

“The Theory of Harmony”

March 17, 2019

Colossians 3:12-17

This is attributed to Samuel Clemens, also known as Mark Twain. “I built a cage and in it I put a dog and a cat. After a little training I got the dog and the cat to the point where they lived together in peace and harmony. Then I introduced a pig. Then, later, a goat and a kangaroo and some birds, and a monkey. And after a few adjustments, they all learned to live in harmony with each other. So encouraged was I by such successes that I added an Irish Catholic, a Presbyterian, a Jew, a Muslim from Turkestan, and a Buddhist from China. Then, on a recent trip I had captured a Baptist missionary which I then placed inside the cage. And in a very short time, there wasn’t a single living thing left in the cage. Harmony went from 100 down to zero.” [Adapted from Mark Twain on www.sermoncentral.com “Living In Harmony” by Pastor Guy McGraw.

Please open your Bible with me to Job chapter thirty-eight. Have you noticed that there are many times when things appear to be out of control in your life? Whenever you find a lots of difficulties in life and whenever things seem out of control (which they sometimes do for all of us), you should choose to read one of the most challenging books ever written; the Book of Job. And here’s why. After all Job experiences; but especially, after *all* he has to go through with his three (so-called) friends, he finally comes to the place where he is truly ready and truly willing to listen to the Voice of the LORD. At the close of the Book there is this marvelous conversation between Job and God. Actually the conversation is a raft of some twenty-five rhetorical

questions that God asks Job. And all of them have to do with truth and with life that surrounds Job’s existence.

And tucked inside that conversation is a reference to something every musician knows a bit about – harmony. See if you can find it with me. Here’s what we read in the thirty-eighth chapter of Job and verse four.

Job 38:4 *“Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. (5) Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? Or who hath stretched the line upon it? (6) Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner stone thereof; (7) when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”*

Folks, when the LORD laid the foundations of the world; when He laid down the measures of it; when He stretched a line upon it to decide its length and height and breadth; when He put His blueprints for the world into existence, an interesting event occurred. The morning stars started singing together and the sons of God began shouting for joy.

Now, of course, you’d ask “Where and when did God form the foundations of the world?” And the answer is “in the beginning.” It was when He spoke those four words *“Let there be light.”*

The angels were obviously created and then, at that very moment, billions of watching angels, shouted with what you might describe as “unbelievable joy” when they saw the first rays of light streaming across the universe. Here they were watching the One Who dwells in spiritual light as He was now creating physical light. And while they were shouting out their excitement at seeing light for the very first time, the morning stars were singing.

Angels shouting; stars singing. That’s what happened when God formed the foundations of the earth. We can’t fully know what was taking place at that moment. But we do know this. Everything God made was in perfect harmony.

And practically speaking, physical white light is the harmony of the entire color spectrum. And at the beginning of creation, the harmony of color blended perfectly with the harmony of the music that came from the morning stars.

I've titled today's sermon "The Theory of Harmony." Shall we pray?

Now, as you might expect, harmony was evident at the very first minute of creation. So, harmony actually begins with God.

Next, would you please open your Bible with me to the NT Epistle to the Philippians and chapter four? Please follow as I read. Philippians 4:4 "*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, rejoice. (5) Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. (6) Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. (7) And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*"

Now, let me qualify what mean when I use the phrase "The Theory of Harmony." What I mean is this. Harmony is just another way of saying "Everything in my life works together. Harmony occurs when an orchestra plays together well or when a choir sings together well. When the choir sings, each person has to sing his part. Then, when all the parts are sung together, they produce harmony. And that harmony is pleasing to the ear."

So, a *life* in harmony is a life that works together well and is pleasing to both your spirit and God's Spirit within you. It produces a sense of satisfaction and a knowledge that you are fulfilling the purpose for which the LORD made you.

So, my hope today is to focus on some of the things that any one of us can do that will move you in the direction of having a more harmonious life.

