

Isaiah 55:1-3a,8-13

"Where to get the real Happy Meal"

"Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink—even if you have no money! Come, take your choice of wine or milk—it's all free!² Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food that does you no good? Listen, and I will tell you where to get food that is good for the soul!

³ "Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, for the life of your soul is at stake. ...

⁸ "My thoughts are completely different from yours," says the Lord. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. ⁹ For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

¹⁰ "The rain and snow come down from the heavens and stay on the ground to water the earth. They cause the grain to grow, producing seed for the farmer and bread for the hungry. ¹¹ It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it. ¹² You will live in joy and peace. The mountains and hills will burst into song, and the trees of the field will clap their hands! ¹³ Where once there were thorns, cypress trees will grow. Where briars grew, myrtles will sprout up. This miracle will bring great honor to the Lord's name; it will be an everlasting sign of his power and love.

(pray)

John Ortberg is pastor and parent. had humor column in (prob biggest) pastoral journal.

here's something wrote --not in humor column; in a mag . (CT May 17 '93 p38-40)

When we take our children to the shrine of "the Golden Arches," they always want the same thing. If they get it, the trip is a success; if not, it is sheer misery. The odd part is that what they are after is not the food. They want the prize. The prize...is...worth maybe 10 cents; but for the moment, getting it is all that matters.

McDonald's, in a fit of marketing genius, gave [a] package of food and [this] prize a special name: the Happy Meal. You're not just buying fries, McNuggets, and a dinosaur stamp, you're buying happiness. Their advertisements have convinced my children that they have a McDonald's-shaped vacuum in their little souls: "our hearts are restless till they find their rest in a Happy Meal."

[Ortberg describes standing at counter, trying to talk them out of getting one.]

...the cry goes up, "I want a Happy Meal!" All over the restaurant, people crane their necks to look at the tightfisted, penny-pinching cheapskate of a parent who would deny a child the meal of great joy.

So I buy each child his own, and they're happy--at least, for a minute and 30 seconds. The problem with the Happy Meal is that the Happy wears off. ... No child discovers lasting happiness in one. Years later, no child says, "Remember that Happy Meal? What great joy I found there."

Ortberg goes on to pt out that when we get older, that our "Happy Meals" change their form.

we adults are bombarded all day long w msgs that tell us happiness is only one step away if we'll just use this /eat /wear /try /drive /put this in our hair.

[this is Ortberg again]

The things you can buy for...your hair alone are staggering: You can wash it, condition it, mousse it, dye it, curl it, straighten it, wax it (if it's growing where it shouldn't), and Rogaine it (if it's not growing where it should).

we Americans have gotten richer over last 50 yrs . so have been able to go for increasingly-expensive "Happy Meals."

if you sat down with a pencil and graph paper to chart the trends of American life since end of WW II, you'd have lot of arrows pointing up.

home size, cars per driver, phone calls made annually, trips taken annually...

July 6, 2006 *Washington Post* talked about trend toward luxury bathrooms. predicted Americans would spend \$22 billion on luxury bathrooms in 2006. described couples who deck out their bathrooms with every amenity --including wide-screen TVs with surround sound!

profiled one couple who upgraded bathroom w new sinks and a 9-by-4-foot shower, "a palace of iridescent glass tile, a human carwash with five shower heads, four body sprays, instant steam, a soaring skylight and portable speakers connected to a wireless iPod transmitter."

www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/05/AR2006070501682.html

none of us spend \$120,000 on our bathroom (that one included floors that are heated marble, a shower w a heated mirror, a tub that's a Jacuzzi w a plasma TV & remote. then, was toilet that comes with a control panel).

but nonetheless our bathroom surely is larger & more elaborate than what we (or our parents, or grandparents) had 50 yrs ago.

all those trends of American life the last 50 yrs --w arrows pointing up-- include not only our income & spending but also longevity, IQ scores. personal health, safety, freedom --espec for women and those handicapped. reduction of bias against minority grps .

just about every indicator has been heading upward for 2 gens ... except * **happiness.**

the number of people who say they are "very unhappy" has risen 20% since the 1950s.

and rates of depression are 10 times higher than they were 50 yrs ago.

how can that be * when we're buying all these Happy Meals!

did you know that we human beings aren't designed to work well when we fixate on gratif of our phys & emot desires? repeat : we human beings aren't designed to work well when we fixate on gratif of our phys & emot desires. our Creator didn't intend us to organize our life around finding pleasure. if he had, all those "Happy Meals" would bring us peace / joy.

