HAPPY TRAILS TO YOU

**DATE: 8/25/2013 am**

**TEXT: Psalm 23:1b**

**INTRODUCTION**

**Ill.** If you grew up in the 50’s, then you just might remember the “King of the Cowboys” and the “Queen of the West,” Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, their horses Trigger and Buttermilk, along with Bullet; Roy’s German Shepherd, bandana faced bandits and scoundrels of all kinds in the modern-day Western town of Mineral City. Children (and even parents) sat through heart-stopping horse chases and dust kicking brawls. But no matter how violent the action got, Roy always maintained his virtue and sense of justice. As a boy, the only thing greater than owning a Red Ryder BB Gun, was being a member of the Roy Rogers Riders Club. To be a member you had to keep the Roy Rogers Riders Club Rules which were: Be neat and clean, Be courteous and polite, Always obey your parents, Protect the weak and help them, Be brave but never take chances, Study hard and learn all you can, Be kind to animals and take care of them, Eat all your food and never waste anything, Love God and go to Sunday school regularly, Always respect our flag and country. Then of course, at the end of the show, Roy and Dale would always wave goodbye and sing, *Happy trails to you, until we meet again. Happy trails to you, keep smilin’ until then.*

If you will allow me a paraphrase of **Psalm 23:1…**

I thought I heard David saying -

*“The LORD is my Shepherd, happy trails to you”*

As we saw in our first message from **23rd** **Psalm**,

We are on a Journey,

A Journey that will be complete when we ***“dwell in the house of the LORD forever”* – v.6**

Our Destination is Settled and Sure

It’s *“until”* then that we must deal with the issues we face now

**Psalm 23** speaks of How we can Face The Days Ahead

Our Journey to the House of the LORD will bring days of

- Lying in green pastures and drinking from still waters …

- But it will also consist of narrow paths that lead us through valleys and rough terrain

Therefore, we need to know How To Face the Days Ahead

We’ve already looked at -

- ***“The LORD”*** being with us

- ***“The LORD*** being ***our Shepherd”***

Today, I want to think of how the Days Ahead can be

***“Happy Trails for You”***

In the first message we briefly noticed the words in **v. 1b –**

***“I shall not want”***

Today I want to dwell on that phrase specifically …

I want to think of how the Trails Ahead can be a Happy Trail

The word ***“want”*** speaks of *lacking something …*

… Thereby producing a need in our life

But David says, ***“I shall not want”***

In this little phrase we see …

- He was determined not to Want

- He knew God would never allow him to Want

- He is testifying that he was Not in Want

- He is declaring that he has, in life, all he Wants

- He is perfectly content, satisfied, and happy

It was indeed, *Happy Trails for David*

How can it be Happy Trails for Us?

Let’s pray and Find out

**~~~Prayer~~~**

First, let’s look at -

**I. THE “LIFE” OF HAPPINESS**

(2 things: The Reality and the Vitality)

People (no doubt) want to be Happy

No one wants to be Miserable and Discontented

(Unless you are some kind of Scrooge)

To be able to say, ***“I shall not want”*** is Mankind’s greatest quest

To be Happy is what we Look for, Long for, and Live for

David (in his statement) tells us, WE CAN be Happy

**A. The ‘Reality’ of a Happy Life**

In the words, ***“I shall not want”*** we see …

That Happiness is … Possible and Obtainable

It’s not just Wishful Thinking

It can be a Reality

Life does not have to be one of ***“want”***

If there is one thing people Want, it is not to be in Want

The Reality is - We can be Satisfied and Content

**1.** Let’s look at the Testimony of Others who have already Experienced this Reality

- Fanny Crosby -

Oftentimes we have been blessed by her great hymns

Blind from six weeks old, before she died at the age of 95, she had composed thousands of hymns, many which remain favorites today

I found this testimony in her biography

She wrote this hymn at the age of eight

Listen carefully – *“O what a happy soul am I! Although I cannot see. I am resolved in this world Contented I will be; How many blessings I enjoy. That other people don’t! To weep and sigh because I’m blind, I cannot, and I won’t”*

Happy! Contented! Enjoying life!

