

Hopewell ARP Midweek Sermon
Wednesday, September 25, 2024

Proverbs 3:13–18

13 Happy is the man who finds wisdom,
And the man who gains understanding;
14 For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver,
And her gain than fine gold.
15 She is more precious than rubies,
And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her.
16 Length of days is in her right hand,
In her left hand riches and honor.
17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
And all her paths are peace.
18 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,
And happy are all who retain her.

The Secret to Happiness

Main idea: Happiness comes by wisdom, because wisdom is knowing God in all your ways.

Introduction: Do you want to be happy? Are you happy? Maybe the problem is that you don't know what happiness is or how happiness comes.

1. The Process of Happiness (v13, 18).

- a. Happiness through finding/gaining wisdom (v13) by the inclining of the ear; and through retaining/clinging (v18b) by the applying of the heart. cf. 2:2
- b. You don't get happiness by trying to be happy or by going after what your heart naturally craves. You get happiness by learning from God's Word that God Himself is the true happiness and then employing that Word in dependence upon Him and living by that Word in desire of Him.
- c. Find His Word! (Find Him!) Hang onto His Word! (Hang onto Him!) Or rather, come to know His hanging onto you!

2. The Possessions of Happiness (v14–16).

- a. Wisdom obtains possessions that silver and gold cannot obtain (v14).
- b. Wisdom itself, God's wisdom through God's Word, has an inherent value in Him (v15a). If you are wise, then you already enjoy the Word above earthly treasure.
- c. Length of days (v16a). In this life, generally. In the next, incomparably, for all.
- d. Riches and honor (v16b). In this life, generally. In the next, incomparably, for all.
- e. Would you be free from craving possessions? Gain "Ps 73 contentment" via attending upon and clinging to God's wisdom.

3. The Paths of Happiness (v17–18a).

- a. Wisdom takes you through the straight paths that are in themselves pleasant (v17a).

- b. Wisdom takes you through the straight paths that are in themselves peace (v17b).
- c. Wisdom assures you that have your life in and from the Lord Himself (v18a).
- d. Wisdom isn't just a path that leads to pleasantness and peace, but a path that is itself pleasant and peaceful. Walk by that Word through which you experience having God Himself in Christ Himself by the Spirit Himself.

Conclusion: Behold the kindness and generosity of your God, Who invites you into such a life of happiness that comes to an “end” of never-ending, ever-increasing

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Proverbs 3 verses 13 through 18. These are the words of God. Is the man who finds wisdom? And the man who gains understanding. For her proceeds, are better than the prophets of silver. And her gain then fine. Gold. She is more precious than Ruby's. And all the things you may desire.

Cannot compare with her. Length of days is in her right hand. In her left hand riches and honor. Her way. Are ways of pleasantness. And all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take, hold of her. And happy. All who retain her.

Amen. Thus ends this reading of God's inspired and And they're into. I remember as A philosophy student. In undergrad, studying the Greek philosophers, especially Um, a stream of Socrates Plato Aristotle. Where happiness? They concluded because they did not know God. They concluded that happiness is the highest good because everything else you sought you sought in order to be happy.

And man desires to be happy, we were created to be happy. Who created to be happy because God is happy in himself. He refers to himself in scripture as the ever blessed the infinitely. Happy eternally unchangeably. Happy got Indeed, not that. We would want to mess with our catechism, but it would not be.

That's all inaccurate to say that God is infinite Eternal and unchangeable, in his blessedness, in his happiness, in his Joy within himself. And so he has created us as we have been hearing and thinking really in almost every sermon Uh, throughout these seven and a half years or so together.

But even More specifically recently in the fathers knowing the son and the Sun knowing the father and the Delight that is within the godhead among the persons of the godhead. Joy into which the Lord Jesus brings us. And praise God. This is then the answer to that desire. That even those Greek philosophers knew every man ultimately has This is a great help for you.

It's Almost like a cheat code for evangelism everyone. You speak to wants to be happy. And so, when I ask rhetorically do you want to be happy? I know that the answer is yes. Now, we do get corrupted, and Our corruption is, is often. Internally inconsistent and insane that there are some people that derive pleasure from feeling conscientiously miserable, they're not happy unless On last day and everyone around them are miserable.

But the answer do you want to be? Happy is yes. But then there's the question. Are you happy? Are you happy? Do you live in an awareness? Of being blessed. Do you Rejoice always? As the Lord, Jesus rejoices always, as he by his Spirit through his Apostle commands us to Rejoice, always And if the answer to that, Are you happy?