A theory, as I'm sure you know, is an attempt at finding out how something works. And Paul finds himself in prison.

Yet, he's able to live by this theory of harmony. *You're* not in prison. But, no doubt, you've got challenges you are facing right now that the LORD has allowed and in those things He's showing you how to live His way in this world. So, at bottom, the theory of harmony is really the way the LORD wants you to live.

Now, there are many other Scriptures that present what we might call "The Theory of a Harmonious Life." But Philippians four contain at least three. So, what I'd like to do today is to answer the question, "What Elements Produce Harmony in someone's life?"

First, then, there's the matter of joy; actually the command to rejoice. Look again at Paul's exhortation in verse four. Philippians 4:4 "*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, rejoice.*"

You can almost always tell that your life is not very harmonious when something or someone has stolen your joy; when joy is missing. It's obvious from this command that God wants for you to experience joy. Yet, how many people do you know are trying to find joy apart from God? Christians often try all sorts of things to find joy apart from the LORD. And, Paul, the prisoner in Rome, is a man of joy and he's writing to Christians in the Church a Philippi with a command to rejoice.

And, of course, Paul gives you qualifying things. God calls you to rejoice in *Him* and *to do it all the time*.

Folks, a spirit of joy and rejoicing fits perfectly with a life of personal and practical harmony. To rejoice simply means to "find the joy." And remember that God only commands the things He intends to enable you to do.

Here's what sometimes is happening when people aren't joyful or can't find joy in life. They are attempting to do the impossible; seriously. You see, if you are seeking the emotion of joy, it will continually elude you. Why? Because joy comes

as a by-product of your relationship with a joy-filled person. That person is Jesus Christ.

God does not and cannot expect you to discover joy apart from Himself.

Do you remember the days of Mary and Martha; those days when Jesus stopped by their home? And do you remember how Luke tells us the difference between the two sisters? The difference was determined by what they chose to do as it related to Jesus. Martha felt her responsibility and the burden of her legitimate responsibility while Mary felt her need to simply rejoice in the LORD's presence.

Think about this past week. Did you feel the burdens of your responsibilities or did you feel the need to just rejoice in your LORD and Savior?

If you spend time with a joyful person, what do you think will happen to your spirit? Will you become critical and condemning? Or, will you receive some of their joy. Now, if you spend time with the Son of God, listening to Him, talking with Him, walking with Him, getting to *know* Him, serving Him, etc. and etc., then you will experience His joy as a by-product of being with Him. After all, joy is a fruit of a relationship with the Spirit of Christ.

This week, in those times when you are beginning to feel the burden of your responsibilities, take the low road, the road of least resistance; rest in the presence of the One Who has all the joy you will ever need. And, remember, He's willing to share it at any moment in time.

So, here's the challenge. Imagine God as the most joyous Person you could possibly know. Now, make a conscious decision to meet Him, to quiet your heart before Him; to listen to Him, to learn from Him, to distinguish between those anxious feelings of "I've got to do this or it won't get done" and "I need the LORD's joy." You see, according to the Bible, "the joy of the LORD is your strength." When He

says "rejoice *in* the LORD," He doesn't mean for you to force yourself to be joyful. Instead, He means for you to bring yourself before Him in lowliness and neediness; to, like Mary, choose the better part. Didn't He say in His first sermon "**Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven**"?

He's ready to bring the Kingdom of Heaven right down into your soul – every day, if you want it. How do I know that? "In Thy presence is fulness of joy" says Psalm 16:11.

You will certainly never rejoice in every soul on this planet. You certainly will not genuinely rejoice in every circumstance that God allows you to experience. But, when you make the choice to rejoice in *Him*, He will fill up your cup with His joy and it will even overflow. Psalm 23:5 "*My cup runneth over.*"

You can't spend time with Jesus Christ and not discover Him to be a Man of tremendous joy. As a matter of fact, here's what He told His Apostles. John 15:11 "*These things have I spoken unto you, that **my** joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*"

And, on that last evening before the LORD's crucifixion, He prayed like this, John 17:13 "*And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.*"

Even as the LORD's final hour was approaching, His concern was that His disciples be filled with His joy.

