

LOVE GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART: EMOTIONS

2 Samuel 6:1-15

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August 20, 2017

When we think about the “heart” in the non-physical sense, perhaps the first thing we all think about is our emotions. When we see this symbol, (**slide 1**) we think of emotional love...maybe romantic love...maybe not. I noticed not long ago on Facebook that I had “hearted” over 1,200 times in the past three or four months. That heart symbol...to me...was about moving beyond just “liking” someone or something that had been posted. I wanted to convey that I loved that statement or picture or person.

And I also really like the whole idea of the creation of emojis in our emerging world of electronic communications...because they help us to more clearly identify what the written word is meant to convey...from (**slide 2**) laughter and joking...(**slide 3**) to shock and dismay...(**slide 4**) to tears and even anger.

Emotions are defined as “the affective aspect of consciousness”...a strong feeling...usually directed toward a specific object and typically accompanied by physiological and behavioral changes in the body. And there’s all kinds of emotions, right? (**slide 5**) From happy...to sad...to angry... afraid...or anxious...and a multitude of nuances in-between...our emotions say something about our lives as we experience them.

Today, as we begin to unpack what Jesus called the first great commandment...of loving the Lord your God with all your Heart...we’re going to look at what that means with regard to our emotions. What does it mean...to love God with our emotions? Will you pray with me?

(PRAYER)

Today’s text is filled with (**slide 6**) emotion! It begins with unbridled joy...as David is about to bring the Ark of the Covenant for the first time into Jerusalem, also

known as the “City of David”. A stumble followed by an instinctive action leads to the death of a servant, which quickly turns David’s joy into anger and then fear. Then, after a three-month “sabbatical” of sorts, David once again joyfully and with abandon dances before the Lord as he brings the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem.

Now, let me begin by saying that I will NOT be focusing today on the death of Uzzah...although that would be a very interesting and important topic for another time as we think about how God is perceived by different people and groups during the Old Testament period and how our understanding of God has been shaped so differently through the lens of the Gospel.

Instead, what I want to look at today are some of the ways this story might enable us to understand more about ourselves...and particularly how our emotions can either draw us nearer or hinder us from entering fully into the kind of relationship that God desires with us that will lead us into wholeness.

So, let’s get to it. We begin with David, along with a whole bunch of other folks—dancing and singing and playing instruments before the Lord. So what’s the setting for this demonstration of exuberant joy? Well, David has become King, and once again, he’s been successful as a military leader against the forces of the Philistines. And for the very first time, they are bringing the Ark of the Covenant—the symbol of God’s presence and power among the people—into Jerusalem—the center of political power. So it’s a great day in David’s life...very much like a coronation or an inauguration. Everybody’s excited about the new beginning...and they worship God “with all their might”.

Have you ever felt that kind of (**slide 7**) unbridled joy? Maybe you can think of some times in your life when you danced or sang with all your might...but I’m guessing, for most of us, it probably wasn’t in the context of worship. Maybe a football game... maybe an outdoor music festival...but worship? I mean, we’ve been taught that worship

is a time when we're supposed to be reverent, right? To dance, or shout, or sing "with all our might" might be viewed as being "out of control"... and we wouldn't ever want to do that, right?

I remember a time in my early days of ministry, when the scripture for the day was Psalm 150. A young man—one of our youth—was reading:

Praise the Lord!

Praise God in the sanctuary;

Praise God in the mighty firmament!

Praise God for God's mighty deeds;

Praise God according to God's surpassing greatness!

Praise God with trumpet sound;

Praise God with lute and harp!

Praise God with tambourine and dance;

Praise God with strings and pipe!

Praise God with clanging cymbals;

Praise God with loud clashing cymbals!

And when he got to this point...with no warning, I pulled out some cymbals and "clanged and clashed" them really loud! Poor little Rhett about jumped out of his skin...as did the whole congregation!

Now—I'm not suggesting that we get all Pentecostal here...but there is something to be said about bringing God our joyful praise...to really think about all of the things that God has given to us and consider who God is...and to be thankful and joyful that "this is our God"...the One who loves us and has compassion for us and grants us peace and strength and forgiveness.

When have you invited God to be a part of joy in your life? It is an offering that you and I can make in worship...as well as in our lives “on the way” to wherever it is that we’re going.

But joy is not the only emotion that David experienced that day, right? Because something happened on the way to Jerusalem. The ark (**slide 8**) which had been carried from the days in wilderness...through the conquest of the “Promised Land”...the ark...representing God with them...a relic with mystical power and authority...this ark was being carried on a new cart...we are told...and coming down the hill to the threshing floor, one of the oxen stumbled. The ark “shook”, and instinctively, Uzzah reached out his hand to stabilize it. And what happens? We’re told that God’s anger was kindled against Uzzah and he died right there on the spot.