That was the testimony of an 8-year old blind girl

Even at a young age she had learned the Reality of a Life of Happiness

- The Apostle Paul - …

Gave this testimony in **Phil. 4:11** –

***“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content”***

Paul was not saying he had it easy

But rather, in every situation he had Learned to be Content

He was able to say, like David ***“I shall not want”***

As a matter-of-fact he probably learned this from David’s **23rd Psalm**

They had discovered The Reality of a Life of Happiness

**2.** The Reality is, that Happiness is not based on something happening

People often say things like …

- *“If only this were different”*

*- “If this hadn’t happened”*

- *“If I only had this or that I would be happy”*

- *“If I were rich, I would be happy”*

- *“If I could get that promotion I would be happy”*

- *“If I were only married I would be happy”*

**Humor:** That reminds me of a little girl that attended her first wedding.  She whispered to her mother, “Why is the bride dressed in white?” The mother said, “Because white is the color of happiness and today is the happiest day of her life.” The little girl thought about this for a moment and then said, “So, why is the groom wearing black?”

**Quote:** Vance Havner once said, *“The average Sunday morning congregation appears as if it has gathered to mourn a defeat rather than celebrate a victory. Too many seem to be enduring their salvation, instead of enjoying it”*

We need to remind ourselves that we’ve not been called to a Funeral, but to a Feast

We don’t have to face life *“sad-faced”*

The Reality is, we can have a Happy Life

People who have gone on before us have proved it

**That’s the ‘Reality’ of a Happy Life**

Furthermore, David, in his statement, speaks of -

**B. The ‘Vitality’ of a Happy Life**

When we say something is Vital, we are saying that something is Extremely Important

When I use the word Vitality, I’m referring to Durability

The ability to Live and Grow despite the Circumstances

In **23rd Psalm** we see a Journey from Earth to Glory

This Journey is a mixture of Good and Bad

David describes this Mixture

Green Pastures and Still Waters … but also …

Valleys filled with Evil and Death

He declares that Being Happy is the Secret to Facing Whatever Life Brings

When the Going gets Tuff, the Tuff get Going

It’s easy to be Happy when we are lying in green pastures and drinking from still waters

It’s another thing to be happy when we are in the valley

Yet, learning to be happy in the hard times as well as the good times is Vital to our Journey

Being Happy is the Key to Facing the Days that are Ahead with Strength and Victory

George Muller, was a man in poor physical health

Yet at the age of 70 he started an Evangelistic campaign

For the next 17 years, he traveled an equivalent of eight times around the world …

… While continuing to carry much of the responsibilities of the orphanages

He did this well into his 90’s

As a young man, Muller’s frequent and serious illness, made many feel that he would die early

Yet at age 92, he said - *“I have been able, every day and all the day, to work, and with that ease as seventy years ago”*

He ascribed his Marvelous Preservation to 3 things -

- *The exercising himself to have always a conscience void of offense, both toward God and toward men*

(a statement based on **Acts 24:16**)

- *To the love he felt for the Scriptures and the constant recuperative power they exercised upon his whole being*

**Proverbs 4:20-22 – *“My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings”***

***“Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart” “For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh”***

- *To the happiness he felt in God, and His work, which relieved him of all anxiety and needless wear and tear in his labors*

Did you notice carefully what Mr. Muller said?

One of the reasons he felt that he had lived as long as he did, and was able to do all he did,

Was because of the Happiness he Experienced in Life

He had been able to say, ***“I shall not want”***

The ability to do so, had been a Vital Factor

I found this statement in the book, *Happiness is a Choice by* Frank Minirth and Paul Meir

It states that about every 20 minutes, someone in the U.S. commits suicide

Several years ago, the *New York Times* estimated that about 5 million people living in America had tried to kill themselves

No doubt many of those referred to in these figures are people that were just downright unhappy

Their lack of happiness left them unable and unequipped to face what life had brought their way

What I am saying is; A Life of Happiness is the Secret to Facing the Days Ahead

Can you say with David - ***“I shall not want!”***

**THE “LIFE” OF HAPPINESS**

Yet, in spite of the Reality and Vitality of a Life of Happiness

There are So Many who are Not Enjoying such a Life

That Leads me to my 2nd thought

And that is -

**II. THE “LACK” OF HAPPINESS**

In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson declared that all people …

*“are endowed, by their Creator, with certain inalienable rights”*

What are those inalienable rights of which Jefferson wrote?