Folks, harmony comes while you are obeying Philippians 4:4. Either He is the LORD of all joy or He isn't. Which is it for you?

First, the matter of joy.

Second, the matter of reasonableness. Practice reasonableness with people. Look with me at verse five. Philippians 4:5 "*Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.*"

This Old English term “moderation” means “the condition of being reasonable with people.”

Here’s how this same word is translated elsewhere in the NT.

Titus 3:2 “*To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle [reasonable], showing all meekness unto all men.*”

James 3:17 “*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle [reasonable], and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*”

Isn’t it interesting that the very things God commands lead you into harmony? First He commands us to “Rejoice in Himself.” Now, here in verse five He commands us to be “reasonable,” as the Son of God Himself is a reasonable Person.

Has it dawned upon you yet *why* God command this? Isn’t it because this is what works in life? Honestly, how many truly joyful people do you know that are harsh? Now, how many truly joyful people do you know who are reasonable? They, obviously, go together.

Reasonable is the opposite of being stiff, severe with people, and inflexible. I Peter 2:18 “*Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle [reasonable], but also to the forward [obstinate].*”

Do you know what the term rigid means? It basically means “unbending.” Someone has illustrated it like this. A boss is being rigid when he docks his employee’s pay for being late to work when the reason he was late because he had just rescued a child from a black bear.

Here are more examples of an inflexible person.

- We have the rules and policies we've got a reason. Don't question them -- just follow them.
- We tried that eight years ago and it didn't work. I'm not interested.

- One day you'll be the boss and you can do it your way. For now, do it my way.

Folks, sweet reasonableness is a quality that resembles the LORD Jesus Christ. II Corinthians 10:1 “*Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness [reasonableness] of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:...*”

Moderation means gentle reasonableness; especially in the face of someone who is obstinate. And it results in harmony in your relationships with those you live with and those you work with.

You see, this is God’s call to produce harmony in your life. This is the way God intends you to live. He began His creation in harmony and He brings us into a relationship with Himself for that exact same purpose. He wants you to experience a harmonious life. The truth may very well be that you don’t *want* to live a life of harmony. And you may have all the reasons in the world to live like that.

But make sure you realize this. Your lack of harmony cannot be blamed on God. It’s *His* will that you find harmony. And, if that’s true, and it is, then it’s someone other than God who desires that you experience disharmony.

Folks, before I say anything more about the elements that create harmony, let me add this. The very beginning of such a life comes with a relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ.

And, it’s true that God is a God of all joy. But, more than that. The LORD Jesus Christ personally offers *His own* joy to anyone and everyone. The answer to your every need is found in Christ alone.

Here’s the simple Gospel message as taught in the Bible.

1. We are all sinners and headed for death and judgment.
2. God provided you a Savior in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ. He died for your sins.

3. The moment you repent of your sins and trust in Jesus Christ as your LORD and Savior, you are completely forgiven of every sin and guaranteed a place in Heaven.
4. Then, last, your life belongs to God both by creation and by salvation.

The day you repent of your sins and receive Jesus Christ as your LORD and Savior is the day you enter into a path of fellowship with the God of all joy.

Then, being in a right relationship to Him, you will find that He clearly tells you what to do in order to experience harmony.

So far, that's what you find here in Philippians chapter four.

First, the matter of joy.

Second, the matter of reasonableness.

Third, harmony also includes substituting prayer for your worries. Look with me at verse six. Philippians 4:6 *"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. (7) And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*

What is the one area of your life that will achieve personal inner harmony? It the matter of personal prayer; but specifically, prayer that replaces worry. Your heart should really go for those who choose worry over prayer. God's certainly does. But, let me assure you of this. The day you choose prayer over worry will be the day your life truly experiences harmony because God has absolutely no interest in your worrying over things.

