

Dear Friends,

I wonder what has made you glad this week. I would invite you to join with me in playing 'The Game'. I have been reading about in the delightful children's book *Pollyanna*, by Eleanor H. Porter. I have been able to pick up a beautifully produced edition published in the Macmillan Collector's Library. I originally bought it for one of my granddaughters, but decided that it was not quite the right book for her at the moment, and I began to read it myself, as a refreshing change from Lee Child's *Jack Reacher* novels. What a delightfully innocent little book it is. As the orphan child of a poor Home Missions Pastor, one would think that Pollyanna had little to be glad about. She depended on the meagre charity of the 'Ladies Aid', a kind of womens' fellowship that provided second-hand goods of dubious quality for the missionaries' families. After the death of her father she was subjected to the frosty, though dutiful, care of her rich but begrudging aunt. Nevertheless, the guileless child proceeded to charm all whom she met by her irrepressible optimism. As taught by her late father, "*the game was just to find something about everything to be glad about*" (p. 9).

It is amazing what a transformation is created in the lives of those whom Pollyanna meets by her persistence in playing *the game* despite and indeed because of adversity. Eleanor H. Porter contrasts Pollyanna with, among other characters, Mrs Snow who is an absurdly miserable and determinedly pessimistic lady who seems to enjoy poor health. The author describes how, "*she had so long been accustomed to wanting what she did not have*" (p.67) and how she rejected every effort to offer her a kind gift by insisting that she actually wanted something else.

The essence of Pollyanna's philosophy is encapsulated in a quotation from the book, printed on the back of the dustjacket: "*I reckon I am glad this morning just to be alive*". What a difference it would make if we all adopted that as our motto. To find '*something about everything*' to be glad about would be such a gift to ourselves and to those around us. This does not mean that we bury our sad feelings. These must be acknowledged but they need not take control of our thinking. Psychologists have found that people who simply think of 3 things every day to be thankful for are much less prone to depression. This sounds very much like a variation of Pollyanna's game.

For those of us who are asking for a Scriptural authority for the game, I suggest you consider: "*give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in*

*Christ Jesus*". (1 Thessalonians 5:18). We may not be able to thank God FOR every circumstance, but we are urged to give thanks to God IN all circumstances. I think that I would enjoy playing Pollyanna's game, and trying to find something about everything to be glad about – for my own sake, and the sake of those sharing the lockdown with me!

May God richly bless you,

Keith.

Rev Keith C. Beckingham, Superintendent Minister.