

1. We are going to finish our series today about **contentment**.
2. As a reminder we said that contentment in its most basic form is the state of being satisfied with what we have.
3. To be at peace with what we have or where we are in that moment or season of life.
4. Not that having Godly dreams and desires are bad, because they are not bad.
5. But on this journey toward spiritual maturity, one of the blessings the Lord longs for us to practice is the gift of contentment.
6. **1 Timothy 6:6** But godliness with contentment is great gain.
7. Another translation of the bible uses the phrase great wealth. Godliness, along with contentment, is this wonderful, beautiful, extremely valuable gift that the Lord makes available to us.
8. I believe it is not a stretch to say that the reverse is also true. Godliness without contentment is great loss.
9. If we attempt to be Godly, to surrender to the Lord's work of making us into a mature disciple, but we are not content with where the Lord has us in that process, we are going to lose something very valuable. we are going to lose the ease of mind or the peace that the Lord longs for us to have.
10. We know for sure that it is entirely possible to be pursuing godliness, and yet at the same time be lacking contentment, because in the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon identifies himself as being in this exact place.
11. He was pursuing godliness, but he was not experiencing contentment.
12. **Ecclesiastes 1:8** Everything is wearisome beyond description. No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied. No matter how much we hear, we are not content. (NLT)
13. When Solomon says everything is wearisome, that everything included a lot of things. It included a lot of stuff. It included many achievements. It included a great number of people.
14. And after pursuing and possessing all of these seemingly wonderful things, he discovered that no matter how much we see we are never satisfied. And no matter how much we hear we are not content.

15. He uncovers something very powerful. He brings into the light a myth that has plagued mankind since the beginning of history.
16. Adam and Eve struggled with it and all of us struggle with it at various times and to varying degrees.
17. The myth is that the more I have the happier I'll be.
18. The underlying mindset of our world is...more is better.
19. Less is worse, more is better.
20. And yet, that mindset is refuted and identified as false all throughout the scripture.
21. In Mark 8:36 Jesus asked a very pointed question. He said, what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and yet loses his soul?
22. In the next verse he answers the question by asking another question. What can anyone give in exchange for their soul?
23. Real living is not in having everything we want or set our mind on, real life is a soul that is full of Jesus Christ. The son of God. The savior of the world.
24. The principle of the kingdom of God is actually the opposite of the world's philosophy. Jesus identifies a portion of this principle in **Mark 8:35** *For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.*
25. The mindset of the world is that more is more. But the principle of the kingdom is that less is more.
26. And to be clear, I could spend the remainder of our time trying to convince you of that truth. I could lay out all the reasons why that is the truth and why you should believe it and live by it.
27. But I'm not going to do that. Mainly because there is this perfect example in the bible of someone who had everything a person could ever want. Who had the means to test this principle to the tenth degree, and after all was said and done, Solomon concluded that Jesus was right, several hundred years before Jesus declared the truth.

**TEXT: Ecclesiastes 2:1-11** I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless. **2** "Laughter," I said, "is madness. And what does pleasure accomplish?" **3** I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly--my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was good for people to do under the heavens during the few days of their lives. **4** I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. **5** I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. **6** I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. **7** I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. **8** I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers, and a harem as well--the delights of a man's heart. **9** I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me. **10** I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil. **11** Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun. (NIV)

**TITLE: Absence makes the Heart grow fonder.**

**INTRO:**

1. Just by a show of hands, how many have ever heard that saying?
2. By a show of hands, how many have ever experienced the truth of that saying?
3. Essentially what that statement means is that when you are away from or separated physically from someone you love for an extended period of time, their absence serves to increase your love and affection for them.
4. If the love is genuine and true, their absence doesn't make you love them less, their absence causes you to love them more.
5. In this case less is more. How many are still with me?
6. In Ecclesiastes chapter 2, Solomon describes the test that he put himself through.
7. He decided to give himself every type of pleasure a person could ever desire, to see whether or not having all those pleasures would really make him happy or fulfilled.
8. He wanted to see if having a world full of things and accomplishments would fill him up and make him feel complete.