Is no. Not as much as I'd like to be or maybe perhaps even not as much as I ought to be. Then, perhaps the problem is, That you still don't quite know what happiness is. You have an incorrect definition or idea of it. And therefore, you do not know how happiness comes.

Well, in our, passage this evening, in these six verses in Proverbs chapter 3, We learn to a large extent. What happiness is precisely by how happiness comes And so, We will. We will start to think about that first looking at the bookends of the passage in verse 13 and 18, where you find the word in our translation, happy or blessed.

As it's quite often, translated in the scripture in verse 13. And then the last part of Verse 18, how is it that we become happy, the process of happiness and the process of Happiness. Of course, tells us what the substance is, because the, how of Happiness tells us what the whom of happiness is.

And so, that's the first thing, we'll consider this evening, the process of Happiness. And the second thing, then the possessions Happiness itself. Of course, being first, and foremost, a whom, and he would be the great possession, but he doesn't leave us quote unquote, with only himself as if himself would be something to say only about since he is greater than all other things taken together.

But we discover, when we consider the possessions of happiness in verses 14 through 16, that all other things is precisely what he gives us in, addition to himself. Praise God. And so, we'll consider first the process of Happiness, verse 13, and 18, and then the possessions of Happiness verses 14 through 16.

And then the paths. Of Happiness verse 17 through. And the first part of Verse 18 discovering that even as the Lord brings us to a more perfect knowledge of him and love for him and Delight in him even as he grows Us by the grace of Christ and by the knowing of Christ, even as he brings us along this path, that ends in perfect and everlasting blessedness in.

God, the path itself is Pleasant So, he has as it were thought of everything. Uh, like a Who comes to into her husband's home and he has gone out of his way to attend to everything that could be thought of for her. For her good and for her enjoyment and for her thriving.

Rejoicing then. As she discovers. Uh, how he has thought of everything for her. How much more? By the end, we hope of our consideration of God's word tonight. Uh we will find that he has thought of everything first, then the process of Happiness. There are two main parts in this process of happiness, and verse 13.

Happy is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding. So there's this obtaining, there's this obtaining of wisdom and understanding That is the first part here of the process of Happiness, and this, obtaining, and of wisdom and understanding this finding and gaining, of course, is by way of inclining our ear.

As we look at verse 13, we'll remember back to chapter 2 and verse 2 and the first part Chapter 2 verse 2 corresponds. Well, to verse 13 in our passage this evening but then the second part of chapter 2 and verse 2 corresponds, well to the last part of Verse 18 in our passage this evening and so Have the obtaining of the wisdom, the attending the inclining, our

ear, to God's word, finding it, wherever he has, provided it for us and devoting ourselves to obtaining.

It giving ourselves to Listening and thinking, and meditating upon and placing our thoughts and our feelings. And our desires under The word of God. And so this finding and obtaining, but then in verse 18b happy are all who retain her. And it's An interesting translation returning, her who hold on to her.

Like a child, whose dad is carrying the little. Toddler up the ladder. And if the child was on their own, they wouldn't even be able to stretch across the rungs, and they're so high up and they, they do their best to retain their father. It's probably not the way we would describe it clinging holding fast to The wisdom of God, happy.

Um, happy are all who hold fast to the wisdom of God and this corresponds to that second part of chapter 2 and verse two, apply your heart to understanding Don't just attend upon God's word. Taking the advantage of your opportunities, for secret time in his word and for family Worship in his word and public worship in his word.

And then other times that you have for discussion with others, whether in your family, or your church, family or meditation before, God, as, as he gives you good occasion to do. So, in his Providence, don't just attend upon his word. Your heart to it, have your thoughts, and your affections, and your choices shaped by his word, which is to say cling to wisdom cling to wisdom.

Don't let go. Cling to God's giving himself to you making himself known to you, instructing, you from his very own self. You see. When we look at the, how of Happiness, we realize you don't get happiness by trying to be happy. You don't get happiness by trying to be happy if you do that, you won't listen to wisdom.

You'll listen to yourself, you'll go after whatever it is that your inclinations, crave. And then rather than finding and obtaining, by Inclining your ear to wisdom. You will never find. You will never gain. And rather than applying your heart so that you hold fast or cling to wisdom. Uh, you will instead go after the desires.

Of your heart. We'll come back to thinking about that. When we get to verse 15, so you don't get happiness. By trying to be happy. You get happiness by learning from God's word. And that's how the, how of wisdom teaches us or sorry the how of Happiness teaches us the whom of Happiness.

