



May 31 – Happiness

In talking with someone recently it was discovered that both of us have played the part of Charlie Brown in the musical “You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown.” For me, this was the Spring production in my freshman year in high school. I was excited to get the chance to play such a role. It sounded too good to be true. All I would have to do is look insecure for a couple hours. I do that all the time. Now was my time to shine, until the spotlight was shining on me.

It is a scary role. The musical starts with a multi-minute monologue while alone on the stage under a spotlight. On opening night, I was in the bathroom throwing up in the minutes leading to the start. I was a freshman playing the lead, while there were seniors who were not cast. I had never played a role that big before. I was nervous and my body was rejecting the experience. When it came time, I took a deep breath, prayed that I would refrain from throwing up on stage, and walked out onto a dark stage with a spotlight on my face. My mind was simultaneously living in excitement and fear.

The Gospel text tells of the eleven returning to Galilee to meet Jesus on the mountain. The text says that “when they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted. It makes it sound like there were some gathered who were filled with faith and awe, while others were filled with doubt and wanting proof. This is a translation choice.

The text says “καὶ” in Greek. In nearly every other occurrence, this word is translated “also” or “moreover.” For some reason, most tend to translate this as “but.” I do not believe the text is talking about a separation between the faithful and the doubtful. I believe it is speaking of human nature. I believe that the text speaks of a gathered people who are both worshipful and uncertain. The word translated as “doubt”, “ἐδίστασαν” means to waver back and forth. It is not as much about a lack of faith as it is a wavering back and forth between questions and certainty.

I believe this text is saying that it is okay to be in a worshipful state of mind while still having questions. It is giving permission, allowing us to lean on the faith of those around us in our times of uncertainty and questions, while being a place for others to lean in their time of need. Following Christ is not about having everything together. It is about faith and wavering, sometimes in the same breath. If you have questions, you are exactly where you should be.

I already talked about how Charlie Brown starts with a lone person on the stage under the spotlight. It is scary being by yourself, with everyone watching. You cannot really see anyone because of the bright light. You start to imagine all the things people are saying about you, or thinking. It kind of forces you to become Charlie Brown. Sometimes life feels like that, we can feel like we are being watched and judged on everything that we do.

By the end of the musical, the cast discovers that true happiness comes when you move from fear into seeing the world as a gift. The lyrics go through a bunch of different things that bring joy or happiness to people. For Charlie Brown, it is finding out the little red-headed girl is human; she chews on her pencil too. Then, the song speaks of pizza toppings and ice cream cones, learning new skills and friendships. In the end, it says that “Happiness is anyone and anything at all, that’s loved by you.”

Any of these things may not seem like much at all. The value and the joy that they bring rest in the person who loves them. It is easy to see that. We can look to the things that bring us joy or happiness. To God, we are the ones who are loved, that bring happiness and joy. There are times we do not believe it, or we waver. We can start to question whether God really could love a person like me. May the text for today be a reminder that it is human nature to both waver and worship. God loves you, no matter what. Amen.