

Intro: Garrison. PIT. Psalm 55. **Pray.**

Recap: If you're just hopping in with us we're in the middle of our summer series where we're intentionally carving out a lot of space to focus on emotions. What does it look like for the people of God to be emotionally healthy disciples of Jesus? Well we started with what emotional health is:

Having the right emotion, at the right time, with the right amount, for the right duration, because of the right reason - namely, love.

And in order to get there we've got to go through 4 specific movements:

- We've got to **GO UP**, bringing our emotions to God.
- We've got to **GO IN**, examining our desires, thoughts and our hearts.
- We've got to **GO BACK**, looking at our past and family of origin.
- And we've got to **GO OUT**, not only inviting community in but actually doing the hard work of being honest and vulnerable with them.

This framework is going to serve the next 5 weeks as we shift towards looking at specific emotions and what we're supposed to do with them.

Now human emotions are really complex, and by no means do we think we're going to be able to parse through every single thing about every single one. So we picked the ones we thought would be most helpful to our church.

And we parse through each specific emotion, we've got to see 2 things that are going to dictate how we think:

1. Every emotion, regardless of how it is provoked, is a reflection of our relationship with God.

As we've said earlier in this series, the reason we feel what we feel isn't determined by 'things' by themselves. It's determined by what we love and worship. What we believe to be true. It's determined by our relationship with God. Regardless of how or why it's provoked, your emotional response is a reflection of your relationship with God.

Now secondly—>

2. There are righteous and unrighteous versions of these emotions.

That might be a foreign category. The way we categorize emotions usually has very little to do with whether they're righteous or unrighteous. We tend to just outright put each emotion into a category of Good or Bad. Or positive or negative. So shame—> bad emotion. joy—>good emotion. sad—> Bad. But this is a miss, because it's viewing our emotions only in light of if I'm comfortable when I'm feeling them.

There's more to it than that. Emotions are both righteous (created by God in His image) and unrighteous (we're sinful).

What we've got to see is that when we feel anything, it can be righteous, unrighteous or both. Hugely helpful, because it reshapes:

1. How we think about what we feel. Some of us don't really understand why we feel the way we feel. Some of us also beat ourselves up over what we feel.
2. What we do about what we feel. If we don't know the why then when we're not going to know what to do. Hopefully with some new categories and framework, you'll be really helped by where we're going.

With that framework, we're going to kick off by looking at **Fear**.

Let me define it for us so we're on the same page:

"Fear, as Dan Allender describes it in his book Cry of the Soul, is our response to uncertainty about our resources in the face of danger, when we are assaulted by a force that overwhelms us and compels us to face that we are helpless and out of control. Fear is provoked when the threat of danger (physical or relational) exposes our inability to preserve what we most deeply cherish."

Maybe more simply, **Fear is our emotional response to uncertainty.** \

Now this can show up in a bunch of different ways. It can look like a sort of simmering worry that we feel, maybe a nervousness, angst even. It can be intense anxiety. Sometimes it's more free floating, where everything worries us, but we're not really sure where it stems. Or it can be specific and we can be intimately aware that the fear is being triggered by our boss, or spouses, or kids. **We're talking about all types of fear, big to small.**

Most of us would categorize fear and anxiety as a negative emotion. We'd say it's bad and makes us uncomfortable. For some of us that's an understatement, we almost feel like fear and worry make our lives unmanageable. Fear and anxiety have a deeply troubling affect on all of us, but there's more to fear than just being a 'bad feeling'. Fear can actually be useful.

Fear is crucial to functioning in a fallen world. Fear is a warning light. It shows us that danger is near. It helps us take precautions, to plan, to hold back from certain people or situations, to get away from pain or danger.

Now, one of the difficult parts of fear is that we have to gauge whether or not we're living in reality or not. Like is this actually worth being afraid over. Which can be difficult, but at face value, fear is meant to be our warning light for danger.

Sharks. For instance, I'm scared of sharks. Terrified. It's not crazy for me to be afraid of sharks. Some of y'all out here without a care in the world, murky carolina beaches body surfing. You're the crazy ones! Not me. I should be afraid of sharks because they can hurt me. Now you can go crazy with that. But the fear is a warning light to keep me from harm.

The fear reminds me of a truth. Dangerous animals can hurt me. Fear tells us something true. Fear tells us we might be in danger, something is at risk. We might lose something important to us. Helps us redeem this category of fear.