didn't create us to carry long-term anger/ bitterness. thus our bodies don't hold-up-well under those emotions.
didn't intend us to be filled w worry/ anxiety. --our bodies aren't built to handle that without damage.
didn't create us engage in homosex sex --our bodies aren't arranged for that.
and didn't create us to order-our-lives around satisfying our desire for pleasure.

a human being is not "built" to thrive when pleasure is the goal of that life.

we are too adaptable . we too quickly "adjust" to new pleasures we acquire. all-too-quickly a new pleasure is no longer special. and we are bored. so we find new ones. ...which we will soon also get "used to"!

the *Wash Post* reporter said guy w the \$120,000 bathroom was rather blasé as he talked about it all. bec "This week, he and his wife were flying to the North Pole to see polar bears."

persons who organize their life around finding pleasure remain restless

when our aim is to satisfy our desires, we can find happiness for the "minute and 30 seconds."

some times longer.

--a good game-for-the-computer-or-TV can keep entertained for a whole day.

--a new car can give mild "high" for a whole week or mo.

--a new purchase we got from catalog or Mall, or new make-over or outfit, can give us a thrill/ pick-me-up.

but never for long enough.

our pleasure "set point" just adapts to the new things-we-have.

and then our toys have to be more expensive to produce the old high.

we Amers are healthier, richer, eat better, dress better, ...play more-than-ever in the history of the human race.

but we not happier. just healthier, wealthier, --w nicer hair.

several times in OT, B describes another culture :

Canaanites in land of Palestine during span of time from Abr to Moses.

among impoverished peoples w few luxury items/resources, sex is greatest pleasure most readily available.

The Canaanites: "pleasure is the highest-of-what-life-offers-us. it's our goal/ ultimate value. so any way we can get sex, any form of it, we'll enjoy."

in time of Abr , think of when 2 angels visited Lot in his home in Sodom. Gen 19. men of city not know angels. thot handsome strangers. gathered outside Lot's home. "send out so we can have sex w them." (why homosex called "sodomy.")

Leviticus 18 refers to Canaanites several times.

forbids Isr engage in homosex

v next to it: bestiality

chapt lists every extramarital relationship can think of.

people of Isr going to settle in land of Canaan. & God instructed them: Leviticus 18:26-28 *...you must not do any of these detestable things,²⁷ for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled.²⁸ And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you.*

is it only our culture that is plunging headlong into trying to find happiness from pleasure? & the Canaanite culture?

what about you and me?

how often do we recognize our self, not only our society, in this?

how often are we restlessly seeking our next exper of pleasure / purchase / pick-me-up ?

catch this:

God does not forbid his people to find & enjoy all the possible sexual exers bec a prude / kill-joy.

but bec it is a life where "can't get no -- satisfaction."

--a life of short-lived highs & constant frustration.

can give you anecdote after anecdote.

--a life where possessions, relationships, & the pleasures of life are used in way not intended .

--a life the human body-&-soul wasn't designed for.

so what are we to do?

if we are not to plunge headlong into trying to find happiness in next Happy Meal, what are we to do?

are we to purse our lips / tighten our belts & squeeze the desire for pleasure out of us?

become ascetics, or Stoics?

that is not what the B says.
God himself built these desires within us. God gave us these hungers/ thirsts.

so what do we do?

down thru centuries, has been a voice:

"Come, all you who are thirsty" - Hey, you!

You who are thirsty. Come to the "waters." --to some springs of fresh, pure water / to glistening mountainside streams.

You who are hungry. come to the market/restaurant--come "buy & eat".

oh, you don't have any money?

"you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost."

Come, (mid v2 NIV) eat what is good.

Let your soul delight in the richest of fare.

Our God calls for us to come! There is * a feast that can come w the-package called "human existence". available to everyone hearing these words.

Come!

don't have to already be rich, have resources / power . Come!

I am hungry. I am thirsty. You ...

God says "come."

Have we come to God? Have you come Have I

what does this mn to "come to God"? receive from God?

well, how do we "come" and "receive" from Dr ?

spend time w them. put self under their authority. listen . obey their instr .

do that w God!

that's way to get true happiness, "where to get real Happy Meal."

say to God, "how do you intend life to be lived?!"

obey God. do duty.

don't be thinking: "what can bring me the most pleasure? most happiness?"

but "what does God want me do?"

