting their share of service.

**It seems to me they are looking for things to complain about
when they live in one of the most beautiful places around.**

Bless their hearts –

- and I mean that in the East Texan way –**
- they seem to thrive on finding fault.**

They remind me of a situation I once heard about.

**A man and his family were relocating
and they stopped at a gas station in a small town.**

**As the man was filling his car with gas,
the station owner wandered out and struck up a conversation.**

**The man asked the owner,
“What's this town like?”**

The owner asked: “What was it like where you're coming from?”

“Oh, it was terrible,” said the man.

**The people were unfriendly, the streets were a wreck,
the mayor was a crook, and there was no service.**

We couldn't get out of there fast enough.”

“Well,” said the owner, “I reckon that's what you'd find here, too.”

The man paid for his gas and moved on.

A little while later,

another man who was relocating with his family pulled in.

As he was gassing up, he struck up a conversation with the owner.

“We're looking for a good place to live.

What's this town like?”

Again, the station owner asked:

“What was it like where you’re coming from?”

**“It was a wonderful place; filled with really good people,
we really loved it there and are sad to move.”**

“Well, sir,” said the station owner, “I reckon you’ll love it here.”

**If we take a spiritual perspective,
we are *exactly* where God placed us.
Geographical discontent will not change a thing.**

**You see, it is not so much *where* you live
as *how* you live where you live.**

**I believe that God has a plan for each of us –
- and each of those plans are unique and individual.**

**So, God calls us together in community
and gives us the opportunity to build something great!**

BE CONTENT WITH WHAT YOU DO:

**The next skill to be learned
is to be content with what you do.**

**One of the hardest – and best – lessons I ever learned was:
If you don’t like what you’re doing,
just don’t do it anymore!**

**If you don’t like being club president, resign;
if you don’t like your vocation, ask God to lead you to a place
where you can make a real difference.**

**If you don’t like your hobby . . .
then, for heaven’s sake, quit doing it!**

**When I was called here to be your pastor,
I was involved in a lot of activities;
Master Gardeners, Bee Club, Fly Fishing, Fly Tying
Ham Radio Club.**

I realized two things:

**First of all, I couldn't manage all those activities
and be a pastor.**

Second, I really didn't like all the things I was doing.

**So, I took the opportunity to resign a lot of those activities.
AND I AM MUCH HAPPIER!**

**Don't make what you do into an idol
that demands you sacrifice your time and talent
doing something that causes you anger and anxiety!**

**You are not defined by what you do.
You are defined by the God who created you.**

**If you are doing what God has called you to do,
there will be fulfilment in it.
It may not be easy; it may be frustrating at times,
but overall, it will be fulfilling.**

BE CONTENT WITH WHAT YOU HAVE:

**Now here's a hard lesson to learn:
Be content with what you have.**

This is a big one!

**It is really hard not to see some of the things others have
and not want those same things for yourself.
Comparing what you have to what someone else has
can only lead to being discontent.**

Perhaps even resentment.

**Looking forward to something better is OK;
planning for a better future and working towards that is fine.
But don't grieve over what you do not have.**

**Life does not consist of abundance in all things.
You've all heard the old maxim: Grass is greener . . .
How many cows have you seen
with their heads stuck in a fence
believing the grass was greener?**

**There have been things in my life that I lusted over . . .
. . . I thought I really wanted them.**

**Sometimes, I even managed to get some of those things
only to find out that I was not nearly as content with them
as I was without them.**

**A new fly rod didn't make me a better fisherman;
it only drained my bank account.**

**Besides, if I caught fish every time I went fishing,
it would lose its challenge and become boring.
At most like going to the store and buying fish.**

BE CONTENT WITH WHO YOU ARE WITH:

**Believe it or not,
this is not nearly as difficult as it sounds.**

**Are you dissatisfied with the person you are with?
Want to change that person?
Change yourself and that person will adjust to you.**

You can't blame others for what you *think* you lack.

**Being discontent with the person you're with
leads to harping and nagging
which leads to arguing and fighting
and – in my experience – doesn't change a thing!**

**If you are not enjoying the company of another person,
you have to ask yourself: why not?
What would have to change in order to please you?**

**Then take a close look
at what is really within your control.
You can't change the behavior of another person
but you can change your reaction to it.**

CONCLUSION:

Earlier, I said that I had achieve contentment.

**By no means does that mean I don't have frustrations –
- we all do.**

Not *everything* goes our way *all* the time.

It is a fact that life can be hard at times.

**Things happen to derail our happiness –
- things and people can lead us to be discontent.
We're human and we will worry.**

It is something we have to learn.

And then it's something we have to practice.

**I can teach you how to tie flies
I can teach you how to tie them onto your line
I can teach you how to cast
But until you get in the river and actually *do* it,
you'll never know how to fish.**

And you better be prepared to fail – over and over again.

**If we dwell on the immense pressure under which we live,
we will never fully know the peace and joy
that God will's for us.**

That's why Paul says:

**“in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,
present your requests to God.”**

In *EVERY* situation!

**If you face a particularly difficult situation,
God may not deliver you from that situation –
- but I guarantee you this:
God *will* strengthen and support you in it.**

**When we really grasp the truth of that –
- when we can ask God for contentment
- when we can accept God's help**

**then . . . we will *know*
“the peace of God, which transcends all understanding.”**

May it be so fall *all* of us.

PRAYER:

**Let me close this sermon with Reinhold Niebuhr's Serenity Prayer.
It was written in the early 1930's
and a portion of it has been adopted by Alcoholics Anonymous.**

**God, give me grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be
changed,
Courage to change the things which should be changed,
and the Wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.**

**Living one day at a time, Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,
Taking, as Jesus did, This sinful world as it is,
Not as I would have it,**

**Trusting that You will make all things right,
If I surrender to Your will,
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.
Amen.**