

Pursuing Happiness

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[0 : 00] Please be seated. Well, good morning everyone. If you come in late, my name's Reverend Philip Knight from the parish of Port Hedland.

My weather was like yesterday's weather, but it's good to be with you here this morning and to have a bit of a change. So let me pray. Gracious Heavenly Father, we thank you for your Holy Word and what it says to us.

And we pray that as we reflect upon it now together that you may inspire us to live Christian lives that are content in a relationship with your Son, Jesus Christ.

We pray in your name. Amen. Stories told of the city of New York. There are millions of pets in New York City. However, when a pet dies, there's nowhere to bury the pet unless you've got a jackhammer.

And so the council said that they could dispose very reverently and nicely of your pet when it passes away for \$50. A lady put an advertisement in the local paper that she would dispose reverently of people's pets when they passed away for \$25.

[1 : 12] She's undercutting the council. How did she do it, you may ask? Well, she went down to the local Salvation Army store and bought a bag for \$5. Then she would go for a ride on the subway.

And as she sat there dozing, someone would come along and snatch the suitcase. And sometimes she'd say, shout out, stop, thief!

But they would just keep on running. They'd snatched the suitcase looking for happiness.

You just imagine the look on their face. They open up this suitcase. How often do you and I run after the things of this world thinking that they are going to be a suitcase full of happiness and finding disappointment with what we find inside.

Some time ago, I received a visit from a lady I've got to know playing sport in my town. She came over in tears as she just had an argument with her husband.

[2 : 32] I know none of you have had an argument but that's what happens. And she came over and her problems boiled down to one thing.

Money. The stress caused by the financial strain that they were under had caused her husband to work long hours.

And he had little or no time for his family. They bought three houses and he wanted to buy another one. He earns over \$150,000 a year.

Yet they still struggle to pay the bills. They came over to Port Hedland to make money so their life would be less stressful.

So they could relax, have more time for each other. But what has turned out has been the opposite. They are stressed. Their relationship is on the rocks.

[3 : 40] The pursuit of money. A tricky business that we all know about. None of us are ignorant of this fact.

But this is not an isolated case in my town. But I'm telling you it's because this is a classic example of a family that comes to my town.

Their problems are commonplace because the number one reason that people come to my town is for the pursuit of money.

Because money to them equals contentment. you wouldn't go there because it's nice weather. Seven months of the year we hang out inside in front of the air conditioner.

When we went on holidays to Perth at the start of January we came back and the front page of our newspaper had a picture of an egg frying on the road because they'd had temperatures on one day of 48 and a half degrees.

[4 : 59] It was cooking there. But people go to Port Hedland not because it's a nice place but because it's a place where they can make lots of money bucket loads of money and for some very small percentage it seems to work out fine.

But for the rest of the people that come along pain and anguish is what they experience. For many it brings up a whole bunch of other issues that they never thought existed and it begs the question where does true contentment come from?

Where can it be found? And this isn't only a question that people in Port Hedland are asking but it's a question that people the world around are asking today.

Where does contentment come from? There's basically two views. A worldly view that says money and a godly view which says Jesus and the two are at odds with each other.

No great surprise for anyone here if you read your Bible what God says and what the world says are normally in conflict with each other. So what does the world think about money?

[6 : 23] Well unless you've been living in a bubble a very hot bubble you'd come to the conclusion that everything was okay and that the world in which we live in is doing okay.

But for the rest of us who live in reality we know that the world is choking itself on money. It's choking itself to death. And a lot seems to be right under how much money you have.

How much money you've got in the bank. How much money you've got in your super fund. How many assets you have. You and I are being constantly bombarded within the advertising community that money and financial security is what you need to run after and grab with both hands.

If you own a lot you don't need to worry. You can relax. But if you haven't got a lot then you're not going to be secure.

That's what the world says. And nowhere else is this more confronting to me than in Port Hedland. Because people go up there with a plan.

[7 : 43] They have a two year plan. A four year plan. A five year plan. And they do. They go up for these years and they work stupid hours.

