

Happy World

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[0 : 0 0] Well, after a couple of weeks away today, we're going to be going back to the happy Christian. And I hope you've noticed that our happiness doesn't so much depend upon our situation, but on our attitude, on what we focus on.

And that's what we've been seeing again and again in this study. And that's interesting because that's exactly what the psychologists in the secular world are discovering, that even as they've researched this topic of happiness, even they are starting to realize that very little of our actual day-to-day happiness depends upon our circumstances.

They've kind of broke it down to about 10%. The other 90% is sort of our disposition, how God has created us, and then what we think about.

And that's what we've been looking at. And so that idea that it's not so much our circumstances, but what we are looking at and focusing on is really highlighted this morning as we're going to talk about happy world.

Happy world. And do you remember a while ago or when we started, I think when we started this Sunday School series, I did that slideshow, that brief slideshow that showed like all those statistics about how the world is actually in many ways becoming a better place.

[1 : 3 9] And I was very tempted to bring that out and show it all over again. You know, we looked at the homicide rates, how they've gone down almost 600 times.

So you're about 600 times less likely to be murdered today than you were 500 years ago. That's a wonderful thing.

And we've looked at malaria and polio and all of these other statistics. The average home size in the United States has doubled in the last 50 years.

And that's a good thing. It's good that we have more room. It's a good thing that we have nicer looking houses. Now, that's not to say that's everything.

The world wants to make that everything. But things are getting better in some ways. So, we need to test our vision as we look at the world.

[2 : 4 9] We need to test our vision. So you go to the eye doctor. And the eye doctor is asking you, what do you see? And what you see and what you can see and what you can't see determines how good your vision is.

If you're like me, you take off your glasses, you're blind as a bat. And I can't see. So my question for you is, and that's what we're going to do this morning, is as we begin, we're going to test our vision.

As we look out into the world, are we seeing everything that is there? Or are we sort of just seeing the big, glaring, capital E, that's staring us in the face? And we're missing all of everything else that is in the picture.

So, what do you see when you look at your neighbor? So I want you to think about your house, your neighbor, if you have a neighbor.

Do you see his messy yard? His bad language? His out-of-control kids? His loud music? His political beliefs that differ from yours?

- [4 : 0 0] Just bad things? Is that all you see? Or are you able to see other things that are there, too? Other good things? His hard work ethic?
- The way he takes care of his children, or at least he likes to give them good things? I like to tell you a personal story, but I just...
- My neighbor, you know, he has his issues. But also, he loves his children. Gives them a swimming pool. Gives them a trampoline.
- He loves them. So, now you get in your car. You drive to work. What do you see there? So you're at your job.
- You're with those people. What do you see? An arrogant boss. Complaining. Just complaining coworkers. Or complaining customers. Just stupid, infuriating, infuriating computers that break.
- [5 : 0 6] Just the moment that you need them to really work. Is that all you see? Is that the whole picture? Or is there no one there with any skill?
- Or is your company not doing any good for anyone? Are all the customers that bad? Does your boss have no redeeming quality, so to speak?
- Do your computers never work? Is your company utterly worthless? Doing no good to anyone? We go to our last stop.
- I just read, I don't know, today or yesterday or something. But it's 100 days to the midterm election. So we go to the voting booth.
- We look on the other side. Is there, is the other side really evil and carnal? Is there nothing good? No good hopes.
- [6 : 0 5] No good desires. Nothing good on the other side. Presently, and maybe it's always been this way. But presently it seems like the other side, there's such a contrast.
- They don't see any good in the other side. And that's what we hear on talk radio or see on the news. There's no good over there. But is that true?
- Is any of this true? Is that the whole picture? Or are we missing something that is really there? God's grace.
- God's grace. Every day, everywhere, everyone grace. That's what we want to talk about this morning. That God's grace is active.
- Is present. In everyone that we meet. In every address. At every company. In every human heart.
- [7 : 1 5] There is a certain amount of God's grace. And so, today's equation. Remember, every chapter has an equation. Today's equation is this. Everywhere grace.
- Greater than. Everywhere sin. Equals positive. Equals happiness. So, the idea is. If we are looking more. At the everywhere grace in people.
- Instead of just the everywhere sin in people. We're going to be happier. We'll be happier. And so. When we go out. And we look at it.
- And we focus on sin. That is everywhere. And we. And that's all we see. Then we're going to miss so much. Of what is true. We're going to miss so much.
- Of what God. Is doing. In the world. Not accidentally. But on purpose. Good things that he is doing. In the world. We're going to be missing that.
- [8 : 1 0] And the result is twofold. One is. Towards God. When you're blind. To God's glory. Is that a problem? When you're blind.
- To God's goodness. Is that right? No. That dishonors him. But. So it has this God word problem. Of dishonoring God.