Look again at verse six. Nothing works well when worry steals your peace. Then, on the other hand, everything works well when you choose to pray and to bring all the issues of your life to Him.

This term "careful" means "to be worried in the face of brewing trouble." And it also refers to "being filled with worrying and tormenting cares." It's a word that describes how you are looking at the future; even if it's later today. So, here's a word to those of you who think worrying over the future is your responsibility. I Peter 5:7 *"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."* This word "care" here in I Peter is the exact same as the one we read here in Philippians 4:6. And it means "to be pulled in two different directions."

Folks, prayer is God's provision for your concerns. Every single one of us has legitimate concerns. Your daily life has aspects of it that cause you to be burdened. And the reason God allows us these concerns is the same thing in every single case; so that you will learn to lean upon Him. Peter tells us that the only way to properly humble yourself before God is to cast all your worries, your cares, whatever they are, upon Him.

And please notice Paul's words here. It's not just prayer that leads to harmony. It's prayer combined with supplication and thanksgiving. There's a general word for prayer. Then there's supplication. Supplication is the type of prayer you pray because you know that either you or someone you know has a need. So, instead of letting your worry level rise, see your-self or see that person in your life as having a need that God is calling you to supplicate for.

So, verse six again. Philippians 4:6 *"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. (7) And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*

When you do pray, you can only truly pray when you come to the LORD with an attitude of appreciation for what He has allowed in your life.

You might have seen this before. If you lost your job, for example, wouldn't you categorize that as a care? And wouldn't that care very likely generate a spirit of worry? Then pray. And, how can prayer maintain or even restore a spirit of harmony in your heart now that you've lost your job? Here's how.

Bring yourself and your needs to your Heavenly Father. Jesus says this in Matthew 6:8 “*...your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*”

So, with the confidence that He knows what you need, you bring yourself and your family and your need for a job to Him. Then you thank Him for your present set of circumstances. And further, you decide right then to trust that He's working everything together for good for you. And with that spirit and mindset, you proceed to ask Him to supply your needs. You ask Him specifically for a job.

And along with a job, here's His promise. Philippians 4:7 “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Yes, peace and harmony go together like bread and butter. And this peace is *His* peace. It's a peace that He's ready and willing to bestow upon your heart and your mind just as soon as you come to Him with your requests. He's made you a personal promise. It's almost as if the LORD knows that your life has disharmony in it when you've got more worry in it than you do prayer. So He makes one of the largest promises known to mankind “*And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.*”

That's how practical this matter of a harmonious life is to God.

First, the matter of joy.

Second, the matter of sweet reasonableness.

And third, harmony also includes substituting prayer for your worries.

So, how does Philippians 4:6-7 work? Here's how. Write this verse on a 3X5 card or memorize it and let it become your meditation.

Let's go back to our earlier example. How does Philippians 4:8 apply to the situation of someone who has lost their job? Here's how. When you begin to hear yourself saying “I'll never find another job. Look at all the people that are laid off,” then you apply these words of Philippians 4:6 “*Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanks-giving let your requests be made known unto God. (7) And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*”

So, it is true that you might never find another job. Yet, you see, you don't know the future. Only God does. Your heart must, like Mary, be set on *Who He is* and what He can do. You see, you *will* find another job. So, trust Him every minute of every day.

Imagine if you begin thinking you'll too old or you can't get a resume together or, once you've done your resume, you are too afraid to email it or send it. Instead, trade that worry into a prayer request.

Joy, reasonableness, and prayer; three simply wonderful things you can engage in that will lead you into harmony.

Now, “do you truly want your life to be a life of harmony?” God will provide you with an opportunity this week to test these words out and to trust Him. So, will you choose harmony or disharmony?

This is God's way. Leave your way behind and set your heart in His way. This is how to live the Christian life.”

Hymn # 589 “Here I Am, LORD”