Some guys I know work 13 days on one day off. These guys have kids same age as my kids. They work 12 hour shifts.

6 till 6. Sometimes they work shift work. Other guys fly in to Port Heaven leaving their family behind and live in camps.

Live in rooms with just a bed and a toilet and a shower. Leaving their family behind. They work for four weeks. On one week off to make money.

to earn enough money to go back to civilisation. Doncaster, Melbourne and to live a nice easy life.

[8 : 45] The catch is that while they're doing this all for the family their family is not having a dad or sometimes even a mum.

the family suffers and the family collapses. it is not unheard of in Port Heaven for a guy to go to work at 5.30 to come home at 6.30 and to find that his kids and his wife have left town.

And that destroys me looking on to that. That's awful. Guys are doing that to their family. Don't do it. It kills you.

It kills my community to see that happen. But that's what guys do. I live in a town that there's a turnover of people. So when one family's had enough and given up another family takes their place and is ready to work after the slave of money.

In a town of 15,000 8,000 people turn over a year. They come and they go and it destroys families. Another catch is that we also know that financial security is very fickle.

[10 : 05] It comes and it goes. The God of money that people worship has taken a beating recently. Many people are starting to realise that money isn't what it's cracked up to be.

That it doesn't provide the security and contentment that they long and wish for. because it can disappear as fast as it comes.

And so where do you turn and what do you do? This brings us to God's view. Why I am in Port Hedland of all places. To bring God's view of money to people there.

What does the word of God say about where true contentment can be found? Well let's open up your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 6.

I used to think when they had the BCA boxes at the church I was going to use to think those poor sods that work for BCA. How do they do it?

[11 : 13] Being stuck out in the middle of nowhere. You only do it because you are in love with Jesus and you are a Jesus freak and want to see the gospel challenged and explained to people.

And my town has lots of opportunities. So if I chat with people I turn to them to the Bible and we open it up and we see what does it have to say? 1 Timothy chapter 6 we had it read from verse 3 to 10 context of verses 3 to 5 Paul is telling Timothy to withdraw from those who are corrupting the gospel.

They are corrupting the gospel of Jesus Christ and the teachings of Jesus and he says that these people are destitute of the truth and they think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

And so he says in verse 6 I'm reading from the NIV I do apologise I didn't know that you guys had the RSV but godliness with contentment is great gain so not money for we brought nothing into this world and we can take nothing out.

Let me say that wherever there is godliness there you will find contentment. Find me a godly man and you will find a content man.

[12 : 41] contentment You see contentment comes from the principles of godliness. Matthew Henry the great theologian good bloke get his stuff read it.

He says that godliness is ever accompanied with contentment in a great or less degree. guys to lead your families you need to be content you need to be godly because godliness will give you contentment.

Just as Paul states in Philippians 4.11 he says I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. Contentment is not situational contentment is relational and by that I mean that your level of contentment is not associated with your circumstances.

It's committed to or it's related to your relationship with Jesus Christ. That's who dictates your level of commitment.

Only a relationship with Jesus Christ will give you true and genuine contentment. Flowing on from this is the realisation that things that you have are only temporary.

[14 : 17] Naked you've come into this world and you'll go out the same. The sum total of my existence is not my bank account, the size of my house or the type of car that I drive.

That is not the sum total of my existence. The story is told of the chief accountant of one of the wealthiest men who ever lived, Rockefeller. a guy came up to him and he said, how much did Rockefeller leave behind when he died?

And the account was very quick and he said, everything. So it is with you and me. Do you live that reality that all you have will be gone?

It's only temporary. Do you live it as well as believe it? It begs the question not only for yourself but myself.

Do I use the gifts and abilities and the money that God has given me for my own pleasure and enjoyment or do I use it for things that have eternal value and meaning?

[15 : 40] Are you so sold on the great Australian dream that you have lost focus about the reason that you actually exist in the first place?

Your purpose for being here? Is contentment a distant dream or is it a living reality for you? Are you content with your stuff or do you just want more stuff?

not more of God but just more stuff? Verse 8 continues but if we have food and clothing we will be content with that.

