

Sermon- Opening Up To The God Who Feels

Sermon: John 11:30-39

Sunday, March 10, 2019

Today we are going to continue into the story of Jesus' last sign miracle. Last Sunday we saw that Jesus had arrived in Bethany. But before he could reach the house itself, when he was still a little distance away, Martha is somehow informed of Jesus' presence and she immediately goes to meet him. When she sees Jesus, the first thing that she says is, "Jesus if only you were here Lazarus would not have died". Jesus replies to that with his last I AM saying, "*I AM the Resurrection and the Life, anyone who believes in me will not die*". Then he asks Martha if she believes Him. She says she does and walks away as if nothing extraordinary was spoken or heard. I am recapping this Jesus-Martha interaction from the previous Sunday because it will help you to see the stark contrast between the Martha and the Jesus-Mary encounter we are going to focus on today.

So as soon as Martha goes back into the house, she tells her sister Mary that Jesus is looking for her. As soon as Mary gets the message she leaves the house and goes to meet Jesus. A lot of people who had come to mourn with the sisters also get up and follow her, thinking that she was going to the tomb to mourn Lazarus there. But Mary as you know did not head to the tomb but to where Jesus was. And when she sees Jesus, her first words out of her mouth are exactly the same as Martha's, "Jesus, if you were here, my brother would not have died". But the way she said it could not be more different. When Mary said those words to Jesus, she fell at his feet and wept as she said it.

To fully enter into this highly emotional scene we need to get a little deeper into the mind of Mary. And if we are to get what is going on, we need to feel what Mary is

feeling. So Mary was someone who as I had mentioned last time looks like someone with a “secure” attachment style. In layman’s terms, she was someone who was secure enough to love people with an appropriate level of emotional intimacy. It was obvious that she was very close to her brother. And her brother had just died an untimely and mysterious death. It would have felt to her like a leaving of someone who was very close to her. When you have people who are close in your life, you share so many things that are unique to that relationship right? You share habits of things you do together, memories of times that have meant a lot to you, words and phrases that you use to each other that are unique to your relationship. You also share a reliance upon each other, right? There are certain things that you always go to some people in your life to satisfy. And they come to you for certain things. That is what a close relationship is. And for Mary, the weight of all those memories and all those things she would not be able to call on Lazarus for were weighing on her. And so when she came to Jesus, all that weight caused her to collapse at Jesus’ feet. And she collapsed at Jesus feet and nobody else’s because she knew for sure that Jesus had the power to prevent the tragedy that she was experiencing right now. Mary was broken with grief and so she collapsed at Jesus feet under the weight of her tears.

Lift your eyes up and look at Jesus for a few minutes. When Jesus saw Mary weeping and not just Mary but even the other mourners who were sharing this moment of grief with her, a deep anger welled up within Him and He was deeply troubled in His spirit. Now this one verse is so loaded that I need to spend some time examining it. The first question we have to address with this verse is this. For someone who was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, you wonder why Jesus spent time troubled about Lazarus’ death rather than hurrying up and fixing the problem, right? This is kind of like if the patient on the operating table has a heart that has stopped and instead of the doctor taking the defibrillator that is right there and shocking the patient, the doctor stands there getting emotional about what has happened to the patient. You know any doctors that will do

that? Probably not because if they did that in this country they would probably get sued, right? But no one dictates to Jesus how he spends his time except his heavenly father. So when Jesus sees Mary and the rest of the mourners weeping he takes time to enter into the emotional depth of the moment and for Jesus this moment caused His spirit to be deeply troubled.

OK so the first question is why is Jesus troubled and what is he troubled about? Well, this is fascinating I think because this reaction shows you both his Divinity and humanity in one emotion. Let me explain. You see, Jesus in His humanity is looking at the death of Lazarus and the sorrow it is causing his family and community and Jesus loves so deeply that he can feel the full force of the pain that these people are experiencing. Now his divine self also knows that when he made the world, he made it without death, remember? Death came into the world because Adam and Eve wanted to experience evil. They did not realize then what they were choosing but they did not value the garden of Eden because it was given to them on a platter. But when evil came into the world, it is hard for anyone but God to comprehend the extent of the mess that humanity had chosen for themselves. Unfortunately by unleashing evil into the world, humanity had unleashed great suffering not just on themselves but on the whole of creation. So yes Jesus in his humanity is grieving for Mary's loss and maybe even his own personal loss for a time. But Jesus in his divinity is angry at the level of suffering that death brings. Because Jesus knows that even though he is very soon going to take care of Lazarus' problem, death of all kinds and the suffering it brings is going to remain a fact of life for a very long time to come. Jesus knows that Lazarus will be up soon, but the fact of death and suffering tears at Jesus more than you and I can comprehend.