9. He wanted to live a life that was **Meaningful: Significant. Relevant. Important. Valid. Worthwhile. Purposeful.**
10. When he started, he didn't have any of these things, but he had the means to pursue each and every one of them like no person ever has or ever will on planet earth. And that is exactly what he did.
11. Let me just list the things and achievements Solomon pursued and gave himself.
12. In verse one he set out to experience every kind of **pleasure** a person could experience. What were those pleasures? I believe what follows are some examples.
13. In verse 2 he tried **laughter**. Maybe Solomon hired a comedian, or surrounded himself with people who were always laughing. Either way he decided, I just want to laugh.
14. In verse 3, after concluding that laughter alone wasn't enough, he attempted to **cheer himself with wine and acting silly.**
15. And it is right here we begin to see how the myth gains traction in our life. I don't have something meaningful inside of me, so that must mean what I long for. What will really make things right in my life is outside of me. So we begin the pursuit of finding out exactly what that thing is.
16. In Solomon's case it was wine and acting crazy.
17. In verse 4 he begins to look for that **meaning in accomplishment.** He began a series of projects in the hopes that the completion of those projects would fill that void.
  - a. He built not a house, but houses for himself. More houses has to be better than one house he decided.
  - b. He planted vineyards. I'm not going to buy wine from someone else, I'm going to grow and produce my own wine. I will be a wine connoisseur and people will appreciate me for my taste.
  - c. He designed and built gardens and parks and filled them with some of the most beautiful trees and vegetation anyone had ever seen.
  - d. He designed and built water reservoirs to water all these plants. There would be no dry season in his world. Every day will be beautiful and wonderful to behold.

18. In verse 7 we find he chose **superiority over others**. He bought many slaves, and those slaves had slaves. He was continually surrounded by people who reminded him that he was on top.
19. The next pleasure was **food**. He amassed more flocks and herds than any person in history. Every meal would be a feast. Multiple times a day he would fill his eyes and his belly with the most wonderful of delicacies.
20. In verse 8 he decided that **money** was where it's at. I don't want to just look rich; I want to be rich. He would pile the silver and gold into store houses and just walk around sometimes and look at it.
21. Then came **entertainment**. He hired singers, and probably musicians. They would be commissioned to fill his ears with every kind of beautiful sound you can imagine.
22. And last but not least, in verse 8 he turned to **sex**. He had a harem of about 1,000 wives and secondary or lesser wives called concubines.
23. More is better. He could be with a different woman every night and it would take him almost 3 years to get back around to the first.
24. The result of all these pursuits was that he became great in the eyes of others. After all. Who doesn't want that? If I can just get people to like me and think well of me, that will be so wonderful.
25. He wraps it up in verse 10 by letting us know that he denied himself nothing and he refused his heart no pleasure. Whatever he wanted he got or did.
26. He set his heart on knowing every kind of pleasure, and he succeeded.
27. And then when it is all said and done, he stood back and took it all in. He surveyed it all and relived all the memories.
28. And this was his conclusion. All of these things and accomplishments and people didn't give his life meaning. He didn't feel more significant. More relevant. More important. It didn't validate his life. It didn't make life more worthwhile or purposeful. Instead it had just the opposite effect.
29. **Ecclesiastes 2:11 Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.**

