

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 1/14/2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

Some years ago, the youth group at the church I was serving usually met on the front steps to wait for me. One Wednesday evening, as I approached the group, I could hear them talking about the jobs they would one day have and the things they would buy when they got older. When the kids saw me, they quickly asked, “Hey, Pastor. What do you think success means?”

I replied, “Success is figuring out what God wants you to do and then doing it.”

“Wow,” they said. “That’s really good!”

Society tells us that success is the secret to happiness. If you are successful, by whatever standard you set for success (wealth, fame, accomplishment, etc.), you will be happy. Yet studies regularly show that happiness is what leads to success, and not the other way around. People who are happy tend to be better workers and accomplish more in their work than do unhappy ones. And the pursuit of success usually leaves one with an awareness of yet another goal to achieve, but not with the happiness they think that success will bring.

The Bible doesn’t really talk about success. Except for a few times in the Old Testament where it tells of the success of armies in defeating their enemies, this really isn’t a topic that the Bible mentions. However, the Bible does talk about happiness, or really joy, 237 times. I think “joy” is the better term on which to focus because happiness is more of momentary feeling, but joyfulness is an ongoing state of being, but both happiness and joyfulness are related.

In John 15, Jesus tells how remaining in His love also reveals the Father’s love. Then He says, *“I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”*

Psalm 67:4 says, *“May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for You rule all the peoples with equality and guide the nations of the earth.”*

In the Matthew 13, Jesus says, *“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought the field.”*

In Philippians 2, Paul writes of the greater joy he will have if his readers fully seek to follow Christ by sharing together in His love: *“Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.”*

It would seem that God’s goal for us is not found in the pursuit of success and the attaining of things, but rather for us to be in relationship with Christ. It is in knowing the love of the Lord and then in sharing it with others that we will find greater happiness. And when we have that joyfulness in us, our lives will be richer and our efforts in life more meaningful.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey