**Sermon: Psalms of Asaph**

**Listening to Our Emotions/Listening to God**

Suggested Resource: Into the Psalms by Rolan Monje [www.ipibooks.com](http://www.ipibooks.com)

In the Psalms, humans are speaking to God.

This is “Wisdom Literature.

The principle (but definitely not only) use of Psalms is to help us in our relationship with God.

In Psalms we learn how to feel about ourselves, about others, and, most importantly, about God.

The Psalms are poetry and they are songs. They are meant to be sung!!!

We will be singing them the next few weeks.

Types of Psalms

1. Psalms of lament (complaint) A call to God for Help in times of struggle. A psalmist is feeling fear, loss, sorrow. To be used in our personal devotions.

2. Imprecatory Psalms Calls for God to come to our aid and to judge his enemies. Psalms of vengeance (surprising) Useful in our personal prayer life.

3. Psalms of Praise: Used in worship. Psalm 19

4. Psalms of Confession. Also good for public worship. Psalm 51 & 32

5. Historical Psalms Psalmist remembers the great deeds of God. Psalm 105-106

6. Wisdom Psalms Psalms like Proverbs. Psalm 1

7. Royal Psalms and Messianic Psalms Psalm 110, 22

Three weeks ago Psalm 42 A psalm of Lament. As a deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God!

His soul was downcast. He had lost his way—been distracted by the world. He said to God, “Why have you forgotten me?”

But then he remembered how he used to go into the house of God with shouts of joy.

He decided to put his trust in God again, and therefore he could say, “Like a deer pants for streams of water…

Psalms of Lament: a pattern:

a. A complaint/lament

b. A petition—request to God

c. A statement of confidence in God.

d. A vow to praise and thank God.

This morning: The Psalms of Asaph. Listening to God’s and Our Emotions.

This morning we are going to talk about emotions.

God’s emotions, Our emotions.

BTW, just so you know, I am not a person particularly in touch with my emotions.

I have a very German father. Never cried. Did not show affection.

I have a stiff-upper-lip British mother, who barely cried when my Dad died.

(but… illustration from my Dad’s memorial service)

Let’s give a brief look at some of God’s emotions.

God has most of the emotions we have. A 1:1 correspondence? Maybe: joy, compassion, anger, hatred, jealousy, love, surprise, disgust, sadness, contentment.

Genesis 1:25,31 God saw that it was good… Very good. God feels a sense of accomplishment. He is content. He is delighted with what he had made. He is delighted with us.

But then just a few chapters later:

Genesis 6:6 The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.

God is hurt. God is disappointed. God feels regret. God is almost depressed here.

Exodus 20:5 I the Lord am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of their parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.

Yes, God feels jealousy. God does not feel envy (desire of what someone else possesses). But God feels jealousy (not wanting someone else to have what, by rights, He ought to have). Jealousy when we give our hearts to the world, to sin, to evil things.

Isaiah 49:15 Can a mother forget the baby at her breast, and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.

God feels deep compassion, like a mother for her baby.

The Creator of the Universe feels these things? Yes!

Jeremiah 30:24 The fierce anger of the Lord will not turn back until he fully accomplishes the purposes of his heart.

God feels anger. God feels the need for justice. Romans 12:19 “It is mine to avenge. I will repay.”

But almost immediately after Jeremiah 30:24 we have,

Jeremiah 31:3 I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.

Of course, God feels love. Arguably, this is the chief emotion God feels. Love is not just an emotion. Love is also a decision, a commitment, a loyalty. But love is a deep emotion, and God feels that emotion.

Then there is Hosea 11:8 How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboyim? (sister cities to Sodom and Gomorrah) My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused.

God feels a family-like loyalty. God feels deep compassion.

And then, of course, there is Jesus:

Mark 3:5 He (Jesus) looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.”

Jesus is feeling disappointment. Jesus is feeling impatient. Jesus is feeling anger.

Context: legalism of the Pharisees

But…

Luke10:21 At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said…

Jesus feels deep satisfaction when he is used by God to do something great. He is feeling deeply content. Context: Success of the 72

And perhaps most famously of all:

Matthew 26:37-38 Jesus began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.

Jesus felt overwhelmed with grief… a grief that bordered on fear.

There are emotions that we have that God does not have.

One of those is shame. Another is envy.

But even these things, God understands because he made us.

From the book Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: “Ignoring our emotions is turning our back on reality. Listening to our emotions ushers us into reality. Emotions are the language of the soul.”

As a young Christian I was taught Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

Of course, this passage is true. We cannot trust our feelings/emotions to tell us the essential truths about God.

I feel that God ought to do such and such…

I feel that God is telling me…

Also, we do not want to be completely controlled by our emotions.

But they do tell us about ourselves.

How about, “This is what I am feeling.”

EHS 67 I believe the greatest gift we can give the world is our true self living in loving union with God. How can we affirm other people’s unique identities when we do not affirm our own?

