"Why are you so unhappy?"

We’re continuing our study of 1 John today and the last time we were together we saw quite clearly that God not only wants happy people, He commands it. We saw that He commanded the Philippian church in Philippians 4:4 to “Rejoice in the Lord always.” We also saw that He commanded the church in Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians 5:16 to “Be joyful always.”

There was no doubt in my mind that God wants His people to be happy, we saw that in the beginning with Adam and Eve and we saw it all the way through the early church. And if you remember they continued to rejoice no matter what persecution and suffering they were going through. And the reason they all rejoiced in the Lord was because of the relationship they had with their God, it was Him they were rejoicing in.

I got a hold of some questions and answers from last year’s GCSE exams, now the answers given were by British students writing their fifth form GCSE Exams last year. These are genuine responses from 16 year olds. On the subject of Geography here are two questions.

Q: Name the four seasons. A: Salt, pepper, mustard and vinegar.
Q: Explain one of the processes by which water can be made safe to drink. A: Flirtation makes water safe to drink because it removes large pollutants like grit, sand, and dead sheep.

On the subject of Sociology here is one question.

On the subject of Biology here are three questions.
Q: Give the meaning of the term "Caesarean Section." A: The caesarean section is a district in Rome.
Q: What is a seizure? A: A Roman emperor.

On English here is one question, which is my favourite.
Q: What does the word "benign" mean? A: Benign is what you will be after you be eight.

Now here is a question I would like you to answer for yourself. Why are some people so unhappy? John tells us in 1 John 1:4 “We write this to make our joy complete.” Now the NIV doesn’t translate that verse very well, some versions say, “We write this so that your joy may be complete.” Or “We write this so that you may be full of joy.”

You see not only does John tell us why God’s people should be happy, he also tells us why some people aren’t happy. The Holy Spirit through John outlines some of the basic causes of unhappiness. 1 John 2:1+2 “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

One of the main reasons why people are so unhappy is because of sin. And sin is nothing new in today’s society; it’s been a problem since the creation of the world. Remember when Adam and Eve were created? They had everything they needed for life in this paradise, they even enjoyed amazing fellowship with God, and they walked with God in the garden. They were not only the only two people in the world at this time but they were the happiest people in the world at this time.

It was amazing what they had, until sin entered into the equation. And so because of that sin God had to bring about Adam and Eve’s punishment. The consequences of which we’re still paying today. Now notice the contrast in their lives because of sin.

Genesis 3:16-19 “To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over
"Why are you so unhappy?"

you." To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

Their sin brought about their sorrow and suffering. Adam and Eve were alive before this sin took place but now God casts them away from the garden and they are now dead, spiritually because of that sin. They were separated from God, and loved ones that’s what sin does, sin separates people from God.

And we need to remember that there are consequences to sin, not only will sin make you unhappy, but the consequences of sin is that you may never find happiness again. The happiness you lost because of your sin may be lost ever. Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death."

Have you ever wondered what sin is? Now I’m not talking about a long list of ungodly things we shouldn’t be doing, I’m talking about sin itself. I remember before I became a Christian, I used to be involved in all sorts of ungodly things, from causing people to fight, to spreading malicious lies about people all over town. But I also remember how much pleasure I got out of being involved with those sins.

But loved ones that’s what sin is, it is pleasure. We wouldn’t be tempted to do something if we didn’t think it was good right? You wouldn’t go out and get drunk; it you didn’t get any pleasure out of getting drunk would you? You wouldn’t switch on TV and watch some X rated film if you didn’t get any pleasure from watching it would you? But have you ever noticed the common denominator about all of these sins?

Whether it is unmarried sex, drunkenness, affairs, pornography, gossip, ungodly thinking or gluttony. The common denominator in all sin is this, it’s temporary. And loved ones we face these choices everyday of our lives. You can either fit in and join in with the world’s sinfulness or stand up and be counted as a man or woman of righteousness.

You see that was the very choice that Moses faced, he didn’t want to be known as an Egyptian, and he didn’t want to be known as Pharaoh’s son. Why? Hebrews 11:24+25 tells us, “By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.”

Moses turned his back on the thrill and excitement of sin. Moses turned his back on the pleasure of sin. Why? Because sin only lasts a short time. And for twenty minutes of sexual pleasure with an unmarried woman or man, you’re going face a lifetime of condemnation and guilt.

For a few hours of drunkenness you’re going face a lifetime of guilt and shame. And if you’re a Christian and you sin the first thing you want to do is hide. Nothing new there then, is there? Genesis 3:8 “Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.”

And I’m wondering today what trees we hide behind. Jesus tells us that the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law and the scribes all hid behind a tree. In Matthew 23, 6 times Jesus tells them that they were hiding behind the tree of hypocrisy.
“Why are you so unhappy?”

Loved ones you can hide wherever you want after you’ve sinned; you might even stay away from church for a few weeks while you deal with your guilt. You might even unplug the telephone so that no-one can get in touch with you.

You can try and hide wherever you want but God still sees you. Hebrews 4:13 “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” You see whatever tree you choose to hide behind is only going to make things worse for yourself.

I’ve told you this story before about the little boy who went to an army surplus store and bought some dynamite. And so he went to school one day and wrapped them all over his body and his friend asked him, “Why have you got all those explosives tied to your body?” And the little boy said, “Well there is this one boy who keeps bullying me and if he pushes me today then he’s going to blow his hand off.”

You see that little boy isn’t thinking straight, but do you know what? When you sin and then try to hide from God in whatever form of tree you managed to grow over the years, your not thinking straight either. You’re only harming yourself.