Which is what we're going to see tonight in Ps 55.

Fear and Anxiety are telling us 3 truths.

Got a bible pick it up. V 1. **Psalm 55**

Give ear to my prayer, O God, and hide not yourself from my plea for mercy! Attend to me, and answer me; I am restless in my complaint and I moan, because of the noise of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked. For they drop

trouble upon me, and in anger they bear a grudge against me. My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death have fallen upon me. 5 Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me.

1. We live in a fallen and broken world.

We don't know the exact context of what's going on in David's life here. Psalm 55 doesn't line up precisely with any one event of David's life that we see in the Scriptures. But what we know is that there's some sort of rebellion or uprising happening, and that it's being led not by an enemy of David, but a close friend, as he states later in the Psalm.

David is crushed. This friend has betrayed him and is causing massive amounts of chaos and destruction. He's angry. He's begging for God to destroy his enemies, to divide them and to defeat them.

But he's also afraid. He's scared. He's feeling this deep sense of fear and terror over what's going on. He says the 'terrors of death have fallen on me'. David is afraid because of the ugliness of the world. People are being oppressed by evil and wicked men. Senseless violence and death are all around him. It doesn't make sense and it's terrifying.

David isn't living in unreality. He's being exposed to reality. Bad things can and will happen in this world. The worst case scenarios can and do happen. Satan, sin and death have a hold on the world. We live in a world that's broken by sin. The perfect world that God created is fallen. It was broken by sin.. That means that there are very real dangers in the world.

So it isn't crazy that you're afraid something could happen to your kid or spouse or loved ones, because we live in a fallen world. It isn't crazy that you're afraid you could have significant financial struggles, because we live in a fallen and broken world.

And that's terrifying. We all have to deal with the reality of suffering and death that is coming for us and everyone we love. Fear reminds us of that reality. We live in a fallen and broken world.

Skip down to v 9 for our second truth:

Destroy, O Lord, divide their tongues; for I see violence and strife in the city. Day and night they go around it on its walls, and iniquity and trouble are within it; ruin is in its midst; oppression and fraud do not depart from its marketplace. For it is not an enemy who taunts me—then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me—then I could hide from him. But it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. We used to take sweet counsel together; within God's house we walked in the throng. Let death steal over them; let them go down to Sheol alive; for evil is in their dwelling place and in their heart.

2. Good things are worth caring about.

David is looking down into his city, and he sees the brokenness. He sees violence and chaos. He sees fraud and theft happening in the marketplaces. And he sees who is responsible. A friend. Someone who he's apparently had a lot of experiences with. They would take counsel together, worship God together. And it's all falling apart.

As king, David was in charge of the government, military operations, money; he was the ultimate authority in Israel. But it was more than a job. If you read David's story you know that he was basically plucked out of obscurity by God and became the second king of Israel. David was more than just a king who had become king by birthright or the common means of succession; he was called by God. This is a high calling.

So David is looking out at the nation and it's in turmoil. This is the second reason he's afraid. The thing he cares about most, the kingdom of Israel, the people he's been called by God to lead, is all falling apart.

Again, is David living in unreality? No. He's being reminded of reality. He has good things in his life and he cares. He's broken over what's happening to his people and his relationships and he's afraid of what's going to happen next. I think this is huge for us.

Because it means you're not necessarily an immature person when you get afraid of bad things happening to the things you care about.

It may mean the warning light of fear is going off because of what and who you love.

Fear reminds us that good things are worth caring about.

Last one, skip back to v6:

And I say, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest; yes, I would wander far away; I would lodge in the wilderness; Selah. I would hurry to find a shelter from the raging wind and tempest."

3. We are not in control.

David responds to the situation by saying 'if I could fix it I would, but I can't so I want to run away, but I can't do that either'. This is the response of not being in control. What happened maybe was his fault, maybe wasn't, maybe a mixture of both, he's done what he can, and now there's nothing left to do. He wants to run. I think this is incredibly relatable.

We all fear what we can't control.

It's a difficult part of reality. We all know it, but struggle to accept it. We all hate the idea of being helpless. But fear reminds us that we are.

