



Sunday 12 September 2021

LOCKDOWN HAPPINESS: A reflection by Jill Kayser and Bill Humphrey

A PRAYER OF PRAISE

King of the poor to whom belongs the kingdom of heaven,
we thank you for your mercy and praise you for your enduring love.

King of the sorrowful who experience a comfort this world cannot give,
we thank you for your mercy and praise you for your enduring love.

King of the meek, who are destined to inherit the earth,
we thank you for your mercy and praise you for your enduring love.

King of the hungry and thirsty to whom are given heavenly bread and wine,
we thank you for your mercy and praise you for your enduring love.

King of the merciful who receive far more than they ever give or expect,
we thank you for your mercy and praise you for your enduring love.

King of the pure of heart, who see God where others see wilderness and
despair,
we thank you for your mercy and praise you for your enduring love.

King of the peacemakers, who receive the right to be called children of God,
we thank you for your mercy and praise you for your enduring love.

King of persecuted believers, who rejoice to be counted worthy of suffering for
Christ's sake,
we thank you for your mercy and praise you for your enduring love.

Thanks be to you, God for Jesus our earthly King,
for everything he has taught us,
for the humble path he has shown us,
and for all he has suffered for us and the whole world.
For Yours in the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.

Amen

Our scripture reading for today is Matthew 5: The Beatitudes (NIV)

Jesus said:

³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.



Jill: Do you remember what it was like to travel long distance in a car with young children? It started as such a happy and hopeful adventure. Maybe you stopped for a takeaway lunch or dinner on the way. No doubt you had treats hidden in the glove box to dish out at opportune moments, then there were the inevitable games of "I spy" or "car cricket", but no matter how well you planned the journey there would come a time when that inevitable whine started: "When we

going to get there." And then you knew it! The happy adventure of car travel together had ended.

Well as we enter our fourth week of level 4 lockdown journey many of us may be struggling to keep our spirits up and find our child within grumbling: "When we going to get there?"

This week Bill Humphrey and I have been reflecting on how to find happiness no matter what situation we find ourselves in.

In Jesus' most famous sermon – the Sermon on the Mount – I think He points us to finding happiness.

In his sermon (Matthew 5) he makes several statements (or beatitudes) beginning with the phrase, "Blessed are..." or "Happy are/is..." as it appears in some translations. Jesus describes a mindset necessary to experience true happiness. Each beatitude has two parts: a condition and a promise.

In his first Beatitude Jesus says: "Blessed are (happy are) the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

I wonder....is Jesus suggesting that when we acknowledge our spiritual poverty we are more open to realising our need for His spirit in our lives. Jesus promises the poor in spirit nothing less than the kingdom of heaven - and that's not something in the afterlife, but a "right-now" kingdom of heaven. A

kingdom of abundant life on earth. *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full"* (John 10:10) He said.

Abundant life (happiness) is the kingdom of heaven "right now" and it is the way Jesus intended for us to live every day no matter the situation. It's the happiness available to all of us when we surrender all to God.

Let's acknowledge our spiritual poverty and surrender to Him willing to admit our part in this global crisis: *"I've been getting it wrong. My way doesn't work. I need to trust in Your ways."* Let's pray when we feel overwhelmed with all that is happening in our lives and world: *"God, I need you to be in charge, because my way simply does not work."*

Let's surrender to what is and trust that God is with us in this situation too.

I think when we are able to do this, we will "lose our life for His sake, and find true life". Only in surrendering to Jesus can we be truly blessed and happy.

But of course surrendering to "what is" and attaining happiness is easier said than done I'm sure you'll agree. It requires commitment and practise.

Some of you may have heard one of our parishioners Bill Humphrey talk about his admiration for Eckhart Tolle, a writer, speaker and possibly even modern day "prophet" whose teachings focus on the importance of living in the now and who has been a great influence in Bill's life.

I asked Bill if he would like to share some of his thoughts and practices inspired by Tolle on how to stay present and happy regardless of the situation we find ourselves in.

Bill: To be happy is to be at peace, at peace with yourself, at peace with your thoughts, at peace with your life; completely at peace. Then you have happiness and are in a joyful state. Joy doesn't and can't come to you from somewhere else. Joy emanates from within you.

Happiness comes, not from following some set of rules but it comes from loving others and loving ourselves by accepting ourselves. Loving others can take many forms: simply acknowledging a person, maybe for something they have done or for just being there, or smiling at a stranger in passing.

Happiness is also experienced when we are fully engaged in a task or activity and find that we are so deeply focussed on it that we are transported into a state of non-thinking. That getting away from thinking is a key to happiness.

An exercise I try to practise when something happens that is not to my liking is to ask myself: "does it matter?" Seriously considering that question frequently makes me realize: "No, It Doesn't Really Matter!" That realized, I am able to move on, accepting "What Is".

Another helpful strategy I employ for maintaining happiness when I find myself disagreeing with someone else's opinion is to accept the difference and move on!

A great way to achieve peace and happiness, is by doing a simple meditation of breathing: I try to relax, breathe slowly and be aware of all the sensations of breathing. Do this for as long as you can. It works!

You can see happiness in some faces; these happy people seem so ready to smile, to share their peace and joy. How wonderful they are – they have the essence of happiness: peace, love and acceptance of life as it is, and it shows in their lives.

"Don't seek happiness. If you seek it, you won't find it, because seeking is the antithesis of happiness. Happiness is ever elusive, but freedom from unhappiness is attainable now, by facing what is rather than making up stories about it." **Eckhart Tolle**

A Prayer for "what is".... please add your own prayers

Loving and healing God, we, turn to you in prayer, confident that you are with us and with all people in every moment.

We stand before you as people of hope, trusting in Your care and protection. May your faithful love support us and soothe the anxiety of our hearts and all hearts across our nation.

Generous God, fill us with compassion and concern for others, young and old, that we may look after one another in these challenging days.

Bring healing to those who are sick with the virus and be with their families.

Strengthen and protect all medical professionals caring for the sick and all who work in our medical facilities.

Give wisdom to our nation's leaders in healthcare and governance that they may make the right decisions for the well-being of all people.

We pray in gratitude for all those in our country who will continue to work in the days ahead for the sake of us all. Bless them and keep them safe.

We pray for Your guidance God. May Your peace be with us and may Your love inspire us to care for each other and Your world now and always. **Amen.**

Remember this from your joyful childhood?

I've got that joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart
Where?

Down in my heart

Where?

Down in my heart

I've got that joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart

Down in my heart to stay.