Inalienable – means *impossible to take away*

They are the right to Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness

A foundational truth of the American way of life …

Is the freedom to pursue that which will make us happy

Yet, with all the opportunity to pursue happiness

It seems that so few are anything but happy

It seems that in many cases, there is -

**A. The ‘Futile Search’ for Happiness**

1. The World’s Unhappiness

- Dennis Wholey, author of *Are You Happy* reported that according to expert opinion, perhaps only 20% of Americans are happy

- One report stated - *“The good news is that most people will be better off in the next millennium. The bad news is that we are all more miserable now”*

- In an article from the Los Angeles Times entitled, *It’s a Juggle Out There,* the question is asked, *“The world as we knew it has changed forever, and the American Century looks to conclude with a huge party. But if we are so rich, how come we're not happy?”*

- Tom Smith of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago stated that Job Satisfaction, Financial Satisfaction and Overall Happiness are all lower now than the average of the past 20 years

- In one article I read, it spoke of the “unhappiness epidemic”

**2.** Consumed with the Pursuit of Things

We are a generation that is always after something bigger, faster, thinner, and nicer

We are a generation that has more available to us, to make us happier than any other generation …

Yet we have become the generation dubbed with an “unhappiness epidemic”

**3.** You could say that the best of times have been the worst of times

In our frantic pursuit of happiness we are only that much more unhappy

To paraphrase Ronald Regan’s famous question,

*“Are we better off than we were 40 years ago?”*

Had you & I fallen asleep in 1960 and awakened today, you’d awake to a …

Doubled divorce rate, Tripled teen suicide, Quadrupled rate of reported violent crime, Quintupled prison population, Sextupled percent of babies born to unmarried parents, Sevenfold increase in cohabitation, Soaring rates of depression—ten times the pre-WWII level by one estimate

**4.** There is not much that Al Gore says that I agree with

But he did say one thing that hits the nail on the head: *“The accumulation of material goods is at an all-time high, but so is the number of people who feel emptiness in their lives.”*

**5.** An article in *Christianity Today* by David Meyers

Was Titled, *“Wanting More in an Age of Plenty”*

The subtitle was, *“Our wallets are fat, but our souls are empty”*

In that article, Meyers writes, *“The Paradox of Our Time in History is that we spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy it less”*

I don’t know about you, but it would seem that our Pursuit of Happiness is Futile

Our Pursuit of Happiness has been like chasing the proverbial carrot

We can never quite reach it!

**The ‘Futile Search’ for Happiness**

Why is that?

Let me say that it has been because we have sought happiness in -

**B. The ‘False Sources’ of Happiness (3 things)**

Dr. Michael Smith said, *“Western men are richer, healthier, and better educated than ever before, And yet—as we nibble our ‘happy meals’ or sip our ‘happy hour’ drinks—happiness itself seems hard to find”*

Let look at some quotes about the 3 False Sources of Happiness

**1. P**ossessions

The reason our search for happiness has been in vain

Is because we have been searching for happiness in all the wrong places

We have been led to believe that happiness comes first off, from Possessions

- 3 out of 4 college students now consider it *“very important”* or *“essential”* that they become “*very well off financially”*

A Princeton sociologist stated that 84% of Americans wished they had more money, and 78% said it was *‘very or fairly important’* to have *‘a beautiful home, a new car and other nice things’*

- A Lexus Ad proclaimed, *“Whoever said money can’t buy happiness isn’t spending it right”*

Many think, that if they had more, or were wealthy, they would be happy

But is that true?

- A surveyed of 800 college alumni with “Yuppie values” (those who preferred a high income, occupational success, and prestige over anything else) were twice as likely as their former classmates to describe themselves as *“fairly”* or *“very”* unhappy

If you want to know if riches will make you happy, the best thing to do is ask the people who are rich

They would tell you otherwise

- Jay Gould, an American millionaire, when dying said, *“I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth”*

- In an article from the Atlanta Business Chronicle told how lottery winners often wind up wishing they hadn’t been so “lucky”

Why? Because the sudden wealth they found only opened the door to unimaginable stress and unhappiness

- J. D. Rockefeller, Sr. said, *“The poorest man I know is the man who has nothing but money, and certainly some of the wealthiest men I have known had very little money”*