A normal pattern for humans is that pretty much everyone is attempting to set up their life in a way that shields them from this truth. To distract and cover the reality of our lack of control. We do things like:

- Plan a trip or finish a project → we feel powerful and competent.
- We do a good job on the report at work → we feel secure and competent.
- We see a certain number in the bank account → we feel safe and stable.

We don't like the fact that all of that can be undone in a moment. We're one phone call away from our whole life changing. One doctor's visit. One call from our boss.

Fear reminds us of reality. Of what is true.

Our world is broken, which means there's good things we care about, that we have little to no control how they are going to end up. And this is why so much of what you're fed for help with your anxiety doesn't work..

This is why saying things like 'it'll be okay' or 'that's not going to happen' when talking about anxiety are so unhelpful. Or even doing it in a Christianized way. Ya know? Like 'If you trust God it's going to be fine.' Which I'm terrible with btw. I find myself saying those platitudes to Cole or friends or even myself all the time. And for all of us that have had experience with worry and anxiety what's our answer? How do you know?! Which can be brushed aside as a really anxious question,

but in reality it's an informed question. We don't know. God CAN be trusted, but that doesn't mean bad things won't happen. Living in a sinful and broken world is the constant reminder of that: We don't know what can or will happen. And we're not in control.

Here's what happens. When we're afraid or anxious, these 3 truths loom really large. All we can see is, the world is bad, I'm not in control, the things I love are going to fall apart. Which becomes our problem. And they end up blocking out a 4th and deeper truth. Look back at vs16:

But I call to God, and the Lord will save me. Evening and morning and at noon. I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice. He redeems my soul in safety from the battle that I wage for many are arrayed against me. God will give ear and humble them, he who is enthroned from of old, Selah because they do not change and do not fear God. Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved. But you, O God, will cast them down into the pit of destruction; men of blood and treachery shall not live out half their days. But I will trust in you.

David's kingdom, David's life is falling apart. He's seen the truths of living in this scary world, while having things he cares about. He wants to run but can't, he wants to fix it but can't; he has no control. BUT, David finds the fourth truth.

4. God is good and in control.

The way we fight fear is not by ignoring it or detaching or mitigating it. **We fight fear by having a greater fear - The fear of God.**

Fear is natural. It takes hold and it does this---> elevates the problems, elevates the fear. De-elevates God. The problem isn't the fear, it's that we need a bigger picture of God. We try to fight the anxiety, but in truth we need a bigger picture of God. That's how we deal with fear.

The fear of God doesn't always eliminate the fear: no. It subordinates the fear.

Ed Welch in his book "When people are big and God is small" says that when you look at the large redwood trees out west, every other tree seems small in comparison. So the solution to our fear isn't to make all of our problems/fears really small ("oh it's no big deal" - some of our fears are really big deals!), it's to get a massive view of God.

Like when I think of David staring down the Philistine army right before fighting Goliath, all the Israelites are terrified, David shows up and says "who do these guys think they are to defy the living God?" THAT'S fear of the Lord. When Isaiah crumbles before God because he sees God in all his splendor and realizes the crushing weight of his sin, that's fear of the Lord.

Yes, you're afraid and maybe should be —> God is greater.

The fear of the Lord is this biblical phrase that pops up over and over again throughout the Bible.

This is a biblical truth that's been lost. Some people like to say this whole thing with 'fearing the Lord' isn't really fearing him but just to be in awe of him or respect him. But the stakes are low. What I mean is the real depth of 'fearing the Lord' gets gutted. We say God's our friend so we don't really need to be afraid of Him. Which there's some truth there. God is our friend and we do need to be in awe and respect Him.

But there's more to it. Because God is also the Creator of all things, He sustains all things, He will judge all things. We can't actually fully comprehend Him in His power and magnitude. We talked about this a few weeks ago, but God is infinitely greater than us. And that's supposed to be comforting AND frightening.

Jesus talks about this type of fear in the Gospel of Luke:

"I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. 5 But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!"

What a huge statement.

Dan Allender again says this:

*To fear God is to know that a moment of existence without Him is hell.... We are to fear the loss of existence; we are to fear the loss of the very essence of humanness as we walk on the edge of rebellion. Further to fear God is to be stunned speechless that the weight of His fury and rejection crushed His Son, not us. **Awe is not appreciation; it is stone-cold terror at the sense of otherness.***

The fear of the Lord is to see God correctly. We see that He is 'other'. We see His perfection and omnipotence. We see that our lives could not exist without Him. And if He wanted, it could end immediately.

