TITLE: CONTENTMENT

TEXT: Eccl. 1:1-2; Heb. 13:5; 1 Tim 6:6; Phil. 4:11-13; 2 Co. 12:7-10; Gal. 4:13-15

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about contentment. One thing that seems to be prevalent in our society today is a lack of contentment. Television commercials and newspaper ads try to make us aware of just how un-content we are. Buy our new latest and greatest gadget…What is the implication? Be discontent with the old to buy the new…. The spirit of discontentment goes way beyond material possessions in our nation. The United States boast the highest divorce rate in the entire world! What is the underlying cause? Discontentment! Tiring of what you have and wanting what you don’t.

So this morning I want to talk about what the Bible has to say about contentment.

First some words from one of the most discontented men of Scripture…

King Solomon…**Ecclesiastes 1:1-2 (NIV)** **1The words of the Teacher,son of David, king in Jerusalem:**

**2“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher.    “Utterly meaningless!  Everything is meaningless.”**

How does Solomon sound here in these opening lines of the book of Eccl. to you? To me he sounds like a very discontented person! This was a young man, who was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth, but Solomon was born with a diamond studded gold spoon in his mouth!

 Solomon had all that this world had to offer at his disposal!

Yet what seemed to be his favorite word when writing the book of Eccl? Meaningless!

**“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher.**

**“Utterly meaningless!  Everything is meaningless.”**

In the book of Eccl. Solomon uses the word meaningless 28 times in 12 short chapters!

**Meaningless! Meaningless “Utterly meaningless!  Everything is meaningless.”**

Doesn’t sound like the picture of a contented man, does it?

If wealth or fame or fortune or material possessions could bring contentment then Solomon would have been the most contented person on earth!

 But that is not what we read in his writings… In fact just the opposite seems the case….Solomon was a very discontented man in spite of all those things!

So how does one find real contentment?

 First, what does it mean to be content?

Once upon a time, there was a man who lived with his wife, two small children, and his elderly parents in a tiny hut. He tried to be patient and gracious, but the noise and crowded conditions wore him down. In desperation, he consulted the village wise man. "Do you have a rooster?" asked the wise man. "Yes," he replied. "Keep the rooster in the hut with your family, and come see me again next week." The next week, the man returned and told the wise elder that living conditions were worse than ever, with the rooster crowing and making a mess of the hut.

 "Do you have a cow?" asked the wise elder. The man nodded fearfully. "Take your cow into the hut as well, and come see me in a week."

 Over the next several weeks, the man--on the advice of the wise elder--made room for a goat, two dogs, and his brother's children.

 Finally, he could take no more, and in a fit of anger, kicked out all the animals and guests, leaving only his wife, his children, and his parents. The home suddenly became spacious and quiet, and everyone lived happily ever after.

 Contentment is first and foremost a matter of perspective!

 But the grass always seems greener on the other side of the fence doesn’t it?

 A man walked into a mental institution one day and was taken on a tour. The tour saw one cell where the man was beating his head against the padded walls. He kept saying, "Linda, how could you do it? Linda, how could you do it?" The guide explained that the man was in love with Linda, and when Linda jilted him, he drifted off into the ozone. He couldn't handle it. They went to the next cell, and there was a man saying, "Linda, Linda, how could this happen? Linda, Linda." The visitor said, "Who's he?" The guide said, "He's the man who married Linda.

 That sums up the myth of the greener grass.. what we don’t have often looks better then what we do have until we get what we don’t have and find out that in reality it isn’t!

 Do you realize that as a Christian God has called us to live lives of contentment? He has called us to be content…

 **Hebrews 13:5 (NIV)** **5Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,   “Never will I leave you;  never will I forsake you.”**

God has said… be content!

The Greek word that we translate as content here is:***ar-keh'-o* *be* *satisfactory*:—, be enough, suffice, be sufficient, be content, be contented.**

Heritage Dictionary defines**: con·tent·ed =Satisfied with things as they are; Desiring no more than what one has; satisfied.**

 We are not called to be content with things such as sin in our life or be content with where we are in our relationship with God and content to go no farther, content to stay still spiritually, for that would put an end to personal sanctification, to being made Holy as God is Holy.

 We are not called to be content personally, spiritually but we are called to be content situationally….

Paul didn’t say we are to be content with who we are but that we are to be content with what we have!