Of missing what he is doing. And it also has a problem. Inside of us. That makes us miserable. Afraid. People. So listen to what.

David Murray says. If I've just described you at home. Or at work. Then you are closing your eyes. Your ears. And mind.

To the grace of God. That. That is not only a serious sin. But it is also. Incredibly damaging. To you.

[9 : 07] Never. You retort. I deeply appreciate God's grace. I talk about it all the time. But these people. And places. Are just sinful. They have no idea. Of God's grace.

That people are lost. And going to hell. The places are fallen. Decaying. And destined. For everlasting burning. I know God's grace.

When I see it. And it ain't anywhere. To be found. Over the fence. Or in the factory. I agree. That such people. And places. Are marred.

By sin. And misery. And without salvation. They are doomed. And yet. I insist. That you are choosing. Not to see the grace of God.

In these people. In places. I'm not talking about God's saving grace. Of course. But what is often called. His common grace.

[10 : 03] grace. So. We've tested. Our vision. We've tested your vision. Do you have tunnel vision? Or only seeing a narrow bit.

Of something. Of the world. Where you only see the sin. But you don't see the grace. And again. Maybe it's not. Saving sin.

But it's. Common grace. Now. Can someone tell me. What. We mean. By common grace. What does that mean? It's for everyone.

It's for everyone. It's for everyone. It's for everyone. Does. When we say common. Do we mean. Sort of like. Little.

Or. You know. Eh. Ordinary. Uh. You know. Like. Not so great. Is that what we mean. By common. You know. What I mean. By that.

[10 : 58] Is like. Okay. So here's a diamond. And. Here's a common stone. And you don't think anything. Of a common stone. There's no real beauty. In a common stone. Is that what we mean.

By common. No. What we mean. Is. It's for. Every. One. So. Let me ask you. How do you see. God's. Grace.

In the weather. In the weather. Derek. Everybody gets ready. Everyone gets rain. Everyone gets. Sun.

Jesus talks about both. He says. God makes. The father makes his son. Rise on the evil and the good. Aren't you glad that. It's both. The sun and the rain.

God gives both. To the evil and the good. That's grace. And all kinds of people experience it. So. All kinds of people. This summer.

[11 : 54] Are going to be going to the national parks. And they're going to be going to the Grand Canyon. And the. And Yellowstone. And they're going to be going to. Whatever.

The. Niagara Falls. They're going to be seeing these things. And they're going to be amazed. And they're going to be blown away. And they're going to rejoice. At how beautiful that is.

And. Is that just for the Christian. No. If Christians were the only people. Going to the national parks. I'm sure the national parks. Would probably have closed by now.

But. Millions of people. From all around the world. Will be going to these beautiful places. And they're going to be experiencing. God's. Goodness. And love.

Now. It's not just there. You can find it. In the worst places. I think I've talked about this before. It's really a beautiful.

[12 : 49] Wonderful movie. Called Life is Beautiful. And you see grace. In that movie. In a concentration camp. In the beginning of the movie. The sort of the first part of the movie. A Jewish man.

Falls in love. With. His wife. Who's a woman. A woman. Becomes his wife. They have a child. Is that common grace.

The two unbelievers. Could fall. Madly in love. And enjoy each other's company. Is that grace. Is that grace.

Just for Christians. No. That. All sorts of people. Experience that. Well. So they have a son together. Now. Soon. The whole family. And their son. They. Who's about four.

He gets taken away. To a concentration camp. And. The Germans. Take so much from them. The Nazis. Take so much from them. But they don't. They can't take away. God's common. Grace.

