

Lent 4 (MW)

happiness, entertainment

Service/worship

**Ephesians 4:17-24, 17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.**

20 You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. 21 Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. **22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.**

**Matthew 6:25-33 /**

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?

26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.

29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.

30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

31 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.

**OR Matthew 20:25-28**

25 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.

26 Not so with you. Instead, **whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,**

**27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave--**

**28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."**

**SKIT**

**SAM:** Hi, Jane.

**JANE:** Hi Sam, I haven't seen you in church, at work, or anywhere.

**SAM:** O, that's boring stuff. You'll see me at work, but I've decided to really start living.

**JANE:** What do you mean?

**SAM:** Well, I'm living for that "pursuit of happiness."

**JANE:** So, where have you been.

**SAM:** I skipped work yesterday and went to Alyeska. Actually, when I came home I was sort of fried, so I was up watching movies and eating Pizza, so, I I got here a little late today.

I'll be in on time tomorrow. But, I'm looking for a job that makes more money, and then I'll get there. I am going to LIVE.

**JANE:** What about finding life and meaning in God and His love?

**SAM:** Not me. God calls us to live for Him. From now on I'm living for ME!

Do you know these words? ***We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,*** This is the famous second paragraph from the Declaration of Independence, called by some the most powerful words of the American language.

So, as we look at modern sins, as we look at Entertainment and the Pursuit of Pleasure, is Pastor Rockey, worst yet, is God saying that the pursuit of happiness is wrong? Not really. Scripture tells us that God created a good world, that we have ruined with our sin. God intends for His children to be blessed in this world, and to find joy as his children.

Psalms 103:4-5 tells us about God's blessings for us, ***4 who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, 5 who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*** God blesses his people spiritually, and physically.

Scripture tells us that God provides, protects, and cares for us physically. Philippians 4:4 tells us, ***“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”*** God calls us to joy as His children. There is a difference between happiness and joy, however. Happiness comes from the circumstances of life, and joy is found in the Lord because of His love, in spite of life's circumstances. Wouldn't you rather be joyful than happy.

So pleasure and even entertainment are not sinful in and of themselves, they can be part of God's good creation. But there is sin involved at times in the pursuit of pleasure, which today is often found in entertainment. This is not necessarily new. Look at our epistle from Ephesians, especially verse 19, ***17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.***

When pursuing pleasure, leads to impurity, this is sinful. God tells This talks about pleasure that leads to impurity. Actually, if you want to see which pleasures are impure, or sinful, just consider the 10 commandments. Do your pursuits enjoying God's gifts, your pursuits of happiness lead you to idolatry, to impure words, to missing worship? Do they lead you to disobedience to authority, or violence, or sexual impurity, or theft or gossip or greed? If so, then sin is involved.

There are some new aspects of this pursuit of pleasure in our culture today, however, for a couple of reasons. Technology and affluence allow people to pursue happiness and pleasure as never before, whether this might seem like a seemingly healthy pursuit such as sports, or say (ahem) fishing, or whether this is an obviously unhealthy pursuit

such as drugs, or sex, or violence. Because of our affluence and technology, the pursuit of pleasure, of entertainment can become an obsession. This obsession makes the pursuit of happiness, of pleasure, or entertainment more important than God. Do you recognize this situation?

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Jesus gave us another example to follow. Our Gospel lesson for today tells us, **whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."** Jesus served us by dying for us. Instead of being obsessed with serving ourselves, Jesus calls us to live for Him, and to serve others. Ephesians also again says it well. **22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.**

I've told you this before, but while driving I have often asked my children, "Is life about having fun?" After a while they get the question. Fun is not wrong, nor happiness. God blesses us in this life. But, Life not about having fun, life is about serving God. Real joy, and actually real happiness, is found in serving Him.