

God With Us in Our Sorrows
Advent Week 3 | Ecclesiastes 7:2-6
December 12, 2021

* KAREN MULLAN REQUEST | Have people stand

Pre-Sermon Remarks

- Advent: the season of longing | Immanuel: God with us
- The Christmas story is full of hope and joy and love...but also more than a little sadness.
- **Limiting** our scope to sadness. Not suffering in general, not trials, not anger.

Scripture Reading

Ecclesiastes 7 ²It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, since that is the end of all mankind, and the living should take it to heart. ³Grief is better than laughter, for when a face is sad, a heart may be glad. ⁴The heart of the wise is in a house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in a house of pleasure. ⁵It is better to listen to rebuke from a wise person than to listen to the song of fools, ⁶for like the crackling of burning thorns under the pot, so is the laughter of the fool. This too is futile.

PRAYER

The Bible and Emotions

1. The Bible emphasizes human emotions
2. It is unbiblical to demonize emotions | from ancient stoics to modern rationalists
 - a. **John Calvin** To bear the cross patiently is not to have your feelings altogether blunted, and to be absolutely insensible to pain, according to the absurd description which the Stoics of old...Now also we have among Christians a new kind of Stoics, who hold it vicious not only to groan and weep, but even to be sad and anxious.
3. It is unbiblical to idolize emotions | modern tendency to value “the felt”
4. Emotions are *not* neutral (amoral)
 - a. Good/bad “positive” emotions, good/bad “negative” emotions
 - b. **Dan Allendar and Tremper Longman** Every emotion is a theological statement.
5. Emotions are a window/gauge | values, expectations, desires
 - a. Therefore, it’s good to *engage* with emotions | *why are you downcast, oh my soul?*

And so that brings us to the specific emotion of sadness. But what is it?

Defining Sadness

1. Synonyms: sorrow, grief
2. Primarily communicates loss
 - a. Anger communicates “something is unjust/wrong”
 - b. Fear communicates “there is a threat”

- c. **J. Alasdair Groves and Winston Smith** Most of us have lost something important to us. If you have, you're familiar with grief. The larger the loss, the greater the ache, and the deeper the sadness. If you've experienced the end of an intimate relationship or the death of a dear loved one, then you know the sadness can be so profound that it is difficult to describe.
- 3. Comes from a variety of sources
 - a. Our own sin/mistakes
 - b. Someone else's sin or betrayal
 - c. Just the general brokenness of the world
- 4. Can be easy to avoid
 - a. Other emotions, like anger or anxiety are more forward (brain science)
 - b. Nothing really to do - sadness is a "sit in it" emotion

The Bible and Sadness/Sorrow

Examples:

- Jacob's sorrow over the loss of his son Joseph
- David's grief over his own sin against Bathsheba and Uriah
- Disciples' sorrow over Jesus' death
- Paul's sorrow over his fellow Jewish kinsmen rejecting Jesus as Messiah

Psalm 31 ⁹ Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye is wasted from grief; my soul and my body also. ¹⁰ For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away.

Assumption: God, please take away this sadness! But is that the whole story?

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Why Embrace Sadness?

1. To reckon directly with death
 - a. Selma's funeral a few weeks ago
 - b. This is where each one of us will eventually end up
2. Sadness leads to genuine gladness
 - a. House of pleasure = false substitute
 - b. Song of fools = rebuke by a wise person is better
 - c. Laughter of fools = crackling thorns are short-lived

Jesus' Advent and Sadness

Jesus' earthly life would be marked by deep sadness | Hebrews 5:7 "loud cries"

1. Starting early with the death of the firstborn | Matthew 2:13-23
2. Continuing through with betrayal |
3. Soul overwhelmed by sorrow in the garden | Mark 14:34
 - a. There is no sin in Jesus - deep pain, but **good** negative emotion

The Gospel and Sadness

1. Jesus deals directly with death | **Romans 4** ⁹ Christ died and returned to life for this: that he might be Lord over both the dead and the living.
2. Jesus invites us into sadness to give us joy | **Matthew 5** ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
3. Sadness is not our ultimate destination | **John 16** ²⁰ Truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice. You will become sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy. ²¹ When a woman is in labor, she has pain because her time has come. But when she has given birth to a child, she no longer remembers the suffering because of the joy that a person has been born into the world. ²² So you also have sorrow now. But I will see you again. Your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy from you.

Engage Your Sadness

*Don't ignore your sadness - No stoicism, no hedonism

1. Minimize action
2. Acknowledge the loss
3. Express your sadness

Examine Your Sadness

1. Bring it to Jesus
2. Repent, Receive, Remember

Charles Spurgeon Your sorrow itself shall be turned into joy. Not the sorrow to be taken away, and joy to be put in its place, but the very sorrow which now grieves you shall be turned into joy. God not only takes away the bitterness and gives sweetness in its place, but turns the bitterness into sweetness itself.

Recommended Resources

- *Untangling Emotions* book by J. Alasdair Groves and Winston T. Smith
- *Faithful Feelings* book by Matthew Eliot
- *Sacred Sorrows* book by Michael Card