

Enjoying The Home.

Text: Phil 4:4

1) What We Must Exclude

Suggested Hymns:

2) What We Must Include

621, 159, 587, 290, 588

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Philippians 4:4, ***“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Some excellent things, some of the finest things in all literature, have been said about the home.

Thus when the poet declares:

*“The pilgrim’s staff in vain,
Seeks Eden’s lovely ground,
But in home’s happy joys again,
An Eden may be found,”*¹

we respond at once to his fine sentiment so beautifully expressed and feel that he knew and enjoyed a real home, a home that was indeed a happy haven of rest and refreshment and recreation.

A singer of sweet thought advises,²

Stay, stay at home, my heart, and rest;
Home-keeping hearts are happiest;
For those that wander they know not where
Are full of trouble and full of care.
To stay at home is best.

Again we feel that a man who says this enjoyed a real and beautiful home-life.

And while Thomas Moore mentions three things found in every happy home in his famous line: *“Love, music, and religion — that is all that is left of Paradise,”* William Cowper has still more aptly and effectively said: *“Domestic happiness, is the only bliss of Paradise that has survived the Fall.”*

But, alas! we also find another strain in literature and in life. An observer of wit and humour has remarked: *“Home is the place we love best and — where we grumble the most.”* Is this fact or fiction in your case?

In order to promote the happiness of our homes, let us deal with the subject *Enjoying the Home*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. What We Must Exclude

King Solomon makes this observation about enjoying pleasure as we read in Ecclesiastes 2:24–26a, ²⁴ *Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God.* ²⁵ *For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I?* ²⁶ *For God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in His sight.*

And in Ecclesiastes 3:12–13, ¹² *I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives,* ¹³ *and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor — it is the gift of God.*

To have good health, to be energetic and fit for work, to eat the labour of one's hands in simple happiness are gifts of God beyond a doubt. We read in Psalm 128:2, ² *When you eat the labor of your hands, You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you.*

But there are dangers and temptations which we must exclude from our home when it is in this way blessed by the Lord.

In the first place, there is the danger of forgetting the Lord, our God, in the day of prosperity instead of blessing Him.³ This danger is most tellingly described by our Saviour in the parable of the Covetous Fool in Luke 12:16–21. This man said to his soul: *“Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”* Material plenty, physical prosperity, was his exclusive delight, his all-consuming pleasure.

Alas, how many have fared exactly as he did! He said to himself that *“for many years”* he should take his ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him: *“Fool! This night your soul will be required of you.”* As in the case of every human being, he had brought nothing into this world, and it was certain he could carry nothing out.⁴

And do not fail to note how Jesus refers back to Solomon’s observation in Ecclesiastes when He said that God told that fool, *“Then whose will those things be which you have provided?”* In other words *This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.*⁵

Where our treasure is, there also our heart will be,⁶ and the besetting danger in every home where health and prosperity reign is that the heart is inclined to forget God and His kingdom, which is the eternal treasure.

Secondly, closely connected with this danger is that of selfishness. With all his bountiful supply the rich fool in the Saviour’s parable makes no mention of the poor and needy. Note well the utter egotism of his heart: “I,” “I,” “my,” “I,” “I,” “my,” “I,” “my,” “my,” “I,” “my.”⁷ Eleven times his selfishness thinks of himself as No. 1, but of others not at all.

Friends, exclude this spirit of selfishness from your home. All too many homes are but embodiments of utter selfishness, self-gratification, and self-glorification; its self-centred tenants never share their enjoyments with others, especially with those who are not so fortunate.

The Bible says in 1 Peter 4:9, ⁹ *Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.* And in Romans 12:13, ¹³ *distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.*

But some people are too self-centred even to consider the matter of hospitality. And when Jesus reminds us of the best hospitality we can possibly practise,⁸ is to be hospitable to those who cannot pay us back, let us not act as if His words were not meant for Christians today.

There is need to remind ourselves of that other rich man and his attitude toward the poor beggar Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, where God gave him opportunity to do good.

But while Mr. Rich Man *“was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day”* the dogs had more sympathy for poor Lazarus than he. Never lifting up his eyes to God in heaven, who gives us richly all things to enjoy,⁹ he waited until it was too late, until he lifted them up in hell.¹⁰

By all means, enjoy your home in the true sense of the word, but exclude and ban from it the spirit of selfishness.

