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Pastor Matt Woods

“Your Happy Place?”

“Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness” is woven into our country’ founding. But what really makes you happy? Money? Time? Success? Sports? Church? The Greeks had a word for Happiness, *makairos*. It is a feeling of contentment, a sense of satisfaction, peace, being fortunate, settled, safe, among other things.

The word is used in the New Testament fifty times. Probably the most familiar place is in our text for this morning from Matthew 5:1-12, namely in what is called the beatitudes.

He (Jesus) said:

<sup>3</sup>“Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup>Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup>Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup>Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.

<sup>7</sup>Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.

<sup>8</sup>Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.

<sup>9</sup>Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called sons of God.

<sup>10</sup>Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup>“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

In an article that I recommend you read called, *Are We Misreading Scripture?* By E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien we discover very quickly that our English word, “happy”, doesn’t really capture the essence of the Greek, *makairos*. Allow me to quote a thought provoking reality that their article points out.

In Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that if you are a peacemaker, then you are *makairos*. Since English doesn’t have a word for this feeling, translators have struggled to find one. What do you call it when you feel happy, content, balanced, harmonious and fortunate? Well, translators have concluded, you are blessed. Thus our English translations say, “Blessed are the peacemakers” ([Matthew 5:9](#)). Unfortunately, this introduces another problem. The English language prefers clear subjects for its verbs. So the missing puzzle piece in the Beatitudes is, How is one blessed? What goes without saying in our culture is that God blesses people. Consequently, we often interpret this verse to mean, “If you are a peacemaker, then God will bless you.” But this isn’t what Jesus meant. Jesus meant, “If you are a peacemaker, then you are in your happy place.” It just doesn’t work well in English. Alas, here is the bigger problem: maybe the reason we North Americans struggle to find makarios in our personal lives is because we don’t have a word in our native language to denote it. (I encourage you to read the article at <https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/topical-studies/are-we-misreading-scripture.html>)

To the author’s point it just does seem to go deep enough to say, “Happy are the peacemakers...Happy are you when people insult and persecute you...” Can you be happy when persecuted or when you mourn?

Perhaps another view may be taken from 1 Timothy 1:11 and 1 Timothy 6:15 which describe God as *Makairos* “blessed” or happy. All things are in the Lord’s care, Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier. Blessed are those who obey the word (Luke 11:28). Blessed is the one who unlike Thomas has not seen but believes in Jesus (John 20:29). Blessed are the eyes that see Jesus and ears that hear Jesus (Mt 13:16). Bless those who cannot repay you and you will also be blessed (Luke 14:14). Blessed is the one whose sins are not counted against him but forgiven in Jesus (Romans 4:7-8). *Makairos* is the one who hopes and trusts and follows and lives in the Lord.

Happiness in our American culture changes. It is based more on ‘happenings’ rather than on a life of contentment. However, in the Lord is a happy place that includes peace in the storm, security in an unsettled world, and holds a certainty in the Lord that fuels hope for eternal life. *Makairos* is much more stable and contiguous because it is based on a Happy Lord. Whole point is *makairos* is connecting to Jesus. You are more blessed in Jesus to be a peacemaker like he is. You are more blessed to mourn your sin and the death it brings as the Lord does. You are more blessed to keep your heart pure, free from selfish ambition and sinful things to be closer to a sinless Lord. It is to see the face of God.

So, are you in your happy place? Are you *makairos*? If you are a normal Christian this is easier said than done and needs to be daily protected and renewed as faith itself does. *Makairos* didn’t stop Thomas from doubting or Peter from denying under pressure. On this side of creation *makairos* is not a promise of perfection. It is still incomplete. It is full of promise and Divine Presence from the one who never leaves us nor forsakes us. In truth you can be very unhappy in an English sense of the word and yet very much in your happy place with the Lord in *makairos*. All of us who have mourned loved ones know that we can feel both *makairos* and mourn at the same time. By way of the cross and the resurrection our happiest place is found in Christ even when there is more worse than better, more sickness than health, and more unknown than known. That’s because the *makairos* of the Beatitudes is a happy place that the Lord has made and in which Jesus is inviting us to take part. This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

And Now the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look on you with His favor and give you His peace in Jesus. Amen.

Pastor Matt Woods  
John 3:30