Yet how often do we seem to get this turned around in our thinking and the way that we live out our life?

 We become content or complacent with who we are and have no desire to become better or continue to grow spiritually and at the same time we become discontented with the situations and places in life that we often find ourselves in. We become content with who we are and discontent with what we have or where we reside in life!

 Just the opposite of what Scripture admonishes us with regards to contentment!

 The Apostle Paul goes on and puts things in their proper perspective as far as contentment goes in the life of a Believer:

**1 Timothy 6:6 (NIV)** **6But godliness with contentment is great gain.**

Godliness **with** contentment is great gain!

To the human condition Godliness speaks of being discontented! Godliness speaks of being discontented with self, that is the sinful self and striving to live our life pleasing to God!

Godliness= ***yoo-seb'-i-ah* *piety*; specifically the *gospel* scheme:—godliness, holiness.**

The only time that we should truly be content with our Godliness, our holiness, our sanctification is when we enter eternity and loose these bodies of flesh and get new resurrected bodies that will be like unto the Lords!

The striving for Godliness in this life will require that we are never fully content with self but are always striving to become more and more like Jesus!

But in this life we are to practice Godliness **with** contentment!

What we are to be content with are the situations that surround our life, the situations and places in life that we find ourselves in because we are a Christian….

The uncomfortable places as well as the comfortable ones.

**Philippians 4:11 - 13 (NIV) 11I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty.**

 **I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13I can do everything through him who gives me strength.**

Paul says that: **I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation!**

Well if there is a secret for being content in any and ever situation in life then I want to know what that secret is---Don’t you?

What was the secret that Paul had learned that enabled him to be content in every situation! Be content whether well fed or hungry, being content whether living in plenty or living in want, being content whether he was staying in a holiday inn or the dungeon of a Philippian jail!

The secret that Paul had learned was the Scriptural reality, the Scriptural truth that: I can do all things through Him who gives me strength!

 That is the secret!

I can do all things through Him who gives me strength!

 The secret to real contentment in this life is coming to the realization of the sufficiency of Christ! The sufficiency of the grace of Christ in our lives!

Paul talks about the sufficiency of the grace of God through Christ Jesus and its ability to transcend the situations of this life, transcend even the difficult and trying and unpleasant situations of this life so that we can find contentment in all of life’s circumstances regardless of what those circumstances may be…..

 Paul uses the illustration of a personal time of pain and trial in his life…

**2 Corinthians 12:7 - 10 (NIV) 7To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. 10That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

We don’t know exactly what Paul’s thorn in the flesh was other then that it was some kind of personal bodily affliction that caused him a great deal of discomfort.

 In speaking to the Galatians Paul says.

**Galatians 4:13 - 15 (NIV) 13As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. 14Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. 15What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.**

Some theorize from this that Paul’s thorn in the flesh was some kind of affliction of the eye that caused Paul severe pain and even embarrassment.

But whatever the thorn was it was very severe to Paul!

He pleaded, he begged God on three separate occasions to remove it from him!

 Three times he pleaded with God for personal healing for this physical affliction!

How does God respond to his beloved apostle? No!

 No Paul I won’t remove the thorn but I will do something much, much better!

 I will pour out My grace upon you and you will discover that My power is made perfect in your weakness!

 You will discover that as you trust and rely upon the sufficiency of My grace, that My grace will always be sufficient for you! And instead of you operating within your weakness I will manifest My strength through your weakness and My power will be displayed in your life!

 How does Paul respond to this new revelation of the sufficiency of Gods grace in his life? **Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. 10That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

The word that Paul uses for delight is:***yoo-dok-eh'-o*** **to *think* *well* of, that is, *approve* (an act);—think good, (be well pleased, take pleasure, be willing.**

To delight in something speaks of what?

It speaks of contentment! Being satisfied!

 What God is telling us is that He can give us contentment even in adversity!

If we rest and trust in His sustaining grace!

If we trust and rest in His sustaining grace then even adversity can be a peaceful place for us! A place of contentment!

-- Martin Luther--- *Next to faith, this is the highest art: to be content in the calling in which God has placed you.*

What is the calling that God has placed you?

 Wherever you are, wherever you happen to be right now!

It seems that often I will hear Christians say, I would like to know what Gods calling, Gods will for my life is?

I wish God would make clear my calling in life!