Thirdly, there are many homes whose happiness is threatened from another source: the demon of discontent. Instead of being content with such things as they have,¹¹ certain people rob themselves of a home happiness by worrying restlessly and covetously about the things they do not have.

No doubt you have met such people in your life. They have a home, humble perhaps as compared with others, they have health, they have food and clothing, maybe not so abundantly as others perhaps, yet far more than they or any of us, being sinners, have deserved; yet the greater part of their existence is spent in grumbling and complaining discontent.

The Bible exhorts all of us in 1 Timothy 6:8, *⁸ And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.* And it reminds us that *“godliness with contentment is great gain,”* and that *godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.*¹²

How can you be discontent when you consider that you deserve to be in hell but that the Saviour has given you heaven instead? When tempted to discontent, recall Proverbs 15:16, *¹⁶ Better is a little with the fear of the LORD, Than great treasure with trouble.*¹³

If you want to enjoy your home, keep discontent and grumbling out. Follow Jesus' marvellous teaching in Matt. 7:19-34, (the importance of foundations, building on the rock and not on the sand), and you will become thoroughly cured of these spiritual ailments, which have wrecked so many homes.

Contrast the spirit of discontent and grumbling with that of Paul's, who, although in prison and homeless, is not only happy and content, but can even write to others more fortunately situated than he, *“Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.”*¹⁴

Yes, from that prison, which could not rob him of his joy, the great apostle wrote a letter brimful of joy and rejoicing, *“as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.”*¹⁵

Fourthly, still another danger needs to be pointed out which often threatens to interfere with enjoying the home — the demon of discord, disharmony, and dissension.

How is it that tiny trivial details cause such intense arguments and real battles of the spirits in a home? How is it that insignificant matters can draw people under the same roof into a full-blown war of words, which often result in serious misunderstandings and grieved spirits?

And how often this tendency to discord and dissension asserts itself among brothers and sisters, causing a break in a family’s loving relationships!

Oh, keep dissension from your home lest it rob your home of happiness and remember the words of Psalm 133:1, *¹ Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!*

Such dissension and strife is an insult to the God of peace,¹⁶ and often ends in a house permanently divided against itself. Beware!

2. What We Must Include.

How refreshing and invigorating the admonition of Paul strikes our ears by way of contrast! *“Rejoice in the Lord always,”* at all times; *“and again I say, Rejoice.”*

If things seem difficult, the whole world is awry, the future seems discouraging, dark, gloomy, and hope delayed then take note of these three instructions given in 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18, *¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ in everything give thanks.* And why, *for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

If those three simple exhortations were always followed by everyone in the home, how happy our homes would be day in and day out! You cannot get away from the fact that to have and enjoy a real home, you must have Christ in it.

If the enjoyment of your home is to be permanent, if it is to endure in times fair and foul, you will have to be *“in the Lord.”* In other words, our Lord and Saviour will have to dwell in your heart by faith.¹⁷

And if He dwells there, abiding in your heart, by faith, you will also rejoice in the Lord always, according to the rule: ***“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”***¹⁸

Jesus at the wedding of Cana,¹⁹ was no damper upon the joys of the hosts or of the guests. He never serves as a damper, except upon such joys as are improper and forbidden by God.

As your thoughts revert to your childhood home, is it not the fellowship of that home which stands out most prominent among its enjoyments? That father and mother, sisters and brothers, were all of the same mind, of the same spirit in the Lord.

*“Two souls and one thought, two hearts and one beat”*²⁰ expresses well the unity of mind, of spirit, of heart, which produces the finest fellowship found anywhere in the wide world, the fellowship of a truly Christian home.

If St. Paul can picture the entire church at Philippi as ***“being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind,”***²¹ why should not the smaller unit in the home, the individual family, be of one mind and of one accord?

As Enoch walked with God,²² so did aged Abraham, and so did young Isaac. And the result? ***“The two of them went together.”***²³ Fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, be of one mind, of one accord, and you will all rejoice in the Lord at all times. Include this fellowship of kindred minds in your home duties, and you will enjoy your present home as preparatory to heaven’s fellowship.

While we Christians, too, have to go through the routine of daily life, while we, too, have to eat and drink and clothe ourselves, and while we, too, must seek rest for our weary body in sleep, yet how different is our attitude and our motive!

Whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do, we Christians do all to the glory of God.²⁴ Indeed, even such common every-day acts as eating and drinking we Christians do to the glory of God. We realise our dependence for physical sustenance on the Lord and Giver and Preserver of life, ***“who gives us richly all things to enjoy.”***²⁵

So ***“that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him,”*** our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁶

Hence, true enjoyment of the home that God has given us will always presuppose appreciative and grateful hearts. All that we Christians have also in our homes comes from God.

