

Theme: Happy as a Puppy

Object: Song "If You Are Happy"

Scripture: **SLIDE** "Blessed is he who trusts in the LORD." (Proverbs 16:20 NASB)

Probably every one here this morning has sung the song, "If You're Happy." You know the one I'm talking about -- **SLIDE** "If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands. If you're happy and you know it clap your hands. If you're happy and you know it, then your face will surely show it. If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands."

What do you think a dog would do to show that he was happy? Wag his tail? **SLIDE** "If you're happy and you know it, wag your tail. (swish-swish) If you're happy and you know it wag your tail. (swish-swish) If you're happy and you know it, then your tail will surely show it. If you're happy and you know it, wag your tail. (swish-swish)"

SLIDE I heard a story about a little puppy that noticed that whenever he was happy, his tail wagged. He thought he had found the secret to happiness. One day he shared the secret of happiness with an older dog. He said, "I have learned that the best thing for a dog is happiness, and that happiness is in my tail. **SLIDE** So I am going to chase my tail; and when I catch it, I shall have happiness!" The old dog replied, "I too, believe that happiness is a marvelous thing for a dog, and that happiness is in my tail. But I have noticed that when I chase it, my tail keeps running away from me; but when I go about my business, **SLIDE** it follows me

wherever I go."

The Bible has a lot to say about being happy. It doesn't say, "Happy are they who have a lot of money" or "Happy are they who live in big houses and drive fancy cars." It doesn't even say, "Happy are they who only have good things happen to them." What the Bible does say is, "Happy are the merciful, happy are the peacemakers, and happy are the pure in heart." **SLIDE** The Bible also says, Happy is he who trusts in the Lord. Many of us are like that little puppy chasing his tail -- trying to find true happiness that is always just out of our reach. What we need to do is learn that if we will just go about our business and trust in the Lord, happiness will follow us wherever we go.

Dear Lord, help us to place our trust in you so that we may experience the happiness that only you can bring. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Slide **The Spirit Who Gives Life** (v 63)

The Lord Jesus had become popular and many people were following Him. Miracles and food – its like dinner and a show - who wouldn't like that? But, then Jesus' teachings and His doctrine became the measure of who He was and what it was to be His disciple. **Slide** When people hear eternal truth they usually respond in just a few ways. **Click** Some react with outright rejection. We see this in the Pharisees as they opposed Jesus' teaching to the point they plotted to kill Him. The Pharisees even accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub the ruler of demons – an absurd effort to discredit Jesus. We see this same approach today in religious groups were you cannot question their teaching and they use every means, mainly deception to discredit all others. There are also some that are attracted to the truth, but their faith is shallow and has no root, they are not true believers and fall away when demands come for them to stand for God's truth. As Jesus' doctrine was made ever more clear the shallow disciples **Slide** turned away. There is a third group of people - the small percentage that **Slide** hears and believes, but they are not our primary focus in this study passage. The Apostle John concludes this chapter by showing what happened; first to the general troupe of disciples following Jesus and secondly concerning the Twelve. **Blank** Today we will be concerned with the general troupe of disciples or followers the Apostle John speaks of in verses 60 to 66.

Remembering in our last study Jesus had said, **Slide** "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life." (v 54) And Jesus also said, **Slide** "As the living Father sent Me." (v 57) The many followers of Jesus, here referred to by John as disciples, respond to Jesus' critical teaching concerning His relationship with God the

Father and that only those God the Father has called will be given to Jesus and they will feed upon Him spiritually to grow in maturity and strength. That these children of God are those who believe in Jesus as the Messiah and their belief gains them the gift of eternal salvation given by God's grace. The crowd responds saying, **Slide** "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" **Slide** F. F. Bruce writes concerning this verse, "This was not simply because they thought the metaphor outrageous but because the whole tenor of his (Jesus') argument implied a claim to be greater than Moses – to be, in fact, uniquely associated with God. His language was hard to take not merely because it was difficult to grasp but because they found it offensive." Professor Bruce was accurate for the **Slide** Greek word **σκληρός** "*sklēros*" (*sk-ler-os*) translated as hard or difficult does not mean hard or difficult to understand, but **Slide** means hard or difficult to tolerate. As long as the troupe of followers enjoyed the miracles and food, but did **NOT** understand Jesus' teaching they were fine. It was only when Jesus' teachings became clear that they could not tolerate them. It is true today as well, when someone is teaching the true word of God this is often when people criticize because of their unwillingness to accept what they hear. There are teachers and preachers who deserve criticism because what they teach is not consistent with the scriptures. Paul addressed this in his second letter to Timothy writing, **Slide** "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.* (2 Timothy 4:3-4 NASB) **Blank** However, those who preach the difficult true teachings that Jesus was teaching to men and women, people find both the preacher and the teachings hard to tolerate. It is these same teachings that cause problems for egocentric people today. What are these teachings that caused problems in Jesus' personal ministry and causes problems today for those who

preach God's Word?

