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| **SERIES** | Pursuit of Happiness |
| **BIBLE** | Matthew 7:24-27, 4:17 |
| **TITLE/TOPIC** | Passover & Culture |
| **OVERVIEW** | The pursuit of happiness is a central aspect of what defines our culture:   * “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” * John Locke 🡪 “The necessity of pursuing happiness [is] the foundation of liberty.”   + What we experience?   + What we obtain?   Is the culture providing a genuine sense of happiness?   * [New data shows Americans more miserable than we've been in half a century](https://thewhyaxis.substack.com/p/new-data-shows-americans-more-miserable) * [American happiness hits record lows](https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/02/politics/unhappiness-americans-gallup-analysis/index.html)   What if true happiness can indeed be obtained, but just now in how the culture promotes it or guides us toward it?   * We are starting a new series today about The Pursuit of Happiness, not one that is true, never-ending, counter-culture, and what our hearts are longing for. * This is what Easter is about at the practical level – a new life is made possible, one we are invited to, and one that available to us |
| **SCRIPTURE BREAKDOWN** | Matthew 7:24-27 is the culmination of Jesus’ most famous sermon.   * The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus’ manifesto of the life he offers people, the culture He is creating, of what the resurrected life looks like. * He is presenting a life that is as counter-cultural now as it was then, but it is the life we were created to be a part of. It is the life of true happiness. * We are starting a new series today and will go on for a few weeks which looks at the life of true happiness Jesus offers. * Today is meant to get us started with a foundation. And really, foundation is what this passage focuses on.   Jesus’ summary to the sermon is about how we build our lives.   * Building on the rock vs building on the sand. * The test of a life’s worthiness, strength and vitality is how it holds up to storms. Can the essence of life, which brings us happiness, withstand the storms or does it crumble under them? And the storms will come!   Here’s the difference between the life which Jesus offers and the life our cultures promotes:  1) Our culture offers a happiness that is rooted in our work and efforts.  God offers a happiness that is rooted in the work and resurrection of Jesus.  2) Our culture offers a happiness that must be earned and maintained.  God offers a happiness that is received and ever-present.  3) Our culture offers a happiness that focuses on the immediate, with no promise for tomorrow.  God offers a happiness that gives hope, joy, peace and guidance for today, but also promises it for eternity.   * This is what we’re going to be looking at over the weeks to come. Today we looked at the end of the Sermon, but over this series we are going to look at the beginning of it with the Beatitudes. * The Beatitudes are declarations of the life God has given us, the happiness we are able to know and live within. * They don’t tell us how to earn happiness, they let us know how God grants true happiness. * The life He grants us is the life we were made for! (John 10:10) |
| **GOSPEL** | Book – [The Divine Conspiracy](https://www.amazon.com/Divine-Conspiracy-Rediscovering-Hidden-Life/dp/0060693339) (especially chapter 4)  Chapter/Article – “[The Beatitudes: Happiness and the Kingdom of God](https://academic.oup.com/book/27229/chapter/196731628)” |
| **NEXT**STEPS | Begin | Connect | Engage | Grow | Disciple |