Let’s look at a person of God who is feeling a lot of emotions.

Q: Where would we look in the Bible to find people feeling and expressing a lot of emotion?

Psalms!

Psalm 73, 74 Asaph. Asaph was David’s chief musician.

Psalm 73:1-12 A psalm of lament/complaint/crying out.

v. 1 Intellectually I know this, v. 2 but…

Asaph is feeling envy (v. 3-4 no struggles, no burdens).

Can you relate to Asaph in feeling envy toward non-Christians?

v. 4,5 is a total lie, but that is what he is feeling.

But he is also feeling anger, both toward the wicked (v. 7-8 callous hearts, evil imaginations, malice, arrogance. v. 9 Despite their sin, they say to God and to us, “I’m good.” “I can have it all—the world and heaven.)

And toward God (v. 11 Does the Most High know anything?). God, why aren’t you doing anything??!!

Asaph is human!

It is time to get real with God and real with yourself about what you are feeling and why you are feeling it.

Psalm 73:13-14

Asaph is really feeling it here. And this is in the Bible!!! He is feeling regret. Asaph is feeling disappointment. Asaph is feeling depressed. He is feeling hopeless.

It has not been worth it. “Every morning brings new punishments.” God has not blessed me as he promised. I still do not have the job I wanted, the health I expected or the boyfriend I had planned on.

Can you relate?

Is God angry with Asaph right now for feeling these things?

There is what you feel, and there is what you do with these feelings.

Don’t worry, we will come back to Psalm 73:15-28 when Asaph resolves his negative feelings.

Psalm 74:1-11

v. 1-3 Asaph is feeling sadness. He is feeling rejected. God has rejected us. No baptisms for a year, and several left God! Our contribution has gone down, and we may need to let go of our leader…

Of course, he is exaggerating, but that is normal. v. 1 “Why have you rejected us forever?”

v. 2 In the past we were your special, chosen people.

v. 3. But now, Jerusalem lies in ruins. God has abandoned his people and reneged on his promises.

v. 4-8 Asaph is feeling fear as well.

They have gone after our young disciples to destroy their faith. They have kicked our ministry off campus.

v. 9-11 Asaph is feeling abandoned. The excitement is gone, and we no longer feel the Holy Spirit speaking to us.

v. 11 WHY??? Take your hands out of your pockets, God!!!

Is God angry at Asaph for feeling these things? Does God want him to feel these things?

Without suffering and anguish, there can be no joy.

Without a sense of loss and loneliness, the sense of satisfaction at finding love is not as deep.

But, if we suppress these emotions; if we do not embrace them, then we are not true to ourselves.

Now, go back to Psalm 73: 15-28 We need to decide ahead of time, before the negative emotions rear their heads, that we will not allow our emotions to take us to a really bad place of no return!!!

v. 15-17 I felt a lot of stuff. I acknowledged my feelings, but I did not let them take me too far into a bad place. Asaph brought his feelings to God.

But then I came into your sanctuary. Then I understood. I was reminded of the truth about your enemies. Psalm 73:16-17 a memory verse.

I reignited the spiritual disciplines in my life. I said the breath prayer daily, I fasted, meditated, memorized Scripture, prayed, practiced the *lectio divina* or Sabbath.

v. 18-20 I was brought back to my senses and I remembered the truth. I remembered the big picture, and how things will be in the end.

v. 21-22 God, I was feeling some “stuff” I was grieved and I felt bitterness.

Grieved: good Bitter: bad

v. 22 God, I went to some bad places and I repent.

v. 23-26 But despite this, you, God, are always with me.

Asaph is feeling safe, protected.

v. 24 Eternity is on my side.

v. 25 Asaph is feeling desire for God.

v. 26 Asaph is feeling confident. God is my portion.

v. 27 Then Asaph is able to move past his negative emotions and remember the truth.

v. 28 Asaph is feeling great! Asaph is going to go out and share his faith.

(But remember the feeling great requires some of the former feelings)

Psalm 74:12-17

v. 12 But… Asaph had a quiet time.

v. 13-15 We have had great victories in the past. You can do anything!

Asaph is feeling confident. v. 16 The day and the night are yours!

Psalm 74:18-23 Asaph feeling confident. Asaph is feeling safe in God’s hands.

Asaph is bold! v. 22 Rise up, O God. Remember! v. 23 Don’t ignore

All of us want to feel these things. But all of us will also feel those other things.

We need one to feel the other.

Let’s finish with David:

Psalm 139:14 I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful. I know that full well.

Psalm 139:23-24 Search me, God, and know my heart (and my emotions!). Test me and know my anxious (fearful, doubtful) thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Summary:

We are spiritual beings, but we are also emotional beings. Guess what! So is God! And both our “positive” and our “negative” emotions, if handled properly in a Christian worldview, can and will help us to know ourselves, and to deepen our relationship with God.