For when we, when we incline our ears to wisdom, when we apply our heart or cling to wisdom? What is it that we obtain? And, of course it's a what question with whom answer? You remember, back in chapter 2, That this inclining and applying or this finding and holding fast.

Concluded in verse 5, with then you will understand the fear of Yahweh And find the knowledge. Or the knowing of God. This is that wisdom that we have just heard about in the verses leading up to our portion. This evening trust in Yahweh with all your heart. And lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways.

Him in all your ways, know him. And so we get happiness by learning from God's word in the first place. What true happiness is By the spirit blessing, his word to us. So that the scales fall from our eyes. And we realize that we were made to find our happiness in our creator.

And that up until the point that he gives us life and Faith, we hold him at arm's length and seek happiness in creatures instead of the Creator. And for this not only is the wrath of God revealed against all unrighteousness, and ungodliness of men, but men, find themselves miserable.

Attempting to obtain a happiness, and a blessedness and created things. That can only come. And our creator himself. So you get happiness by learning from God's word that God himself is the true happiness. And then employing that word or rather attending to that word as he employs it employing that word Independence upon him.

And living by his word. In desire of him. And so, The first part of our lesson, in happiness, this evening gives us the how and therefore the whom the process of Happiness. Find wisdom and hold fast to it. And by wisdom, we don't mean the perplexing riddles. Of a withered man.

On top of a mountain somewhere. We mean, God's communication of himself in his word by his son, by his Spirit, by the scriptures, which he has given us. As the means. And so find his word and by his word, find him. And cling to hang on, to hold fast to his word.

And by doing so, hold fast to him. Or rather. Come to know as I'm sure you suspected in our illustration earlier. It is not the power of the toddler. Who? Yes, he is. Holding fast to his father. That is keeping him attached. But it is his father. Holding him fast.

Now, praise God. The analogy breaks down. Because your father, By the life and virtue of his son, applied to you, by the power of His Spirit. He gives you your own holding fast. As a method does it means an instrument by which he holds you fast. So first, there's the process of happiness, and then the possessions of Happiness, we've already heard the first great possession of Happiness that we would have God himself.

The ever blessed God, and we find our own blessedness. Then in him. But to Incomparable, gift of himself to which all other things put together. Could not compare, he adds, All other things. Verse 14. For her proceeds, are better than the prophets of silver and her gain then fine gold.

Which is to say, Wisdom gets you things. That money could never get you. Wisdom gets you with silver. Cannot obtain wisdom. Gets you. What gold cannot obtain? This of course is first of all, wisdom itself. The word of God. The communication of what is true and what is right?

Who God is, what this world is, where it came from the purposes of it, how to live in it? Who we are, as his creatures made in His image. What that means for what we are supposed to do with this world, that he has made. But to which We compare as those made in His Image and therefore more precious among the creatures than any other creature.

And what that means for how you treat your neighbor, and what that means for, what you do with your Earthly possessions, your material Treasures, Wisdom itself is something that silver and gold cannot buy. And so you have him, and you have his wisdom. Even as verse 15 begins, she is more precious than rubies.

You could possibly pile up, enough, silver and enough gold. That someone would hand over rubies to you. But there is no amount of silver and no amount of gold that you could pile up with which to obtain the knowledge of God. The communication of himself to you the communication of his mind.

You his fatherly instruction to you his wisdom by itself is more than all the silver and all the gold and Solomon's Kingdom. Obtain. She is more precious than rubies. And then there's Not a

quantitative comparison. Um, in the rest of verse 15. But a qualitative comparison, or maybe we would use this word now, a Quantum comparison.

All the things you may desire. Cannot compare with her. All the, it's not just, That wisdom gets you more than silver or gold can. It's that wisdom. Gives you as it. A desire transplant. We use the word Joy transplant in a sermon, not too long ago, it gives you a desire transplant because we're Desiring the wrong things.

Here are so many go after all sorts of things in their hearts. And if you ask yourself, honestly, what have I been treating? As if it would make me happy. And you think about that in your thoughts and your desires? And you come up on the list. Verse 15 now comes and says, take everything that you think would make you happy.

That God's word hasn't told you is where happiness comes from? Even if you could get all of it, You would not be happy. Because everything that you desire. Apart from God, apart from Grace. Apart from that, which his word tells us to desire. Will not satisfy or will not compare.