Again, I’m not going to elaborate here about this perception of God’s anger and wrath for a seemingly benign act of trying to help...but I do want to talk about David’s reaction. Because what happens? We are told that David is what? He’s (**slide 9**) angry. And he’s angry...not at Uzzah. He’s angry with God! He’s angry because God has done this thing that doesn’t seem at all to be just or right.

Have you ever been angry? Don’t all of you raise your hands at once! But how about this question: Have you ever been angry...with God? And if so...have you ever voiced your anger?

For those who might think this is heretical even to think about...hang on. Listen to this Psalm of Lament attributed to David:

How long...O Lord? Will you forget me forever?

How long...will you hide your face from me?

How long...must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day?

How long...shall my enemy be exalted over me?

These are words of frustration and even anger at God...for God's seeming absence and for the injustice David is experiencing in his life. A time when he's in the pit of despair.

David continues in his prayer:

Consider and answer me, O Lord my God;

Light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,

Lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him,"

Lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.

Anger. You know, we tend to think of anger as a "bad" emotion. And, it can be. Many awful things can happen when anger is unleashed—which we have certainly witnessed in recent days. But that doesn't have to be. Anger is also an emotion that can motivate us to do what is right and good. The great Martin Luther once said (**slide 10**):

"I never work better than when I am inspired by anger; when I am angry, I can write, pray, and preach well, for then my whole temperament is quickened, my understanding sharpened, and all mundane vexations and temptations depart."

What he's saying here is that when we commit our anger to God...rather than allowing it to consume and control us... anger can actually become the means by which we move out of our complacency and begin to work for God's agenda...to do justice, and love kindness and walk humbly with our God.

In the psalm that we were just looking at, David ends his prayer of complaint to God with these words:

But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because God has dealt bountifully with me.

So...instead of allowing anger to be destructive...bring it to God! Let God take that anger and deal bountifully with you. And trust! Trust that God has big enough shoulders to take your anger and transform it for God's good purposes! //

There's one more emotion that we see as David responds to Uzzah's death. After mentioning David's anger, what emotion is expressed? (**slide 11**) Fear. In verse 9 we read, "David was afraid of the Lord that day; he said, 'How can the ark of the Lord come into my care?' So David was unwilling to take the ark of the Lord into his care in the city of David; instead, David took it to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite."

What's the opposite of faith? It's fear! Now, as we know...this is a real emotion ...and of all the emotions...this is the only one that the Bible actually repeatedly tells us NOT to entertain. "Do not fear" the Bible says at least 365 times—that's one for every day of the year.

Now—why should we not entertain fear? And I use that word "entertain" intentionally here...because I think we do, in our society, really entertain fear. We watch scary shows, yes...but many of us also entertain fear whenever we feed on the latest bad news. And what happens when you and I "entertain" fear? Like David, we can become paralyzed. For three months he would not bring the ark into the city of David because of his fear. In fact...he had the ark taken to a Philistine...to his enemy! And it wasn't until David saw that the recipient of the ark was being blessed that he took the risk of overcoming his fear.

Now—let me say a quick word about a positive kind of fear...because there is something that the Bible calls the "fear of the Lord". Proverbs says, (**slide 12**) "The fear of the Lord is what? The beginning of wisdom." In this sense, we're talking about fear not as being afraid of...but respecting God...not taking God for granted.

Now, I want you to listen to me here. God is not my buddy. God is not my pal. God is HOLY. God is RIGHTEOUS. God is God...and I am not! And neither are you! God deserves our praise and reverence and respect. This is a healthy understanding of fear...and to love God fully...we have to fear God in this way.

So we get to the end of the passage with David bringing the ark into the city of David...into Jerusalem...once again dancing before the Lord with all his might! Now, if you keep reading, you'll find that his wife Micah is less than happy about this "inappropriate display" in front of all the young maidens...of David dancing with that linen ephod and stuff...but that's a story for another day too!

I love this text because it makes one thing abundantly clear: David is an example for...and he's an example of all of us. He's an example of someone who has a heart for God. Oh he's completely imperfect...we know that...but still ...he seeks to connect with God fully...with all his heart and emotions. Whether it's unbridled joy for who God is...or it's dealing with feelings of anger or fear...David brings it all...to God.

And that's what I hope we will do, as well. To remember that God has given us our emotions as a gift. Emotions help us to know ourselves...they are indicators about what is going on deep inside. And emotions are also means by which we can offer God what is deep within.

Because you see...**(slide 13)** God doesn't want part of you...God wants ALL of you! And this week, I hope you will offer your emotions...your feelings...whatever they are...to God. Trust God with your emotions. Allow them to become a means of connecting with God more fully. And see what you discover...about yourself... and about our God!

Love the Lord your God...with all your emotions! Praise be to God! Amen!