[13 : 48] And so there they are. The father. And the son. In the camp. And the women. Are in another part of the camp. As. As how it was. And so how do you handle. That situation. Well.

The father tells the son. That they're playing a game. And. All the prisoners. Are playing the game. And you get points. By being quiet. And.

You get points. For not complaining. About being hungry. And you get extra points. If you hide quietly. From the guards. And. The first one. To a thousand points. Gets a tank. And.

So the game goes on. And all the time. The father. Is doing everything. He can. To protect his little son. To protect his little son's heart. And. Till the very end.

The allies. Are almost. There. To free the kill. And in the chaos. The father. Takes his son. And they go. To try to find his wife. And escape together. As a family. And as they're sneaking around.

[14 : 44] The German officer. Spots them. And the father. Tells his little boy. To hide. In a box. And he says. This is the last contest. If you win this one. You're going to win. The prize.

And. The German officer. Sees him. Catches the father. And decides. That he's going to shoot him. And still in character. The father. Winks at his son. And marches off.

In a very silly way. And. He's afraid. And. He doesn't want to die. And yet. He loves his son. And. That's common grace.

You hear. The gunshot. From around the corner. You don't see it. And the next day. The allies roll in. And a soldier. One of the soldiers. Finds the little boy. In the box. And puts him up on the tank.

And they drive off. He's won his tank. Now. That's obviously. A fictional story. But. It's a true story. That's a true story.

[15 : 43] Because in. In the worst places. There is. Grace. There's love. There's sacrifice. There's sharing. There's caring.

There's compassion. There's joy. I forgot to put in my notes. But. If I had time.

I could. Think of it. There was. A man. Who snuck in. To Auschwitz. Like. Four times.

Not snuck out. He snuck in. To help. To report. He went into that. He wasn't a Christian. Or anything. But he was doing good.

In the worst places. There's. There's grace. It's. The apostle John said. Jesus gives light. To every person. Who comes into the world.

[16 : 40] He gives light. To every person. Who comes into the world. And so. Even the most pardoned. Criminals. Have. An honor code. Even the worst. Shorts of terrorists. Sit around.

And are kind. To each other. In some places. It's. It's perhaps. Only a trace. It's not saying. That. That. Everywhere.

Grace is equally. Distributed. It's not. But it is. Everywhere. There are traces. Everywhere. And. So. My question. For you. Is.

Where does. All that. Grace. Come from. Where does it. All come from. From. I'm a God of love. I'm a God of love.

From God. From a God of love. From God. Loves. Some Christians. Especially. Some.

[17 : 36] Reformed. Christians. Have a hard time. Going. That far. Going so far. As to say.

God. Loves. Everyone. I have a hard time. Saying that. They don't want to talk about. Grace. To them. They might call it. Restraining.

Providence. And there is such a thing. It's restraining. It prevents people. From being as bad. As they possibly can be. But. But. Again. It's just. Restraining.

Providence. They don't see anything. Positive. In God's disposition. To them. God's disposition. To everyone. His attitude. To even the unbelievers.

And so. Some Christians. Don't want to talk about. Any kind of love. God's love. For unbelievers. Because they think that. That cheapens.

[18 : 28] God's love. God's love. So how can God love. Those who are not. Christians. And may well. Never be. Christians. And so.

How can they do that? And so. Maybe as an answer. You say. Well look at. Look at everything. We talked about. Look at. Look at all of God's. Gifts to them. Look at the sun. And the rain.

Look at his. Common grace. In their lives. And giving them marriage. And giving them food. And giving them things. To enjoy. What. How do you explain that? And.

Some of them will answer. God is. Maybe they wouldn't say this out loud. But. Maybe in their own hearts. They would say. God is. Fattening them up.