When we see that: That's when the Fear of the Lord subordinates all our other fears. Yes, they're still real, but they're put back into the reality that God is the one that ultimately determines everything that happens to us, and He determines what that will be based of His own purposes and we will not understand them.

And that should make us tremble and worship Him.

And what's even more incomprehensible: is that the same fear that can and should crush us, doesn't because of the Gospel.

Gospel conclusion: We deserved God's greatness and wrath to reign down on us, but Jesus entered in and was crushed in our place. I love that quote 'the weight of His fury and rejection crushed His Son'. What a stunning reality. It does not make sense, all we can do is stand in awe. This God that is terrifying and 'other' made a way to be in relationship with us. You and me. With our fears, big and small. When we totally let those fears cloud out who He really is, He still made a way.

This is the hope of the Gospel. That our fears of today and worries about tomorrow will be gone. Jesus went to the cross to make eternal relationship with God possible for us. It's a terrifying reality that the cup of Gods wrath was waiting for us but Jesus picked it up and drank in our place.

Yet He did it, clearing the path that was barricaded by sin, between us and God. You are His. Forever. If you feel like the world is falling apart. If you're looking to run away or just be in control for a little bit. You're His. The promise is not that everything is going to turn out the way you want and that bad things won't happen. The promise is that You're His and He's with you.

Because of that you can trust Him today.

Application:

My hope is that when you're afraid, you wouldn't be stuck doing the mental gymnastics of how do I get this to go away? Or trying to escape or numb. But that you'd be able to let your fears be subordinate to your fear of God.

Very practical ways that we can cultivate the fear of the Lord.

1. Sabbath.

One of our defaults in anxiety is to try and take control. When we're anxious, worried about our uncertain future, so often we think the answer is to do more, try harder - it practically and physically draws us away from trust and fear of God. Sabbath is a chance to lay all of that down for one day. To take a day to cease. To stop. To remember in a practical, painful, difficult way that God never stops working, so we can.

2. Meditate on Scripture.

You have to get in God's Word. You have to read it, study it, memorize it. So when anxiety comes, you can bring back to mind the truths of the living and active word of God which is powerful, and has everything we need for life and Godliness.

- So when you're anxious about a meeting or about something you're about to step into:
 - Isaiah 41:10 - "Fear not, for God is with you."
- When you're anxious about temptation, worried over giving into sin:
 - 1 Cor 10:13 - "He'll provide a way out."
- When you're anxious about a decision about the future:
 - Psalm 32:8 - "God will instruct us and teach us the way we should go."

We try to get some Bible in our heads about the bigness and greatness of God. Easy place to start:

- Exodus. God leads over a million Israelites out of slavery. Parts the Red Sea. Destroys the Egyptian army.

We have to get into God's Word, learn it, study it, memorize it - so that when we're pressed by life the Holy Spirit might bring these promises of God back into our minds and rehearse these truths of God's Word to our hearts.

3. Remember God's faithfulness.

Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved. But you, O God, will cast them down into the pit of destruction; men of blood and treachery shall not live out half their days. But I will trust in you.

Very often in David's life, we see him refer back to what God has done for him. He looks back and sees how God has been faithful and looks at His actions. This idea of 'remember the Lord' is rehearsed throughout the Scriptures. And God actually says it often Himself, setting up feasts and practices so His people will remember what He's done.

We need to do the same thing. Whether you're currently experiencing anxiety, fear, worry; it needs to be a regular practice of looking back at what God has done in your life. Maybe you're like, I can't really see anything right now, it's very cloudy. I get it, look at how he saved you. If you're a Christian, you will always have something you can look at to remember God's faithfulness.

Secondly, many of us, myself included, struggle to see the reality that God is faithful, and bad things happen. Those don't contradict. There are ton of biblical figures that died really bad deaths even though they were following after God. Many of us need to face the reality, that our worst fears could happen and God is still good.

Me and Tim were listening to a sermon on our Pastor Retreat and something stuck out to both of us, the teacher said “In Christ, you’re okay.” You’re not in control, we live in a sinful broken world, bad things can and may happen to you and those you love: and in Christ, you’re okay. We look past this broken world and God’s faithfulness now and in the past is a reminder of what’s to come.

Communion.

Pray