

Grace and peace be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

In our sermon series entitled, "The Lies of Satan" we've come to this lie: "**God wants you to be happy, so...**"

May the Holy Spirit bless our mediation upon His holy Word so that our armor against Satan's lies is strengthened. May the Holy Spirit do this for our own good, for our personal happiness, and for the glory of God our Creator and Savior. **Amen.**

For our sermon reading we have two selections today. One from John's Gospel, and one from the apostle Paul's letter to the Roman Christians.

John 6:40, Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)

⁴⁰For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

12 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Let's get right to it. Today's lie from Satan is pretty ridiculous. "God wants me to be happy, so... FILL IN THE BLANK." When you get down to it, the logic behind this statement is downright childish. It's a self serving philosophy, and an abuse of God's love. It's the call of the person who wants to be enabled. Let's not be enablers whether this lie springs up on our conversations with someone else, or whether, God forbid, it springs up in our own hearts.

I mean seriously, does this sound like the God of the Bible that we know?

I want you to be happy, so... do whatever you think in your mind will make you happy. Whatever that thing is, I'm sure that it'll be my will. Just follow your heart, it'll NEVER lead you astray.

That doesn't sound like God's voice to me. Not at all. This is the voice of the person who wants to justify the fact that they're going to openly disobey one of God's clear commands.

I mean, really, why did God have the Ten Commandments written down if we could just follow our own emotions? Why didn't He just say, Follow your heart?

And yet, this is what some so-called Christians believe today. That following our own hearts is what Christianity is all about. Recently I read an interview with a high ranking official in our government. This official claims to be a Christian, but listen to the following excerpt.

REPORTER:

Do you believe in sin?

POLITICIAN:

Yes.

REPORTER:

What is sin?

POLITICIAN:

Being out of alignment with my values.

REPORTER:

What happens if you have sin in your life?

POLITICIAN:

I think it's the same thing as the question about heaven. In the same way that if I'm true to myself and my faith that that is its own reward, when I'm not true to it, it's its own punishment.

Sin isn't being untrue to yourself, sin is being untrue to God. Sin isn't being out of alignment with one's own values, it is being out of alignment with God's values. And the punishment of sin isn't just the damaging fallout of sin that happens in our lives, the full punishment for sin is eternal existence apart from God and all His blessings. Eternal suffering in hell is the punishment for sin!

That phrase, "God wants you to be happy, so..." has a grain of truth in it. God does indeed want you to be happy. It's the dot, dot, dot that makes it a lie. It's when we insert our own "therefore" statement on the end of it that makes it Satan's lie.

Just imagine some of our Bible heroes employing this little lie in their own lives. Imagine Joseph in Egypt reasoning, God wants me to be happy, so I think I will have an adulterous affair with Potiphar's wife. She wants me. She's attractive. Surely God wants me to get all the happiness out of this opportunity that I can.

Or imagine Daniel in Babylon reasoning, God wants me to be happy, so I think I will worship King Darius. After all, if I don't they'll throw me to the lions, and that doesn't sound like much fun. Surely God wants me to worship King Darius.

Or worst of all, imagine God's own Son employing this logic, Being beaten, spit on and nailed to a cross doesn't sound like fun. Certainly my Father in Heaven doesn't want me to suffer like that. I think I'll skip suffering and dying to save all the sinners of the world. After all, God wants me to be happy!

Part of the reason why Satan is so successful with this lie is that he often offers this lie when we're in a hard place. He presents two options: 1) Either we do something we know is wrong, or 2) We remain miserable for the REST OF OUR LIVES. But this is selling God woefully short. Like God is unable to make things better in our lives unless we take the wheel into our own hands and steer down a sinful path. But God is powerful!

When Joseph refused the advances of Potiphar's wife, he got accused of doing what he actually refused to do and was thrown in jail. But not long after that God arranged events that made Joseph the ruler over all Egypt, with only the present Pharaoh holding more power.

When Daniel refused to worship Darius, he was indeed thrown to the lions. But God sent an angel to close the mouths of the lions and Daniel made it out of that pit without a scratch, and it ended up being Daniel's haters who became the lions lunch.

When Jesus refused to falter on His way to the cross, he was indeed beaten, tortured and crucified to death. But three days later God raised Jesus back to life and exalted Him as the Savior of all mankind.

God doesn't need our sinful ways to make us happy. He has more than enough power to make that happen all on His own. So, let's trust Him when He directs our walk.

Putting words in God's mouth is always spiritually dangerous. How much more dangerous it is when we use the love of God to justify putting words in God's mouth. Instead of putting words in God's mouth, we ought to go to where God has put His own Words - in the Bible!

Instead of filling the blank after "God wants me to be happy, so..." with our own motives and desires, how about we fill that blank with God's Word?

Here's what I mean. We ought to reason like this instead. We know that God loves us. The divine Creator who made the amazing universe for our playground certainly loves us. The divine and Holy God who voluntarily sent His Son to suffer and die to take away the punishment for our sins certainly loves us. He DOES want us to be happy. That much IS obvious. So we ought to reason like this. I know that God loves me and wants me to be happy, so, in this situation I'm going to do what HE TELLS ME IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO IN HIS BIBLE! Then, I'll wait for the blessing that He promises to those who walk in His ways.

The thing is, we live in a sinful world, so the happy blessings that that result from following God's direction don't all come to us here. Some blessings won't arrive till we reach heaven. Jesus Himself made it clear to His disciples that their Heavenly Father loved them. But He also made it clear that in this life God's people should expect suffering and ridicule. Just as God's Son was hated by the sinful world and persecuted, so also God's followers will be hated and persecuted.

"¹⁸ "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (**John 15:18-20** ESV).

And that same Jesus promised those who trusted in Him the following...

"... Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, ³⁰ who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life" (**Luke 18:29-30** ESV).

God indeed wants you to be happy, but now just happy with some temporary and fleeting thrill. Not just happy with some self gratification. He wants you to be ETERNALLY HAPPY as His forgiven child in heaven.

Lasting happiness doesn't spring from following your sinful heart. Nor does it come from riches, or fame or physical pleasure. Just look at the movie stars in Hollywood. Are they the happiest people on earth? Not when you read their biographies. Instead, the lives of the godless are often the troubled and empty.

Right now, a group of our young people are overseas serving up the message of sins forgiven through Jesus Christ to people who have very little when it comes to physical possessions. And yet it is the poor Christian people of India and Africa that shock our missionaries. They often come home telling tales about people who have nothing but the Gospel, and are radiant with peace and joy. No, lasting happiness does not depend on

the things this world can offer. It does not spring from the heart which seeks to find its own way. Enduring happiness comes from an ongoing relationship with the forgiving God.

So, when Satan whispers that little lie in your ear, when he says, "God wants you to be happy, so..." let us respond in this way. Let's say, "You've got it right Satan, God does want me to be happy, that's why I'm going to do things His way and wait for His blessing. And if that blessing doesn't come fully until I reach the shores of heaven as a sinner cleansed by the blood of God's Son, then so be it."

I'd like to close our meditation today by reading our sermon selections one more time.

John 6:40, Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)

⁴⁰For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

12 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Amen.

And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus.