

Delighting in God (Psalm 37, Is 61:10-11)

I said last week that the greatest legacy I would like to leave here in Swaffham is a church where people have a thirst and a hunger after God - a people who desire His presence. A people who want more of Him.

Not more about Him - just Him. Because when we came to Christ and accepted Him, we entered into an eternal relationship with an eternal Father.

But sometimes the problem is as we get older is that we forget the joy of our salvation as the pressures of life get in the way. What was exciting and vibrant to us as young people can become just routine and matter of fact.

Worse still, ways of thinking enter into our lives that quite frankly just don't reflect that our faith is an eternal relationship. What do I mean? Let me give you an example.

At Moody Church in Chicago the constitution of the church requires that a number of questions be asked of prospective deacon candidates in the interview process. One of the questions is: "Are you opposed, both in theory and practice, to indulgence in all questionable or sensual amusements that mar your fellowship with Christ?" One candidate replied: "Yes, I do oppose these things. In fact, my marriage is very boring."

We have all been affected in some way by the old idea that somehow pleasure and happiness are an either - or. We can either have a happy and pleasurable life - or we can act like a Christian. We have to be austere, serious, sombre, "reverend" in order to live lives in the presence of God. We have a deep joy - buried so deep that no-one is ever going to dig it out. Young Christians are shallow so that can be a little free and happy, but we must have that deep joy.

Now I know we're not really like that here, but it's easy how that kind of thinking can affect us. We often don't like to see our faith as an emotional thing. I was brought up by a strand of evangelical thought that said we should rely on facts for our faith as emotions are unreliable. So faith is stripped of all emotion and we deal with the cold steel of hard fact.

But that's not God! He is a God of emotion - of love, of joy, of delight.

Ps 149: 4 For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation.

Jer 9: 23 This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, 24 but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.

God doesn't just approve of His people. He doesn't merely have a matter of fact interest in kindness, justice and righteousness - He *delights* in them. Delight is not a neutral word and the English delight reflects what we have just read.

1. Great pleasure; joy.
2. Something that gives great pleasure or enjoyment.

Delight is an emotion and quite an extreme one - an emotion of great pleasure. Our God isn't a computer - a matter-of-fact God, but one who delights in His people and one who delights in those things which people do which reflects His holiness - kindness, justice, righteousness.

Why did God open a way of salvation for us. well, we say it's all about the fact that God loved us and He showed His unmerited favour - grace - isn't it. Turn with me to Ephesians 1

4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Why did God make us His sons - because it gave Him *pleasure* to do so. It wasn't that polite phrase that we say when we help someone "It will be a pleasure". Pleasure means just that. it was God's pleasure to redeem us. It gave Him pleasure. God is a god who *delights* to do things. God invented emotion so don't be surprised if we find it in His created beings. God isn't a computer and He isn't matter-of-fact.

As a God who delights. He is a God who has made His people to delight.

Created to delight in God

After the Civil War, the great reformed scholars in England wrote what has become known as the Westminster Confession which was designed to be a statement of the Christian faith. It's quite a long document but in it is the following phrase *"the chief end of man is to glorify the Lord and ENJOY Him forever."*

As we read in Psalm 37 there is a command to delight in God - *Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.*

Delight yourself. We are made originally to delight in God. Adam and Eve delighted in Him, until they decided to delight in the forbidden fruit. *Gen. 3:6. When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some of it and ate it*

As we look at the wonder of creation, do we delight in the God who created it? It's easy again as we look at creation to be scientific and matter of fact about it, instead of looking at who made it. When we see creation as something we use and exploit, we become like Adam and Eve and desire what we want and do not see what's there. God has created beauty because I delighted Him to do so, but are we delighted by it?

Just because some of the things that people find delight in and seek happiness from are totally depraved and sinful, does not mean that the emotion of delight and pleasure, or joy or happiness are sinful. God made us people who delight, who seek pleasure and happiness because they are all things of God. Sin occurs where we use our capacity to delight and pursue pleasures we were not created for or seek joy and happiness in those things that do not bring glory to God.

Desiring to delight in God

I said last week that my desire is that we each have a longing and desire after God: to know Him and not just know about Him. Because as we know Him we delight in Him because we understand His goodness to us, not just in our salvation, but in His grace to us day by day.

Ps 37: 4 *Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.* Does that mean I get my Ferrari. No. Because as I delight in the Lord - as desire to be in His presence: I delight in who He is and His desires are my desires and I get all the desires of my heart because they are His.

Notice the wording in Ps 37:4 *"Delight yourself IN the Lord."* He did not use "from" or "with" or "by" but He used the word "in". Why? Because the act of delighting one's self IN God is personal and intimate. It's about relationship - with Him!

Someone once said this: *The mere execution of religious activity will never replace the one on one relationship that the Christian can have in God through the person of Jesus Christ. True delight is diving headfirst into a dynamic and passionate experience with the God of the universe. ONLY WHEN WE REALISE THAT HAPPINESS COMES FROM TOTALLY IMMERSING OURSELVES IN GOD WILL WE EVER FIND FULFILMENT. The opposite of Psalm 37:4 could go something like this; "Deprive yourself of the Lord and you will be miserable and unhappy."*

And there are a lot of unhappy and unfulfilled Christians in this world because they live deprived lives.

Yet we have a God who wants us to desire His presence. Look at:

1 Pet 1: 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Are we a people who delight in God? Not just people who have decided in our minds that we are saved, not just people who meet to share our common faith but a people who come because we hunger and thirst after the presence of God because we delight in Him.

This morning God wants us to realise afresh that who He is and what He has done for us is so exciting and profound - that we have been made His children; that we should desire Him and as we do so that we delight in Him. Not just smile a bit but people who take joy and pleasure being in His presence and doing his will.