Slide First, there is the doctrine of Christ's incarnation and all this implies who Jesus is. Jesus said that He was the true "Bread that came down from heaven" in verses 33, 38 and 51. He was telling people that He had existed before His physical birth and this also meant that He had a special relationship with God. Jesus said, that He was the only begotten Son of God and was therefore, divine. We know that the crowds rejected this by what one can read in the other gospels of Matthew chapter 26 and Mark chapter 14 where they reacted by saying Jesus had committed blasphemy.

Slide Secondly, Jesus was teaching that He had to die on the cross as found in the ending of verse 51, **Slide** "...the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh." How hard would this be for prideful men to accept? These men accepted that they could earn their salvation by their piety, but the concept that someone else had to pay the price and it would be given as an unearned or undeserved gift insulted their intellect. Is this not a problem with many people today? This leads us to the next reason for people unbelief.

Jesus taught that the real reason that most people listening to His teachings did not believe was **Slide** they could not believe because God had not caused them to believe. In a nutshell these are the doctrines of election, predestination, God's effectual calling and the gift of salvation by God's grace. This teaching was seen in verse 44, **Slide** "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him..." and verse 37, **Slide** "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me..." These teachings ran counter to the Jewish leaders and therefore to the Jewish peoples thinking at the time of Jesus. They run counter to peoples thinking today. The question then and the question now is - "Are you willing to change your opinions and

possibly what religious leaders have taught you to conform to the teachings of Christ found in the scriptures?" **Blank**

Let me ask you, have you ever heard anyone teach or preach these sayings from the scriptures?

- "God helps those who help themselves."
- "Spare the rod, spoil the child."
- "God works in mysterious ways."
- "Cleanliness is next to Godliness."

These sayings are not from the scriptures – there are sayings in the scriptures close to these, but they are not these. We have heard stories like tying a rope around the ankle of the high priest when he enters the Holy of Holies so that if he gets sick or dies, the other priests can pull him out. But this story is not in the Bible. Nor is there a Book of Limitations in the Bible. And I have to admit there is no Book of Dude either. Joyce and I visited a church here in Albuquerque where the preacher said the Bible teaches that if his children disobeyed him he had the right to shoot them dead with God's blessing. Yes, we left there quickly, running in evasive maneuvers until in our car. How difficult overcoming our past can be – Catholic, Mormon, Muslim, American or bad preaching and on and on, but we must push past these bad teachings of our past to accept what is truly written in the scriptures - inspired by God and the only unchanging truth.

In our study passage the crowd replied to Jesus' teaching by saying, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" Jesus answers them in verses 60 and 61 "Does this cause you to stumble? *What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?*" Some say verse 61, "Son of Man ascending to where He was before?" is a reference to the cross and some to Christ's ascension after the cross, but I do not think this is right. It was not His ascension in the future He was speaking of, but His

descent from heaven to earth that took place in the past, about 30 years or so in the past. I believe Jesus is telling the crowd - Are you offended? Do you find My teachings intolerable? What if history were reversed? What if I did not teach these things? What if I did no miracles? What if I did not come from heaven to earth to be born? What if there was no plan of redemption? What would you do then? What could the people then and what could the people today do if this happened? Nothing – there would be absolutely zero hope! Praise God there is a plan for our redemption and Jesus did descend to earth, living a sinless life and giving His life as a ransom for the sins of those who God calls and gives to Him by His grace. Jesus was looking these people in the eye and saying you want the hard truth or would you rather there be no hope. I am growing tired of you not wanting to hear and accept the truth.

Look in your bibles at verse 63 as Jesus continues His response to this crowd of faithless people, He says, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.” I believe this is clear and to the point – **Slide** it is only through the ministry of the Holy Spirit that people are able to understand Jesus’ doctrine. Some people might believe that people would come to Christ if He walked the earth this very day. People could see His face, hear His voice, see His miracles – they would naturally see His divine nature and come to know Him as their Lord – the masses of the world would be saved! How many thousands of people when Christ did walk this earth saw all this and more and yet they turned away and did not believe. They returned to the world of the unsaved. It is who Jesus is, it is the person of the Triune Godhead that is important, not the outward acts of Jesus. If He came today, with our technology we would be replaying the miracles in “slo-mo” on large flat screens, we would have His portrait in HD high-gloss posters and we would be worshiping these idols instead of the person of Christ.

Just the way the cross for some people is an idol or a just piece of jewelry. And even many of those who were drawn to Jesus by His outwards acts of miracles – it did not last – unless, unless God the Holy Spirit conveyed to their heart spiritual wisdom that brought spiritual life. **Blank**

Our wisdom, even though it may appear good is in truth flawed. Here is an example, in the Gospel of Luke chapter 11 there is a whole prayer life for the Catholics built upon a verse that sounds good **Slide** “...one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him (Jesus), ‘Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed.’” (Luke 11:27 NASB) After all Mary deserves honor above all women and should be able to intercede for us sinners to Jesus on our behalf. She is first among the venerated saints people should pray to. This is good isn’t it? Here is Jesus’ response to this well meaning woman **Slide** “On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.” (Luke 11:28 NASB) It was not about Mary, it has never been about Mary, it was and is about Jesus and His plan of redemption. It does not matter the denomination or name of the external trappings and rituals of religion – these do not save, they do not bless, but it is the Word of God that has power and blessing. This is feeding upon Jesus. Baptism is a beautiful ritual and God commands it, but baptism does not save. In fact I believe baptism has become a curse in some denominations because they practice this ritual knowingly on unbelievers. It gives the impression that all is well with the souls of children, when in truth all people, including children, are children of wrath and under condemnation if they are NOT saved. Baptism is for the recognition of believers only; otherwise unsaved people have the false impression they are saved and no longer seek Christ. **Blank**

