

October 7, 2007

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WHAT MAKES GOD HAPPY?

I Corinthians 1:20-31.

What makes God Happy? What gives God the most pleasure? How does God get his kicks? My grandfather had a sermon entitled What Makes God Cry?...an interesting thought, but I want to explore, what makes God happy?

Looking around at his creation might cause you to come up with an answer...creating beauty makes Him happy. We certainly see a lot of beauty in trees, flowers, lakes, mountains, skies, the miracle of birth, to mention a few. These creations must please him. The person who wrote the first chapter to the book of Genesis in the Bible ends each day's creation by saying "And God saw that it was good." He was happy with what he did. So I think we can say that God is happy creating that which is good.

But I see something else when I read the Bible, which I believe pleases Him much more. I think He get the most pleasure out of taking persons who feel like a failure, or whom others see as worthless, and giving them direction and value. In other words making people feel worthwhile and a success in life.

In John chapter one, Nathanael says, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" This was a real putdown. But God brought Jesus out of Nazareth. That must of made Him happy.

In the book of the prophet Micah, God announces that the Messiah of Israel will come from humble beginnings. In the book of Judges, Gideon says, "Pray, Lord, How can I deliver Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh and I am the least in my family." But with God's help Gideon did deliver Israel from its enemies. And Moses, before the burning bush said, "Who am I that you have chosen me?" He felt totally inadequate to do the job God wanted him to do. But with God's support and guidance he did a great job which must have made God happy.

Let's look at our Bible text, at what Paul says to the people at his church in Corinth. "My friends, think of what kind of people you are. Few of you are wise by any human standard, few powerful or of noble birth. Yet, to shame the wise, God has chosen what the world counts folly, and to shame what is strong, God has chosen what the world counts weakness. He has chosen things without rank or standing in the world, mere nothings, to overthrow the existing order."

Here we see God at work doing what makes him happy. Inspiring people who are the least promising to become strong, confident, successful, worthy servants of His.

In other words Paul is telling his congregation in Corinth, Take a look at yourselves. You weren't much to begin with but God gets great pleasure out of using you to promote his kingdom.

That's good news, because sometimes we don't think we are worth much. In fact some psychiatrists say that two out of three people have a low opinion of themselves. They call it "low self-esteem."

We are all aware of the statistics. People with high self-esteem are healthier, have fewer accidents, live longer, are more successful than the average person. Martin Seligman, a professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania surveyed sales agents of a major life insurance company. He found that those who expected to succeed sold 37% more life insurance than those who had low expectations. A person who sees himself or herself as a loser will probably meet their expectations. This is one of those "self-fulfilling prophecies."

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians it is clear that he sees these people as low in status. Whether he sees them as low in self-esteem is not clear but he is eager to pump them up, to fill them with self-confidence to fulfill God's mission. It is also clear that Paul believes this will please God.

The Bible says, "As a person thinks in his heart, so he is." A kindergarten teacher wrote a song about popcorn. Then she had her class crouch down on the floor as they sang it. At the appropriate time in the chorus, all the children would pop up. One day during the popcorn song, the teacher noticed that one little boy remained crouched down when all the other children popped up. "What's wrong?" the teacher asked him. "Why can't you pop like the other children?" The little boy replied, "I'm burning on the bottom of the pan."

Some of us are like that little boy. We feel like we are burning on the bottom of the pan. That's really sad. GOD SEES US AS PERSONS OF INFINITE WORTH, AND THAT IS THE WAY WE NEED TO SEE OURSELVES. God used Jesus to teach us that we are persons who are loved and valued. If we would believe in ourselves as much as God does, our lives would be radically

changed. If we could see our potential as clearly as we see our problems, life would be a joyful adventure.

Bob Schuler in his book "Power to Grow Beyond Yourself" tells an interesting story about the actor Gregory Peck. Peck was in the middle of filming the life of General Douglas MacArthur. He had no idea that his wife had decided to go shopping for a new house. On that particular morning they were going to shoot the scene in which MacArthur addressed both houses of Congress. 600 extras had been hired to play the congressmen who would listen to his famous speech...the one he ended (remember?) with the words "Old soldiers never die, they just fade away."

Peck was in full dress of a 5 star General uniform. Just then he was called to the phone. It was his wife. "Honey, you've got to come down here right away. I've found our dream house."

Peck said, "Darling, you have to realize that I'm about to shoot a scene. We had 600 hired actors. The set is prepared. I have to be here all day filming."

"But Honey," she said, "You've got to come. There are already two bids on the house. If you don't come we are going to lose it." His reply was, "I can't."

Well, this went back and forth several times. Then he told her, "I'll make arrangements to have the studio limo bring me over during our one hour lunch break."

He went to the address she gave him. He strode onto the property in full-dress uniform, hat, swagger-stick and all. As far as anybody who didn't know him, he was General Douglas MacArthur. He walked around the estate for 6 minutes, never went inside, then said to his wife. "Buy it. I don't care what it costs. Buy it." And then he was gone.

Peck always looked back in amazement at that decision. He said he was always terrible at making up his mind. Yet he made one of the biggest decisions of his life in 6 minutes. He added, "I think it had something to do with the uniform." He saw himself at the moment as tough, committed, decisive General MacArthur...a man of decision. How we view ourselves makes all the difference in the world how we live.

What makes God happy? Remember Jesus' parable of the lost sheep. I could have used it completely as my text. He concluded that there is more rejoicing in heaven over the one

lost lamb, that is found, than over all of the 99 safe in the fold.

Now please don't think I am encouraging a vain, prideful, egocentric approach to life. Dale Carnegie in his famous book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* said that we should stand in front of a mirror every morning and tell ourselves how wonderful we are. It sounded to me like some sort of conceited, prideful self-hypnotism.

We don't need to stand in front of a mirror but from time to time we need to remind ourselves in prayer. "Thank you God for believing in me. You see me as a person of infinite worth. I know you love me. I can do all things because you strength me. There is nothing that can happen to me today that I can not handle with your help." Would that make God happy?

I think we please God when we approach life with good healthy self-esteem. When we live in partnership with Him. When we have worthwhile goals and when we are dedicated to serving others.

I would like to close with a reading from a publication called THE PASTORAL COUNSEL LETTER and no author was named.

I'M SPECIAL.

In all the world there's nobody like me. Since the beginning of time, there has never been another person like me. Nobody has my smile. Nobody has my eyes, my nose, my hands, my voice. I'm special.

No one can be found who has my handwriting. (And you could say, no one has my fingerprints or DNA...I through that in.) Nobody anywhere can see things just as I do.

In all time there's been no one who laughs like me, no one who cries like me. And what makes me laugh and cry will never produce identical laughter or tears for anybody else ever. No one reacts to any situation just as I would react.

I'm special.

I'm the only one in all of creation who has my set of abilities. Oh, there will always be somebody who is better at one of the things I'm good at, but no one in the universe can reach the quality of my combination of talents, ideas, abilities and feelings.

Like a room full of musical instruments, some may excel alone, but none can match the symphony sound when all are played together.

I am a symphony.

I am rare. And, in all rarity there is great value. And because of my great, rare value, I need not attempt to imitate others. I will accept, yes, and celebrate my differences. I'm special.

And I'm beginning to realize that this is no accident. God made me special for a very special purpose. He must have a job for me that no one else can do as well as I.

Out of the billions of applicants, only one is qualified, only one has the right combination of what it takes!!!

And that one is me!!!

“O God, show me your on-going plan for my life.

Lead me, I will follow.” Amen. (Silence)

Our Father who art in heaven...