- Wallace Johnson, one of the co-founders of Holiday Inn International said, *“When one has money, he realizes that is not where life’s meaning is found”*

**2.** Popularity

Yes, for many, they feel the way to be happy is to be rich

Yet there are those who think that popularity and fame will bring them happiness

We watch the Hollywood personalities and think, *“If I could be like her or him, then I would really be happy”*

The truth is, some of the most miserable, unfulfilled, and unhappy people in the world are the Hollywood crowd

Those who have fame and popularity have not found it a source for happiness

- At the peak of her career, Christ Evert Lloyd, with 146 tennis championships behind her and married to John Lloyd said, *“We get into a rut. We play tennis, we go to a movie, we watch TV, but I kept saying, ‘John, there has to be more’”*

- Elvis Presley, six weeks before he died, was asked by a reporter, *“Elvis, when you first started playing music, you said you wanted to be rich, famous, and happy. Are you happy?”* Elvis replied, *“I’m lonely as expletive”*

**3.** Pleasure

There are those who think that pleasure will make them happy

- Lord Chesterton said, *“I have run the silly rounds of pleasure, and by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose”*

What does all this say to us?

They all testify that trying to find happiness in possessions, popularity, or pleasure is fledging

They are all false sources of happiness

Understanding this,

Where can Real Happiness be Found?

Notice with me lastly, not only -

**THE “LIFE” OF HAPPINESS**

**THE “LACK” OF HAPPINESS**

**III. THE “LORD” OF HAPPINESS**

If you want to be Happy then ask someone who is genuinely Happy

Ask them the Secret to their Happiness

David has declared that he is a Happy and Contented …

… So let’s ask him what the Secret of his Happiness is

*“David, you tell us that you are not in want. Why is that? Please tell us your secret”*

He answers, ***“The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not want”***

Let’s break his answer down and see what his Secret and Source for Happiness is

First, we see -

## A. The ‘Relationship He Declared’

David says, **“*The Lord is my Shepherd”***

David declares that he has a personal relationship with the Lord

The LORD is both a Saviour and Shepherd to David

As Saviour, David has a relationship with the LORD …

… Found in the Forgiveness of his sin

**Psalm 32:1 – *“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered”***

**Psalm 85:2 – *“Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin”***

As Shepherd, the LORD has a relationship with David

**John 10:14, 15 – *“I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine”  
“As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep”***

David is saying the Lord is his Shepherd

And the Lord is saying that David is one of His sheep

His words are words of Certainty / Conviction

Conviction - *a complete confidence in the truth of something or an expected outcome*

The Lord—is—my—Shepherd

Do you have that assurance today that you have a relationship with the Lord?

Is He your Saviour and Shepherd?

**Song:** Are you able to sing with Fanny Crosby: *“Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation, purchase of God, Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood”*

What is that Assurance based on?

Before a person can ever talk or think about being happy or experience Happiness,

They first must be able to say, ***“The LORD is my Shepherd”***

Why? Notice that David not only speaks with words of Certainty /Conviction

In …

## The ‘Relationship He Declared’

But also with *Contentment*

For we see -

**B. The ‘Result He Described’**

What is the result of this relationship with the Lord?

David says, ***“The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not want”***

He attributes his happiness and contentment to his relationship with the Lord

I want you to understand that there will never be and can never be real happiness without the Lord

Jesus and Jesus alone is the real source of genuine joy and happiness

Ill. a Gallup poll was taken of representative groups of people to ascertain which were the happiest. He found that the happiest people are those who have a real religious experience.

DO YOU WANT TO BE HAPPY?

The secrets to that Happiness is Jesus!!

Without Him there can be no Happiness,

But with Him you can face all the days that are ahead with happiness

**CONCLUSION**

If you were to go to the Roy Rogers web page (royrogers.com) you will find an alternate verse to Dale Evans song, “Happy Trails”

The alternate verse goes like this:

Happy trails to you, it’s great to say “hello”

And to share with you the trail we’ve come to know

It started on the day that we met Jesus,

He came into our hearts and then He freed us.

For a life that’s true, a happy trail to you.

If Jesus is your Saviour and Shepherd,

You can be certain that there will be …

…Happy Trails for you!

**THE “LIFE” OF HAPPINESS**

**THE “LACK” OF HAPPINESS**

**THE “LORD” OF HAPPINESS**