30. He did all these things and amassed all these possessions and surrounded himself with all these people and finally he concluded that he didn't have any more than he did when he started. Because he was still lacking the most important thing.
31. A life filled with meaning can't be obtained by pursuing or gaining any of those things.
32. A life of meaning can only be gained through the person of Jesus Christ.
33. You say, Solomon came before Jesus. Solomon would have never had the opportunity to know Jesus. And that is true.
34. It's it's been said that each of us has a God shaped hole in our lives. And nothing can fill that hole except the fullness of God through his son Jesus Christ.
35. Only Christ can make us whole and complete.
36. Only Christ can make life Meaningful: Significant. Relevant. Important. Valid. Worthwhile. Purposeful.
37. In John chapter 6 Peter said it this way.
38. Because of some teaching that people didn't like, many left Jesus and quit following him.
39. So Jesus turned and questioned his disciples. **John 6:67-68 "You do not want to leave too, do you?"** Jesus asked the Twelve. **68** Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.
40. Bless his heart. Peter was stubborn and hardheaded sometimes, but on this occasion, he got it right. Jesus, there is no one else to turn to. You have the words of eternal life.
41. Notice Peter didn't say, to whom shall we go. You're the only one who can take care of us and provide for us. You're the only one who gives us wisdom and shows us where to go.
42. No. He said you have the words of eternal life. Life is what we really long for. Meaningful, relevant, significant, important, valid, worthwhile, and purposeful life.
43. And that is exactly what Jesus gives us.
44. Jesus said in **John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.**



45. Other translations use the word abundant life. A life of abundance is not a life full of stuff, or accomplishments, or accolades.
46. A life of abundance is a life full of Jesus.
47. And that's why we can have nothing and be nothing and still have it all.
48. Contentment is the act of living the abundant life, not in things or people, but in Jesus.
49. Contentment is a matter of worship.

#### Conclusion:

1. I mentioned a few weeks ago that when we are not content with what God has given us of where he is leading us, we become our own Gods.
2. We are in essence saying to the Lord, I know better, and I can do better. But we don't know better, and we can't do better. Only he can give us full and abundant life.
3. And I know we know that. But I also know that we are in a spiritual battle. And just like Eve in the garden, whenever we don't have what we think we should have.
4. Or whenever we are not positioned where we think we should be positioned, the enemy lies to us and says.
5. See there. God is just holding out on you. He doesn't love you. If he loved you, he would give you what you wanted.
6. But that is such a lie. Because it is not having everything we want that makes life meaningful. It is having Jesus that makes life meaningful.
7. In November of 2020 I got Covid for the first time. I have shared before, I ate lunch one day and could taste and smell just fine, and at dinner that night I couldn't taste or smell anything.
8. What I haven't shared with very many is that I went without taste and smell for 8 months.
9. I didn't regain my taste and smell until July of last year.
10. I know when it was because I think that memory will be with me for a very long time.

11. It was a Friday morning and I had toasted a blueberry bagel. And when I tasted that blueberry, it was like I was tasting for the very first time in my life.
12. I walked around saying ohhhhh. That is so good.
13. Then I picked up a banana. Oh my goodness. It was absolutely amazing.
14. And before I tell you what happened next, I want to be very clear. It didn't happen because I was spiritual. Far from it.
15. In fact, over the 8 months I spent without taste and smell, I was quite unspiritual about it at times.
16. I remember the Holy Spirit saying, it wasn't the abundance of tasty food that made that blueberry so amazing, it was the absence of taste for all those months that caused me to appreciate it so much.
17. And then all of the sudden this worship just rushed over me.
18. And I must tell you. I didn't worship the blueberry bagel or the banana. I didn't even thank God for making the blueberry and banana.
19. I began praising the Lord out of nowhere that he had created me and given me the wonderful gift of taste.
20. The meaning was not in the fruit. The meaning was not in how it tasted. The meaning came from the wonderful father who has given me this wonderful gift of taste.
21. But it took the absence of taste to be reminded how wonderful He really is.
22. I would venture to say that almost every person is experiencing an absence of something in your life.
23. You want something. You may need something, or think you need something. You may be convinced there is something you can't live without.
24. But this morning I want to ask you to do something a little bit different. Rather than focusing on the thing, instead focus on the giver of all good things.
25. Jesus Christ. **Matthew 6:31-33** So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' **32** For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **33** But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.



26. So. One more time this morning we are going to practice contentment by being thankful and praising the Lord.
27. Let's make it all about Him.
28. Talk to him like you are talking to your very best friend.
29. Tell him how wonderful he is.
30. Tell him what a great provider he is.
31. Let him know that what you really want is Him. That he is enough.
32. Prayer.