Contentment here is described as being happy, content, satisfied with the basics.

are you content with the basics, food and clothing or does your list go on and on and on?

[16 : 50] Proverbs 30 verse 8 says give me neither poverty nor riches but only my daily bread.

is that a prayer that you pray or is that a prayer that you run away from? But then there are those who are not satisfied with the basics and so the passage goes on.

Verses 9 to 10 say this, people who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires.

for the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people eager for money have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many grieves.

So is it wrong to own things? Is it wrong to enjoy things? Well that's not what the Bible is saying. You're going glad that's the case.

[17 : 57] You see God is not some cosmic killjoy that if you and I are having fun with what we have then God is saying hey none of that. God wants you to enjoy what you have.

But I think what God's word reminds us is that if money and possessions is our priority then there's a problem. If that's what drives your life wealth then you are going to be disappointed with that suitcase.

If our purpose in life is to accumulate wealth then you are never going to be satisfied. I guarantee you that. Ask a rich man how much more he wants and he will always say just one more dollar.

in the Sunday Telegraph on January the 18th there was an article there about James Packer. You all know James Packer?

One of the richest men in Australia no longer number one he's gone down the list a bit. In this particular article it said that Mr Packer's fortune is believed to have slumped from six billion dollars down to three billion dollars.

[19 : 27] I see you're all unhappy about that and confused about why he's lost half of his money. You guys have lost half your super maybe.

It said that one of the richest men in Australia this is in the newspaper so yeah take it as it comes saying that he's not been seen in public for some time.

I reckon that he's gained weight and he's suffering from depression because of the financial turmoil that he's going through.

My heart bleeds. this guy has more money than I can ever imagine and is he the picture of happiness and contentment and the answer is surprise surprise no.

The lotto ads lie. the reason to go to Port Hedlin it's a lie.

[20 : 44] It will not give you contentment. Money seems to buy you more worries than anything else. And you may sit and say hey Philip I'm a Christian been walking with the Lord for a while.

I would say look at verse 10 because you are not immune to the lure of possessions and money.

Verse 10 is a stern warning against putting the pursuit of wealth before our relationship with God. Have a look at what it says.

It says for the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people eager for money have wandered from the faith.

Your Bible says the same. Wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs replacing God with money. That's idolatry.

[21 : 48] You're breaking the first commandment. You haven't even got on to the other nine. First commandment you shall have no other gods before me. In fact a lot of our sin comes from breaking the first commandment doesn't it?

A lot of things that we attempted to give priority over our relationship with God including money. God needs to be our focus. He needs to be our priority.

Nothing else. A person came to me, a non-Christian who's come along to church, has done for a while. Came along to me very happy.

She had finally got a job with a mining company and she was rubbing her hands with glee because she was going to be earning lots of money and she came over to tell us the news and sharing all the things she's going to be spending her money on.

Well, a few days after she started with the company, they started laying people off because of the financial downturn. 90% of the people who were there when she walked in are no longer there.

[23 : 04] She's part of the 10% left, probably because she's the one that looks after the wages. And all the other people have been laid off and her contract now finishes next month instead of a couple of years time.

Put your trust in job security and you were going to be sadly let down. The only way in which that you and I are able to find contentment in life is by having God as our priority.

By having God as the purpose for our existence, we will never be let down. We will never be let go. Never said sorry, not enough time for you.

Never. God doesn't chop and change. You and I do. We change with the weather, just like our complaints about the weather change.

If our lives are centred around a relationship with God, then you know what? Possessions and our toys become a lot less important. We can still enjoy what we've got.

[24 : 23] But if we don't have it, we're not going to stress out. We are going to be content. I don't even go as far as saying that if you struggle with that, you need to look at your relationship with God.

Things never give you contentment. God is the only one who can provide you with contentment. the Bible says, the start of 1 Peter, that we are strangers in this world.

This means that we no longer conform to the values and the ideas that the world puts forward as being important that we should hold in high regard.

The world says that money plays the majority part of everyone's life, the major part. Indeed, money becomes an idol.

People spend far too much time thinking about their money, what they could earn, how they could earn more, even if it is to the detriment of others.