For the slaughter. He's fattening them like turkeys. For Thanksgiving. Man. Man. Man. Man. the logic is impressive the theology is bad there's a place in James where he says you have fattened yourselves up for the day of destruction but that is never said I don't think of God and so the logic is impressive the theology is wrong and you only have to say look and how does Jesus the son of God who knows God's heart who is the revelation of God's heart how does he calculate it you've heard that it was said love your neighbor and what your enemy hate love your neighbor love your neighbor and hate your enemy but

[20 : 26] I tell you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be sons of your father in heaven he causes his son to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous if you love those who love you what reward will you get are not even the tax collectors doing that and if you greet only your brothers what are you doing more than others do not even pagans do that be perfect therefore as your heavenly father is perfect now how is God perfect what does Jesus mean by that in that in that passage how is God the father perfect how do you see his perfection he loves his enemies he loves his enemies and because he is like that what does Jesus say that we should be like we should love our enemies as well now how is our father different than so many people

Jesus talks about different groups of people and now who do who do they love who do the pagans and the tax collectors love what is what did Jesus say their own group they love them he says the tax collectors are doing that if you greet your brothers what are you doing more than others lots of people greet their own little group the people that are like them the people that are on their side but Jesus is saying God is not his love is not constricted to that little group of people that are just like him and like him he loves his enemies his perfection is seen and that his love blows out into every group and Jesus calls it love so we have to ask is that real love where he really means it or is it just fake love

I think it would be a total dishonor to God to suppose that it's just pretend doesn't really mean it and so that's a long way from God fattening people up for the slaughter just giving them gifts he doesn't love them like he loves his own there is a difference in the way he loves his own people and the way he loves everybody but it's love nonetheless it's real love nonetheless and though it is listen to me carefully though it's lesser love it's not little love it's lesser than saving grace but it's not little that's what it's common it doesn't reach to the heights of saving grace and saving love and yet it is not some sort of ordinary stone on the ground that has no beauty and you just ignore it

God loves this is what David Murray says and I echo it God loves the unsaved more than we have ever loved anyone God loves the unsaved more than we have loved anyone he says I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that they would what?

repent return that they'd be saved he pleads with them choose life and so if if you aren't a Christian here this is God's heart toward you I love you why would you die?

[24 : 35] repent and be saved and that God so God's love is behind this everywhere everyone grace now so if you want to be happy if you want to be happy you need to look for it you need to look for it you need to look for it in the world you need to look for it around you you have to throw off the tunnel vision so all of that grace is shouting it's shouting God is good God is kind God is full of love so I wonder can you can you does your heart echo Psalm 33 5 the earth is full of your unfailing love when we look out across the earth the psalmist says the earth is full of your unfailing love Psalm 119 64 the earth is filled with your love so just like the waters fill the oceans

God's love fills the earth and so we need to look for it use your eyes to see it use your nose to smell it use your ears to hear it use your tongues to taste it the earth is filled with your love breakfast is filled with God's love lunch is filled with God's love dinner is filled with God's love driving sitting working they're full of God's love and grace and so your food tastes good because God is good and you know what the food of the believer can taste as good or the food of the unbeliever can taste as good as the food of the believer your food tastes good because God is good they invented showers because God is good they invented indoor plumbing because God is good they figured out how to make soft beds because God is good and so we need to look for it it's filling your life it's filling my life it's there it's not something we imagine into the world it's something that God has put there and that we need to see it so look for it around you look for it in others you know we can thank God that Bill

Gates is using that vast amount of wealth to do really good things one of his major projects is to end malaria and that's a good thing malaria kills millions of people it robs millions of children of going to school it destroys family it creates orphans it destroys economies and so isn't it good that God put that into Mr. Gates his heart that I want to end this I want something better for these people that's God's grace so look for it in your children they're full of strengths they're full of God's grace look for it in your spouse whatever is admirable maybe that's a good thing that we need to do I just thought of that you know that list in Philippians 4 whatever is admirable and praiseworthy and excellent etc maybe we need to write that list down and then go through that list with each of our children in mind go through that list with each of our not each of our spouses with our spouse in mind go through the list what is praiseworthy about her what is excellent about my little boy look for it in your brothers and your sisters thank God for them and don't be afraid to tell them about it next week we're going to talk about happy praise and part of the people that we are meant to be praising and encouraging and helping are God's people so don't be afraid to look for it to see it and to tell them look for it in our politicians it's easy to say this world is ruined it's easy to say it's all terrible there's no good the whole thing is pointless but it's not the whole picture it's not the whole picture and I'm not saying ignore the bad and I'm not saying don't mourn