All? Yes. And how comprehensive and manifold is that word “all”! Listen and marvel! We read in 1 Corinthians 3:21–22, *For all things are yours: ²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life* [with all its glorious possibilities] *or death*, [with its gain]²⁷ *or things present or things to come* [nothing hinders, the saints’ prosperity or salvation]²⁸ — *all are yours.* ²³ *And you are Christ’s*, [hence not the property of His servants or of any one else] *and Christ is God’s.*

What more do you desire? There is nothing more. Only to see to it that as you pass through things temporal that you do not lose the things eternal.

In all your enjoyments, also in the home, be temperate, be moderate,²⁹ practising excess in nothing.

We cannot leave the subject of the home without a glance at the-greatest story ever written about the home. The story of our Saviour about the Lost Son, or the Prodigal Son in Luke 15.

Now, the point is this: sin will enter the home, sometimes in flagrant form, as it did the home of Luke 15. The joy and happiness of the home is in such cases suddenly chilled. Silent sighing becomes the daily occupation. Sighing and praying and longing for what? For the return of the sinner.

And oh, when the sinner does return penitent, may the agony not be prolonged or the return even prohibited by such pet excuses as “the family honour” or “our good name”!

If there is joy in heaven, in the presence of the angels of God, over a sinner who repents, why bar this joy from your earthly home? Why make it impossible for the penitent to return home?

No; in a home, and specifically in a Christian home, let us exhibit the forgiving spirit. Forgiveness will have to be included in the prescription for a happy home. We read in Ephesians 4:32, ³² *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*

And similarly Colossians 3:13, ¹³ *bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*

Dear friends, you will have to include these virtues in your enjoyment of home. Think of Joseph's forgiveness of his brother's sin,³⁰ and its happy results.

But some one interposes, And what if sickness comes to a home? And I add, What if death comes? Recall the words before where Paul exclaims, "*All things are yours,*" and he includes death. Strange? Not at all.

Death is ours also in the home. But for us to die is gain. For after death we are with Christ, which is far better for He is in glory. So whether sickness or death comes, there is one verse in our Bible which covers all sorrows of a home.

Romans 8:28, ²⁸ *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.* So this truth, too, we shall have to include if we would truly enjoy peace of mind in our home. And what is better than peace of mind?

We read in Philippians 4:8, ⁸ *Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things.* And so you will always enjoy your home.

Accordingly, as we read in *Luther's Small Catechism* — *Let each his lesson learn with care, And all the household well shall fare.*

And now, as we return to own homes, let us thus quietly, piously, and sincerely enjoy our home, so passing through the things temporal that we do not lose the things eternal, never allowing our hearts to be troubled.

Jesus assures us that in His Father's house are many mansions.³¹ Even He, our home's faithful Friend and unseen Guest, says, "*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*"³²

Hence ⁴ *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Amen.*

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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- ¹ “Home” John Bowring
² Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
³ Deut. 8:6—20
⁴ 1 Tim. 6:7
⁵ Ecclesiastes 2:26
⁶ Luke 12:34
⁷ Luke 12:18-19
⁸ Luke 14:12—14
⁹ 1 Tim. 6:17
¹⁰ Luke 16:19—23
¹¹ Heb. 13:5
¹² 1 Tim. 4:8
¹³ See also Prov. 16:8; Psa. 37:16
¹⁴ See also Phil. 3:1; 1 Thess. 5:16
¹⁵ 2 Cor. 6:10, See also Phil. 1:18, Phil 2:18; Phil 3:1; Phil 4:1. Phil 4:10.
¹⁶ Phil. 4:9
¹⁷ Eph. 3:17
¹⁸ Matthew 6:21
¹⁹ John 2:1-11
²⁰ John Keats
²¹ Phil. 2:2
²² Gen. 5:22, 24
²³ Gen. 22:6, 8
²⁴ 1 Cor. 10:31
²⁵ 1 Timothy 6:17
²⁶ 1 Thessalonians 5:10
²⁷ Philippians 1:21
²⁸ Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 13:8
²⁹ Acts 24:25; 1 Cor. 9:25; Gal. 5:23; 2 Pet. 1:6; Titus 1:8
³⁰ Gen. 45
³¹ John 14:1-2
³² John 14:27