The Lord’s Supper is another beautiful ritual. But without care the Lord’s Supper

becomes just another thing that Christians do and if not guarded against it loses its meaning. It's meaning is even more eroded when unbelievers participate because churches have not taught about the Lord's Supper properly. This is what Jesus is saying in verse 63 **"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing."** You see, my beloved, we grow by feeding upon Jesus and allowing the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of Jesus to bring wisdom and meaning to His Words – God's Words of the Bible and then apply these words and truths to our lives.

Ritual and routine – Christians can fall into the same traps as unbelievers if they are not diligent. It reminds me of a story I once heard, a simply story, but one I hope makes a clear point. There was a family traveling through Florida. They left their hotel early and drove a couple of hours before stopping for breakfast. During this time they had traveled through mile after mile of orange orchards. They stopped at a restaurant that appeared to be craved out of the mass of orange trees just as the road had. This had worked up a terrible thirst for orange juice in their son. Billy ordered a large glass of juice with his pancakes. The waitress said she could not bring the boy orange juice because their machine had broken. Billy was dumbstruck - there they sat among thousands of orange trees loaded with oranges and he could not get one glass of juice. You see they had become so dependent on a machine that they had forgotten how to get the juice for themselves. Christians are sometimes like that. Bibles in their homes may surround them, but if something should happen to the Sunday morning preaching service, they would have no nourishment for their souls. The problem is not a lack of spiritual food, but that many Christians haven't grown enough to know how to get spiritual food for themselves.

This section John chapter 6 closes with Jesus restating that one must be called by God to come to Him. Return to your bibles as I read verse 65, **"And He (Jesus) was saying, 'For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has**

been granted him from the Father.” Because these truths Jesus had been teaching were hard and contrary to the way Jews had thought for centuries and because of what we have just read here in verse 65 the Apostle John now tells us – “As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.” What a terrible thought, all those people desperately needing God and Salvation, Jesus the Christ, stood before them, but they had hardened hearts, like Pharaoh, and they pushed onward towards their doom, just as Pharaoh had done.

This brings us to the crossroads of life – both at the time Christ taught the Jews in the Gospel of John and for us today. So, **Slide** what will you do with Christ words? Will you let them sink into your heart and allow the Holy Spirit bless you? Or will you turn away; turn away just as the crowd of disciples did that day - the day we studied about this morning when Jesus taught teachings so hard to tolerate? It is true that no one can come to Jesus unless God the Father draws him or her, but this does not eliminate a person’s responsibility to heed Christ’s words. Do you see the balance to verse 63? Look with me, Jesus said, **Slide** “It is the Spirit who gives life...” This is the work of God the Spirit alone and in it no person participates, as we understand by what the verse now says, **Slide** “the flesh profits nothing.” But then Jesus went on and added, **Slide** “the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.” Here the words **Slide** “spoken to you” imply our human responsibility. The teachings of Jesus the Christ are directed to each and every person that hears these words. **Blank** This is why I preach and this is why I encourage everyone to read the Bible to test it and see it proved to be true. If you are not a Christian you need to read God’s Word and see for yourself its truth and reflect on this eternal truth. Moreover you are to follow the Word of God wherever it leads you - and let me tell you, as a believer, I know it leads to the Savior and spiritual life.

But here this morning, most of you I am speaking to are Christians, who have heard the Word of God and responded to God. Your obligation is to feed upon the Word and to grow spiritually. Why? Not only so it will change who you are, but also you are called by God to take His Word to those who do not know Him. God has put people in your life's path – co-workers, friends, relatives, the butcher, baker and candle stick maker and, hear me, these people are going to perish eternally. This is your **Slide** prime directive from God, your responsibility. I know, I know life is busy with jobs and raising children, but God has called all of us to feed and care for the spiritually sick and dying. As a community of Christ we are to feed the poor, care for widows and orphans and share the gospel. What are you doing? Will you accept the gift of God's salvation for yourself and hoard it? God has called you to be His ambassadors to the lost world – this is a Christian's prime purpose in life. Remember it is like eating garlic – feed upon Christ's words, digest the Word of God, live Christ and **Slide** exude Christ in all that you are. Many pressing concerns will attempt to distract you, but as Luke said keep your hand to the plow, do not look back, stay focused, you will be supported in this by your involvement in your community of Canyon Bible and be encouraged to step out in faith. You will hear as this passage closed **"This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?"** But you will also experience people who hear God's Word and come. I tell you there is nothing – no thrill you have ever experienced in life as thrilling as seeing the spiritual lights go on in someone's eyes as they come to know Christ as their Savior. But you will not know this greatest of life's experiences – unless – unless you are obedient to Christ your Lord and reach out to the lost. The choice is before you.