[25 : 37] We as Christians need to be different and we don't, like the world say, money and financial security is our Lord, but we say Jesus is Lord.

But it's not enough just to say these things at all, but our lives need to express that reality. As other people see our attitude towards what we have and especially in this financial climate that we're in, what do they see?

Do they see that Jesus is Lord? Or do you behave just like every other poor sod who's lost so much in his super fund?

That really shows where you're at. When the God of money is being shown up for what it really is, just a slave making, promise breaking, soul destroying, family destroying, master for what it is, then you and I have an opportunity to stand and proclaim the life changing message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christians tell me always looking for an opportunity. An opportunity has come knocking at your door right now within the economic turmoil that we are experiencing now.

[27 : 07] that you and I can talk about a rich faith in Jesus Christ. Now is the time for you and I to step up and to take the opportunities that we have with both hands and to proclaim that Jesus is the way, that Jesus has the answer because people are calling out, they call out in my town and in this town, this city, how can I make sense of what is going on?

You and I have the answer. It's found in a relationship with Jesus Christ. People are calling out, where can I find lasting security? And you and I have the answer in Jesus Christ.

People say, where can I find hope? And you and I have the answer in Jesus Christ. You and I need to proclaim that message.

Does my town of Port Hedland need more people? Or do they need another sermon from me about the evils of money?

Or does it need a minister to live out the gospel, who daily walks close with Jesus Christ and who finds contentment in godliness?

[28 : 40] I live in a fishbowl of a town. People know who I am. I'm the Anglican minister in town.

People know what car I drive, where I spend my money, the attitude that I have, because I spend time with them. So I am under a magnifying glass.

It is a fishbowl. And so how I live my life counts as people look on.

But here's the reality check. In Melbourne with people, population of 3.8 million, give or take a few, your life also counts, because you also live in a fishbowl.

In the community, the relationships that you have with people, at work, or at play, or within your family, people look on to see how you respond in any given circumstances.

[29 : 51] and your life can have a dramatic effect on others. If I'm really honest about it, I think one of the reasons why the church as a whole is not having a stronger impact on others is because there's too little tangible evidence that what we believe is either true or significant in our lives, in the lives of Christians.

One of the saddest things I look back on my growing up was the occasion where I went to spend an afternoon with a good friend of mine and his family.

I was introduced to his family like this. This is my friend Philip. His dad is an Anglican minister.

But don't worry, he's just like you and me. That has to be one of the most chilling things that I think back on my life.

Can the same thing be said of you? How were you introduced to your friends? How do you live your life in front of others?

[31 : 20] Let me put it to you that most of you don't need more head knowledge of God, more knowledge about how to answer those tricky theological questions that people ask.

what we all desperately need is a real and living, breathing relationship with Jesus Christ that is lived out through actions, that is lived out in reality.

We need to live out what we believe because people are looking on. When you see Jesus face to face on that day of judgment, do you think he's going to be concerned or worried about how you answered those deep theological questions from your friends?

Or do you think he'll be more interested in how well your life spoke of the reality that he is Lord?

I think that you and I along with everyone else are sick and tired of people talking about what they believe and not living what they believe in front of others.

[32 : 48] The challenge is not just to be a talker, the challenge is to be a walker of the faith. in front of everyone. You may think, well Philip, I don't have to give a sermon.

Your life is a sermon. What you do and how you act has significance. People look on in your life, what do they see?

Do they see anything tangibly different from their other non-Christian friends? Do they see that you are content in your relationship with Jesus Christ?

What do they see? The daily challenge is to come before our Creator God in humble repentance hearts and asking that only in this day we could reflect His greatness in the way in which we live our life.

That is a great prayer. That is a great life to be used by God for His glory. So the big question is, are you content?

[34 : 00] let's pray. Gracious Heavenly Father, thank you that you provide for us all we need.

May we be content with food and clothing, the basics. Help us to be people who are people after your heart. and may we practice what we preach and believe so that those that look on may seek to repent and believe that Jesus is Lord.

We pray this in your name. Amen.