

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

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There is nothing more human than the pursuit of happiness, nothing comes more naturally to us.

- ❖ We have the sense that life without it is cruel, and that freedom without happiness is just an illusion.
- ❖ Of course, just because pursuing happiness comes naturally doesn't mean that catching it does.
- ❖ So what better way for Jesus to lay the foundation for following him than telling us how to be happy?

The struggles we have with being truly happy come from not knowing what happiness really is.

- ❖ It's easy for us to fall into using the world's formula, which means trying to find the right combination of wealth, fame, power, physical and mental health, pleasure, and calmness of mind.
- ❖ Unfortunately it's often chasing these standards or trying to maintain them that can rob us of the joy and peace we already have!

What would have made Jesus' message so compelling to the crowds following him is how extremely happy he himself would have been.

- ❖ He would exuded the joy, peace, and interior freedom that all of us long for, but without being bound by those other worldly standards.
- ❖ So even if you didn't always get exactly what he meant, you would had to have thought, "This guy knows what he's talking about. He knows what heaven is like. He knows and lives the blessedness that I've only dreamed about. I have to find out where that comes from."

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So where does it come from? Jesus is giving us the program for exactly that.

- ❖ Being poor in spirit, mourning our sins and the selfishness, giving up our desire for control and patiently waiting on God give us freedom.
- ❖ With that freedom we hunger and thirst after what's truly best for us, we can show mercy instead of grabbing for power.
- ❖ We can know the love of God that comes from seeing as he sees and single-mindedly pursuing his will in our lives and the lives of those around us.

Most of all, these allow us to find happiness because they allow us to find Jesus.

- ❖ They're the portrait of who he is and how he loves us.
- ❖ So consider – which of these are most challenging to the way you live your life?