Because what that does is rob you of the joy we talked about last time. We all know the story about David’s sin with Bathsheba and Uriah which is told in 2 Samuel 11+12. Now if you want to know what sin does to a person, when you go home read 2 Samuel 12:14-23 and you will see the consequences of David’s sin. In short David was destroyed within; he was heartbroken after the death of his child. His sin robbed him of his joy.

When we sin as Christian, then you can be sure that our joy will be lost. Why do you think Peter wept bitterly after he denied the Lord in Matthew 26:75? Why do you think that Judas committed suicide following his betrayal of Jesus in Matthew 27:5?

You can’t have your cake and eat it. You can’t continue in un-confessed sin and hope to receive the joys of eternal life. And if you’re a Christian this morning and you’ve lost your joy then maybe it’s time to get out from behind your tree and confess those sins to God today. 1 John 1:9 says that, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

If you haven’t confessed any sins to God for a while then you need to pray to God what David prayed after Nathan confronted him with the sin of adultery. Psalm 51:12 “Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.”

Another cause of unhappiness is selfishness. The philosophy of world is that “happiness comes by getting”; now we know this is false otherwise we wouldn’t be Christians. Remember in Luke 12 when Jesus is addressing a large crowd?

A guy comes out of the crowd and asks Jesus in Luke 12:13, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Jesus answered him in verse 15 by saying, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." And then down in verse 21 Jesus explains that in order for a person to be happy, a person “must be rich toward God.”

Do you see how the material things that you possess are only temporary? That’s why John reminds us that life doesn’t consist of an abundance of things possessed but rather an abundance of things to be shared. 1 John 3:17 “If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?” Sin is short lived, material goods are short lived and life itself is short lived.
“Why are you so unhappy?”

I get these e-mails from time to time with funny stories in them but I got one a little while ago which I would like to share with you this morning, “It’s called God is like.” God is like coke He’s the real thing. God is like electric He brings good things to life. God is like Asda's He has everything. God is like NHS you’re in good hands with Him. God is like VO-5 Hair Spray He holds through all kinds of weather. God is like the post office neither rain, nor snow, nor sleet nor ice will keep Him from His appointed destination.

God maybe like all of these things but John tells us twice in 1 John 4 what God is really like, he tells us that “God is love.” The fundamental problem in the world today is that it doesn’t know what to love and what not to love. John tells us in 1 John 2:15-17 “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”

Do you see how sin’s pleasures are short and temporary? Are you going to let the fleeting pleasures of sin and materialism steal your joy in Christ Jesus? That word “World” there in 1 John 2:15-17 is the word “Kosmos”. And it’s talking about the kind of people in the world who “live by lust”, and people who “live exclusively for “things.”

John is trying to tell us that were supposed to love God, not things. Because John tells us how we can love God in 1 John 5:3 “This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.” If you love God and you want to show Him and the world that you love God then simply do what He asks us all to do, "Obey His commands."

Because if you’re a Christian and your living exclusively for the here and now then your depriving yourself of the joy of hope. Romans 12:12 “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”

If you’re a Christian and you’re living exclusively for the here and now and you’re struggling to resists the temptation of materialism, then you need to tell the tempter exactly what Jesus told him. When Jesus was being tempted by the tempter, to worship him and he will give Jesus all the kingdoms of the earth, Jesus said to him in Matthew 4:10 "Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Now loved ones we need to be aware of these things that can stop us from rejoicing in the Lord always. You see when we give our lives to Jesus, we receive far more than we deserve. We receive real everlasting joy because of the things in which the One we rejoice has done. When Jesus was in his final hour on the cross, John 19:28-30 says, "Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

Jesus showed the sins of the world on Calvary for the whole world to see. Loved ones we shouldn’t be trying to hide behind any tree. Whether it is behind the tree of sexual immorality or idolatry. Whether it is be the behind the tree of prostitution or adultery. Whether it is the behind the tree of homosexuality or greed.

God knows where your hiding and God sees your sins, the very sins that we should be confessing to Him and turning away from. But it’s not all bad news, because God had a remedy for sin. 1 John 1:7 “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”
“Why are you so unhappy?”

Now that’s great news if you’re a Christian this morning but bad news if you’re not a Christian this morning. You see God’s remedy for sin was Jesus Christ Himself. He sacrificed His One and only Son because of my sin and your sin. 1 John 2:2 “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

And if you’re not a Christian this morning and you want to obey His commands then you need to repent of your sins and be baptised into Jesus’ death. Romans 6:3+4 “Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

You need to be baptised into His death, because baptism is the place where you are cleansed from your sin by Jesus’ blood. And His blood will continue to wash you clean of your sins as long as you continue walk in the light of God’s word.

1 John 1:5-10 “This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”

Can you see what I’m saying here? The only truly long term happy people in this world are people who have been forgiven and are continually being forgiven of their sins. That’s why in Acts 8:39 the Ethiopian Eunuch “went on his way rejoicing.” That why in Acts 16:34 the Philippian jailor and his family were “filled with joy”

And if your not a Christian this morning then you too can study God’s word and then obey what He says in His word and after you’ve obeyed you too can go on with the rest of your life rejoicing. And instead of being a selfish person who lives for the here and now.

You can begin to practice what Paul preached in Acts 20:35 “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Why are some of you so unhappy? Maybe it’s because of the un-confessed sin is in your life. Maybe it’s because you’re whole life is centred on the here and now. Maybe it’s simply because you haven’t made Jesus your own by being baptised so that your sins can be forgiven.

If after reading this you want to know more about finding real happiness or if this sermon has raised other questions in your thoughts then please just contact me and I will get back to you as soon as possible.

God bless and thanks for taking the time to grow in your understanding of God’s Word.