To wisdom itself and what she gets for us and what does she get for us? Well, she gets for us things that the world is going after but doesn't know how to obtain. Length of days. And we have in the history and not all entirely history, a little bit of Mythology.

In our own land, the search for the Fountain of Youth. Uh, we invent all sorts of nonsense in the the mythology and imaginations of our culture like Lazarus pits, and we even play video games in which you get unlimited lives and wish that we could have something similar. In real life as it were, Length of days.

So many who go after Cosmetic surgery, and pharmaceutical methods, those who spend their lives. Not just trying to be fit and healthy and useful, but as youthful as they possibly can, we are obsessed with it. And yet you cannot by all of your worrying. By all of your striving.

Actually add a day. To your life. Now God has so ordered his world that obedience to him. Generally speaking does things like result. And being a good Steward of your body. And a good Steward of your time. And the mental and emotional well-being, that comes with knowing him and depending upon him and the healthy relationships that ordinarily come from Godly character and conduct towards others.

So, that there is a real sense that He has given obedience to his word and holy living and instrumental consequence. Generally, speaking of length of days, And yet, there are many. Who belonged to him, who trust in him and Begin by Grace, to walk with him, who are cut down in the flower of their youth.

Whether by, Providence, that we cannot explain or when Providence uses a man like pilate. You know, whether it's the mixing of the blood of the Christian with their sacrifices, by a tyrant, or a tower falling, upon them, And history is full of those things. But I ask you. Have those Believers.

Who exited this world early? Have they failed to obtain length of days? Is that the ultimate length of days? That God has promised us. Yes. We want to honor our father, and our mother because instrumentally speaking and it's, there's a promise attached and generally speaking in this life, even it's a true promise.

Even for this world, for this life, our days will be long. We will dwell happily in the land that God has given us here for a long time. But that is not the ultimate length of days. The ultimate

length of days. Belongs not to the first Adam in whom we died and so our days have been cut short.

As short as 900, some odd years at first. And now, as short as a hundred some odd years, No. The length of days that wisdom gives us. As the length of days that is in the last atom. Unending days. On ending days, in a new heavens and a new Earth.

Length of days is in her right hand in her left hand riches and honor. Again, generally speaking. Hard. Work self-control. Not living a lavish and self-indulgent life. Generosity among the people. This is a recipe for Prosperity for And kindness and the guarding of one another's names, and the ninth commandment, and the protection of one another's, marriages and the seventh commandment, and the respect for one another.

Lives and dignity in the sixth, commandment. This is a recipe for honor for How blessed the man in this life with riches and honor genuine riches and genuine honor. And how blessed the society in this life where God's word is followed and obeyed. That is true. And yet, how often?

Believers have been. Reviled and despised, not honored. And have ended up being among the poorest of the culture, in which they were in because they are abused and robbed and taken advantage of. Have they failed to receive? The riches and honor. That God gives. Together with Christ. Of course, not.

For whatever the level of riches and level of Honor, he gives us to obtain and enjoy in this world, through the instrumentality of following his word. The wealthiest and most honored Christian in this world has not received the smallest part. Of that riches and that honor. That shall be his in the next.

And those Christians who have been least in this world. Will be greatest of all. And so there here is length of days. And riches. And honor. And they are not far off. This is not an epic. No, as God gives us. Himself and his wisdom. Which presents himself to us in his son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

We find that the length of days and the riches and the honor are quite literally ready to hand. Right at hand. The length of days in her right hand. The riches and honor in her left hand. And so, if we have him, We may know for sure that we have everything else.

He who did not spare his own son. But gave him up for us all. How will he not also together with him freely? Give us all things. Is he not working all things together? For good, for those whom he has called, According to his purpose and therefore whom he has made to begin loving him.

And they say, oh things are working together for my good because in all things I have him whom I love. And so, we don't need to go after. Things and riches and honor and length of days in the same way that the worldling does When the Corinthians were doing so did not the Apostle come and say, don't, you know, That everything is already yours.

Because you belong to Christ. And Christ belongs to God. Why strive against one another? As if there's a zero sum limited quantity of blessing in God's Providence, If you have God himself, Then you are sure to have All things. Together with him. Would you be free from craving possessions?

Then gain that Psalm 73 contentment. Where you attend, upon God and his word and like asaph, you enter and you behold his glory and you say, I am continually with you, you guide

me by that. You you guide me by your counsel. You take me by the hand. Sorry those are opposite.

You take me by the hand, you guide me by your counsel and afterward you will receive me into glory. Whom have I in heaven, but you. And what else could I desire on Earth besides you? And you will find that contentment through this attending upon and clinging to God himself by attending upon and clinging to his wisdom.