(& often not sure what God wants, do what common sense .

but quite often we do know . spks as read B / as pray / listen to bro/sis.)

& look at what happens when our focus is obeying God! --

are obeying the One who knows what is best for us & the universe.

so will be doing things that start good chain reactions. will find all kinds of unexpected joys --and pleasures-- as things turn out to have been wisest & best.

like the joy when sow good seed.

eg last yr Karen & I planted packet of wild flower seed.

as much fun this yr : those flowers seeded that end of garden !

as a couple sows good-"seed"-of-obeying-God in their marriage, will enjoy ...

I would hold the pleasure K & I exper in our marriage --as obeying God /seeking to serve each other-- up against any couple who just seeking to maximize pleasure.

measure the two. ours - both more steady & more intense.

I would hold the pleasure of eating a simple, hearty meal after a day of doing duty (working up appetite & need for food)

alongside the pleasure of fancy meal served in expensive restaurant.

or the pleasure of small children eating a Happy M at McDs

when it is part of a celebr of their family & their parent's love for them rather than just part of the children's "give me" attitude.

the child is still going to be basking in glow of that Happy M at end day.

as we obey God, we are living as life designed.

will exper all kinds of unsought joys / pleasures.

bec God delights to give good gifts.

God has nothing against pleasure. to contrary, has filled world w pleasures.

1 Tim 4 says he creates many good things for us to receive w thanksgiving.

"persons who organize their life around finding pleasure remain restless"

but **persons ordering their life around obeying God experience joy and peace and many unsought pleasures**

actually, think we exper more pleasure than those seeking pleasure.

seeking-a-pleasure does "a number" on it.

whereas not-expecting-pleasure enhances it.

eg. sometimes we go to a movie, expecting it to be "great." & then if only "good," disapp .

somehow unsought pleasures deliver more enjoyment.

one summer man in Caton on my mail route told me about the Amish who built a garage on his old farmhouse. described their child-like enjoyment of any unusual thing that happened. like when driving his tractor deer that came by

my hunch is that as our goal is "to get our duty done" (rather than to get pleasure) (our "duty" is love/obey God, love neighbor), then the simple pleasures that come our way unbidden are more enjoyable.

when we're seeking pleasure, when the pleasurable event happens, our reaction is just "that's what was supposed to happen." it doesn't delight us unless it is real novel or exceptional. (& then something in us automatically raises a bar within us to that new level, making it harder for us to get pleasure the next time.)

but God's way enhances our pleasure.

God has nothing against us experiencing pleasure.

it's not like going-without-some pleasure is a virtue. securing-good-things-for-others --that is the virtue. & sometimes we will go without something so we can give more to someone else. but the goal is not our-abstinence but their-happiness. justice.

the marvel of heterosexual sex is that in the very act where the husband-or-wife is seeking-to-give-the-other pleasure, they receive-it-themselves. (I think when the Creator came up w that one, shook his head & grinned!)

so the human way is to seek the pleasure, & in so doing, diminish it. God's way: seek to obey him / love those around.

& God's way is better!!

⁸ "My thoughts are completely different from yours," says the Lord. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine." ⁹ For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

v11 - my word *always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it.*

obeying God is way of hope!

often not immediate love / joy. fallen world. war zone. Jesus in obeying God / loving others suffered death on cross.

but obeying God/ following J is only way of hope. tho is war going on, one day triumph of God and his k will be fully revealed.

¹² *You will live in joy and peace. The mountains and hills will burst into song, and the trees of the field will clap their hands!* ¹³ *Where once there were thorns, cypress trees will grow. Where briars grew, myrtles will sprout up.* myrtle - low tree sometimes ten feet high, with green shining leaves, and snow-white flowers bordered with purple, "which emit a perfume more exquisite than that of the rose. --Smith's Bible Dictionary

there is a way to stop our unending & futile search for pleasure & way to receive peace & much unexpected pleasure and joy :

place our focus on loving God & serving him. & everything else falls into place.

in God we get the real Happy M . of pleasure. of love. for eternity.

¹² *You will live in joy and peace. The mountains and hills will burst into song, and the trees of the field will clap their hands!* ¹³ *...Where briars grew, myrtles will sprout up. This ...will be an everlasting sign of [the Lord's] power and love.*

stand (for closing song)

has God been challenging you begin changing something in your life

this afternoon / tomorrow morn you can take an action to change something in life.

I'm inviting you begin it right now . prayer.