 If that is a question that plagues you and is making you feel discontent in life then I have some good news for you! I can answer that question for you this morning!

Take a look at where you are in life, take a look at what you do in life and realize that for this moment anyway, that is Gods calling for you at this time!

You are a Christian mother and homemaker then that is your calling! Be the best Christian mother and homemaker that you can be! If you are a Father and factory worker then that is your calling at the present so be the best Christian father and factory worker that you can be!

 If you are a Christian banker or a postal worker or a farmer or a police officer or a ditch digger then that is Gods calling upon your life at this time so be the best Christian that you can be representing Jesus Christ in those places!

 At some point in time God may change your calling, He may place another calling upon your life but if and when He does I guarantee that you will know it and have the opportunity to respond to it!

 But for this moment your calling is simply wherever you are right now!

And each of us have been called you to be content in the calling in which God has placed us.

There is a classic story called “Acres of Diamonds” that was told by the Rev. Russell Conwell more that 5000 times in his preaching career.

 It is a true story about a wealthy farmer who was probably one of the richest men in Africa.

 His name was Hafid and he owned a large farm with fertile soil, herds of camels and goats and orchards of dates and figs. He was a very wealthy man who didn’t lack a thing as far as the material possessions and comforts of this life go. One day a wondering Holy man visited his farm and mentioned that huge fortunes where being made discovering and mining diamonds---fortunes even greater then Hafid’s. This news captured Hafid’s attention. He inquired of the Holy man what diamonds were and where they could be found. The Holy man said that he wasn’t sure of all the details but he had heard that diamonds were usually found in the white sands of rivers that flowed out of valley’s formed by V-shaped mountains. Hafid, eager to increase his fortune, sold his farm, herds, and orchards placed his family in the care of someone else and set out to find his fortune. Hafid’s travels took him all over Africa but he never discovered what he had given up everything to find.

 Finally, in deep despair he threw himself off a mountain and died a frustrated, broken and poor man.

 The farmer that bought his farm was watering his camels one day and noticed a pretty rock in the river, because it sparkled. He took it home and placed it on a shelf where the sun would strike it and splash rainbows of color across the room.

 The same holy man came back to this same farm. He was immediately startled by the rainbow of light from the rock.

 Had Hafid returned? Well, no he hadn’t, and he was no longer the owner of this farm.

 Then taking the rock from the shelf, the holy man became animated. That’s a diamond! He excitedly told the farmer. Where did you find it? The farmer, somewhat confused in the flurry of excitement explained that it came from down by the river.

 Show me insisted the Holy man.

 The two of them went out to the river, which flowed out from a valley formed by a V-shaped mountain. And there they found a larger diamond, and then another, and many more diamonds, large and small.

 Actually the land, which Hafid sold to pursue his fortune elsewhere, turned out to be acres and acres of diamonds. In fact, it became the Kimberly, the richest diamond mine in all of South Africa!

Contentment is most often found, not in chasing after what you don’t have but by realizing and seeing the value of what you do have.

And for the Christian our contentment is found only in one place…And that is Jesus Christ….

The story is told of a farmer who had lived on the same farm all his life. It was a good farm, but with the passing years, the farmer began to tire of it. He longed for a change--for something "better." Every day he found a new reason for criticizing some feature of the old place. Finally, he decided to sell, and listed the farm with a real estate broker who promptly prepared a sales advertisement.

 As one might expect, it emphasized all the farm's advantages: ideal location, modern equipment, healthy stock, acres of fertile ground, etc. Before placing the ad in the newspaper, the realtor called the farmer and read the copy to him for his approval. When he had finished, the farmer cried out, "Hold everything! I've changed my mind. I am not going to sell. I've been looking for a place like that all my life."

Again, Contentment is most often found, not in chasing after what we don’t have but by realizing and seeing the value of what we do have.

And if we have Jesus we need nothing else!

 You see, it is only Jesus that can bring real contentment and true purpose to our lives. It is only Jesus that can truly fulfill all of our needs. It is only His grace that can sustain us, even in the difficult times of life and make us truly content.

God has called us to live lives of contentment.

Is content a word that describes your life this morning?

If not, do you have Jesus in your life? If you do then simply rest and trust in Him and you will find true contentment..

 If you don’t or are not sure then know that He wants to introduce Himself to you this morning. He wants you to find true contentment of life in Him.