But you won't have only him. You will have him and everything else. That the highest Heaven contains. And the new Heavens contain, you will have him and every other good thing. All of that perfect goodness with which the new Earth is filled. The possessions of Happiness. We have the process of happiness, and then the possessions of happiness, and finally, the paths of Happiness Now this is not surprising because we've already been identifying God himself as the blessedness that wisdom gives us.

That Bible wisdom gives us. When we find him, when we have the fear of the Lord as The beginning of wisdom and of understanding. But that means, then that This blessedness, this happiness isn't merely something that we find at the end of a path that wisdom puts us upon But rather that the whole way.

Is one of every increasing pleasantness. And peace. Verse 17. And the first part of Verse 18, her ways are ways of pleasantness Wisdom takes you through those straight paths. If you in all your ways, know him, he straightens your paths. You remember from verse 6 of this chapter Well, so wisdom takes you through straight paths that are in themselves Pleasant.

Wisdom takes you through straight paths. Second part of verse 17 that are in themselves, peace. For the Peace of the one who has God. And who is living according to his word. Is not interrupted or rather, not disrupted. By any of the turmoil that comes in this world or from this life.

And therefore it's not just that if by this walking with him, according to his word and having him in Christ. If if we do this then one day we will end up at blessedness and blessedness one day. We will end up at peace. No, we will have pleasantness all along the way that can't be disrupted or taken away by circumstance.

We'll have peace with him as those have been reconciled to God. And we know that God is exerting all that he is and all that he does for our sakes for our good for air, no longer his enemies. But have been reconciled by the blood of his son. And indeed have been made not just slaves in his household, which is a High status and position and not just subjects in his kingdom, but children.

Joint errors. With the Lord Jesus Christ. And we will know that just as surely as everything that happens is for the glory of God and for the glory of Christ. So everything that happens is for the good of us. Who have got? In Christ. Such is the Peace of the path.

Of wisdom. Indeed, wisdom. Is like having access to the Tree of Life once more. In all the Old Testaments, you only have the Tree of Life appearing in Genesis 2, Genesis 3. And here, it appears again in glory, it was a sacramental tree. It was not a magic tree with magic fruit that you could somehow get eternal life from Uh, eternal life.

It was never merely life of unlimited duration. It is life in God, himself in Fellowship with God himself. And so the the Tree of Life, from which they were permitted to eat, until they fell had sacramental value to them. It was something provided to Adam and his wife between them and the Lord reminding them of the blessedness of the life that they have in him.

And when man fell, God placed the angels and the sword to guard the way to the Tree of Life. Not to guard it, so that no man could ever eat from it again. If so, then the scheme would fail at the end of the Book of Revelation. But rather to keep it for men, whom the Lord had already declared himself to be redeeming by the coming of Christ.

Who had crushed the Serpent's head? Well one day Lord willing, one day, Lord willing. You and I who belong to him by faith in Jesus Christ will actually eat again of the Tree of Life. And whatever. Odd inquiries. We've had in our mind as to what kind of fruit and how it might taste.

Do you know what it tastes like? It tastes like, Fellowship with God. In the Lord, Jesus Christ. By his holy. And the certainty. That God is your life and your blessedness. Forever and ever. So we don't actually have to wait. To eat of the fruit. I'm looking forward to it.

But here in Proverbs 3, he says Bible wisdom. Fellowship with God from his word, which proclaims Christ to us. And gives us to have God as our blessedness in Christ. Even now Bible wisdom. Is a tree of life. To those who take, hold of her. Because walking this way with the Lord, Assures, you signifies to you.

Makes you to test. That God who owed, you wrath? Due to your enmity against him. Has put it on his son instead. And destroyed it in his son instead. So that you might have. And blessedness in him. She is a tree of. To those who take, hold of her.

And you are able then as one who walks by Bible, wisdom through your life, To pluck from the tree. All along the way. And enjoy. That you belong to God. And he belongs to you. And his Banner over you is love. And he is giving you not just himself.

But all other things. Together with him. And so let us conclude this evening by beholding the kindness and generosity. Yea, even the wisdom of our God. Who could devise? Such a life of Happiness. And his kindness and generosity in inviting us into such a life of Happiness. And when this life of Happiness comes to its end.

We'll find that its end, its purpose, its goal. Its ultimate fulfillment is a never-ending increasing happiness. In God himself. May the Lord give you. To be happy. The way it is defined here.