I'm not saying any of those things but what I am saying is that can't be our whole response that can be part of our response and it needs to be part of our response but it can't be our whole response because that's not the Bible's whole response that's not God sees the evil and he sees the good so I'm not talking about sticking your head in the ground optimism and I'm just saying that the cynicism and despair that is everywhere in our culture is as much of a lie as the optimism it's missing God's grace it's missing the beauty and the love that is showing everywhere and so we need to look for it a great amount of our happiness is going to depend upon what we're looking at and if we see it in those in our children if we see it in our spouse if we see it at those people at work so we have about six minutes here this is what I want to end with

I want to ask you and I want you to share where do you see where do you see God's common grace where did you see it this week or where have you seen it lately or what around you that you've enjoyed or what do you see in those people at work or whatever that it says this is God's grace it's not saving grace but it's wonderful grace what have you seen lately I shared with you my neighbor got lots of problems but you know what he loves his kids he'll treat them he'll give them good gifts trampolines swimming pools because he loves them he wants to make them happy how about you I've seen a family that I wouldn't think is converted every Saturday going out for breakfast together mine's a neighbor's story also a neighbor

[31 : 52] I don't believe is a believer but in her death that just happened she was surrounded by family the last few weeks and then after her funeral yesterday there were 14 cars there I mean just family below showing family love not saving grace still beautiful isn't it middle of the night Friday night I get a call I'm in a dead sleep got two guys down at work in a fight stand and meet you down here right away I'm not very happy going down I'm still foggy do all the interviews and I got to go back to the camera and I saw two guys immediately go over and break it up so I went back out and I thanked them for being willing to go into that and break it up and I it's very good I saw someone over here up and just we've been so blessed and over the years where we've looked at on those sides our neighbors watch over our place and this is

Billy's place and keep an eye on things Nikki when I was in Christ I was bit by a dog and I didn't believe that it was wisdom to all people and gives them the ability to learn and so there were doctors in Mexico that had a progressive treatment and people that he was wisdom to all we were bit by a dog you're looking at the wrong teeth carol and I see it at times when we're driving come up to intersections busy intersections people take turns at the intersection for the most part you see the other two of them driving the traffic but busy highways pretty much you can drive down there pretty high way to speed that you know he's cutting the off exactly right with man up the block and he never asked the boy or put out that there's this little boy following him on his crowd he step each week

I visit or speak to manufacturers that sole aim to kill cancer and their energy to kill cells or tissue in less traumatic way stee we live in a hispanic neighborhood and we often see a very tight community and how they're all really good workers and they support each other and sometimes it gets a little loud but they're very happy taking a course right now on law and ethics and there's just a connection from the writers of the books and their illustrations and all sorts of ways they're connecting the good ethics it's good for the community it's good for the economy it's good for people it's good for customers it's good for employees it's just it's an accepted fact and we have problems in our nation and in our companies and again large and small environments with problems when we don't carry our business yeah as bad as things are generally in our culture especially compared to others there's the rule of law and the rule of good ethics and so bad ethics is really not the norm and it's always all that

I mean yeah everywhere but what I'm saying is most of the time people are doing what they're supposed to that makes a huge difference anyone else when I go to work I see a young man who is unsafe he's unvuried but has a daughter and the days I happen to be there is a day he has his daughter and he's always saying how much he loves her and his mom is going to watch her one day and he called and said when you take her swimming you make sure she gets her sunscreen on and make sure it's 50 maybe a couple more oh sorry Darren can I give you eight from the topic no you can give me two

I was just thinking how the world non-believers seek grace and they believe that God saves everyone no matter what and the response to that is he does love everyone but not everybody loves him okay I have the opportunity to call on farmers all over the United States and see them have a concentrated effort to make the food that we eat and 1% of the people produce all the food that we eat eggs chicken and turkey and you see that they really try hard and they do a great job and they improve every day every month it's just something to see people working hard and getting gratification of their hard work very good okay

[38 : 49] I think that's all we have time for let's have our eyes open let's have our eyes open to see it and see it in others we're dismissed