

AT THE TRAIN STATION

Have you ever heard the expression, "My ship finally came in and I was at the train station?" For those under 25, trains are those long things that make the arms come down and block traffic at intersections when you are in a hurry. Back in the olden days, people used to ride them, but I digress. Like a lot of people, we have had a run of misfortune and disappointment. This latest run has lasted for about 7 years.

There have been a lot of good things that have happened during the past 7 years but it is hard not to focus on the bad. I struggle with this. **SHOCKER ALERT!!!** I am not a really happy person by nature. If you have recovered from that shocking news, I will continue. My wife, Karen, chastises me on occasion for my lack of excitement about things and my response is, "there is a lot to be said for contentment." Amazingly, despite my attitude of striving for contentment, this woman has remained married to me for almost 25 years. She is a happy person. I am content with that.

The bigger question is, "does God want us to be happy?" As an elder in the Church, this question arises often when people are on the move away from God. You'll hear them say: "I know God wants me to be happy."

I do think God wants us to be happy. Yes, I said happy, not just content but don't tell my wife that I said that. The struggle is; God's concept of human happiness is not the same as the world's concept of happiness. God desires for us a spiritual happiness, not a worldly happiness. We often want to re-fashion God, to make Him fit our expectations and serve our desires rather than finding happiness in serving others and fulfilling God's plan for each of us.

Ecclesiastes, in several passages, reveals God's desire for us to find happiness in our lives. One passage is:

Ecclesiastes 3:12-13

¹² I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. ¹³ That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God.

Ephesians 1:3-5 states:

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.

Notice it says: "in accordance with ***his pleasure and will.***" Not our expectations or to serve our desires - his pleasure and will. God is too big to keep in the box that we sometimes want to place him inside.

Yes, God does want us to be "happy" but not if it involves sin, causing another to stumble, or the pursuit of personal lusts. Real happiness is a product of being right with God and fulfilling his will for us.

I think Peter 3:8-12 gives us great direction on how to be right with God:

Peter 3:8-12

⁸Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

⁹Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. ¹⁰For,

***"Whoever would love life
and see good days
must keep his tongue from evil
and his lips from deceitful speech.***

***¹¹He must turn from evil and do good;
he must seek peace and pursue it.***

***¹²For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous
and his ears are attentive to their prayer,
but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."***

In conclusion, if you find yourself at the train station when your ship finally comes in, look around you, there is probably a reason that you are at the train station. God will give us the opportunity to glorify him wherever we are. As for me, I get seasick. Trains are better than ships any day.

Jeff