And Jesus did not hide his emotions. It was there for everybody to see. He was transparent with people because He came to show people God's heart. Jesus does not

guard his heart from people and because of that you know that God himself does not guard his heart from people. The bible is not kidding when it says, if you have seen Jesus, you have seen the Father in heaven. If Jesus' heart is troubled so much at the death of Lazarus, whom he has the power to raise from the dead, know that our Father in heaven is also deeply troubled in his heart at all the suffering that he has all the power to sweep away at any time and will one day in fact do.

But this brings us then to another question. Lazarus was as dead when Jesus spoke to Martha as when he spoke to Mary. So how come he was not so overcome with emotion when he spoke to Martha as when he spoke to Mary? Well, Jesus does not get overcome with emotion in his conversation with Martha because Martha does not open up her emotional self to Jesus. So there was nothing for Jesus to empathize with. Martha made no emotional request of Jesus so there was no emotional response from Jesus. This is the fundamental fact of interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal relationships are based on the law of reciprocity. In a healthy relationship and even in some unhealthy relationships, people mirror each other's emotional states. Why is mirroring relevant here? Because we forget that we have to bring our emotions to our relationship with Jesus Christ just as much as we have to bring our requests. Because when we bring our emotions into our prayer life, we have the opportunity to receive God's emotions as well. When we have an emotional connection with God we just know where His heart is on some issue. That is what it means to have a personal relationship with a personal God. If we say we worship a personal God, then do our conversations with our Heavenly father reflect an intimate personal relationship or are our prayers more like a message in a bottle. A note set adrift on a vast ocean. The God that Jesus represents does not want messages in bottles, I can tell you that. Our God wants you to bring your mess to His feet like Mary did.

So what does it take to have an emotionally intimate relationship with Jesus and our heavenly Father?

The fact is, if you are not in touch with your own emotions and you are not emotionally available to the people around you, you are not going to be able to be emotionally available even to God. So the first step is to be **in touch** with one's own emotional state. You see both Mary and Martha experienced the same loss. But you don't see Martha expressing any emotion to Jesus. This may be because she was either hiding what she really felt, or she was too afraid to actually deal with her own emotions. Martha's emotional cageyness may be the result of some form of rejection early in life. Whatever it is, it is something that needs to be recognized and healed. Healing is possible, but only if you recognize that the need for healing in this area. If you want to have emotional intimacy with Christ, you have to be in touch with your emotions whether you are male or female.

The second aspect of having an emotional relationship with Christ is being able to **express** your emotions in prayer. Sometimes our prayers take on a bland monotone of reading a laundry list. But here is the problem. If we related to any other human being like that would that be a satisfying relationship? Not really. So how will reading a laundry lists be satisfying to God? Christ is looking for a relationship with us that has all the emotional colors of life itself. While you and me are never going to be able to have the emotional intensity that Christ shared with his Father, as he was sweating blood in the Garden of Gethsemane, but you and me and learn from the emotional quality of someone like King David, the man after God's own heart. When David cries he cries "why have you forsaken me Lord?" and when he rejoices he says, "your word is sweeter than honey". When he expresses yearning he says, "as the deer pants for the water so my soul pants for you". You see David was a man after God's own heart because God

could see his heart. The only way to have emotional intimacy with God is to have a prayer life in which you express not just your needs but your emotions as well.

The third aspect of having a real emotionally intimate relationship with Jesus is being able to **sense** His spirit's response to what you have expressed to Him. You see, the most amazing thing we get to see in this passage is that when Mary falls at Jesus' feet crying, Jesus does not simply stand and watch. Jesus feels something in His spirit that he does not feel when Martha speaks to him. Not because Jesus did not care for Martha but because with Martha an emotional response would have been out of place. Martha would not be able to handle it. There will be situations when you bring your self to Jesus with your whole emotional being, and you will be able to say, I **know** how Jesus feels about this situation. This is what it means to see God. When a kid longs for a parent they don't have, can you feel God's heart on the matter? When a parent is dealing with grief because their son or daughter's life was taken by a bullet, can you sense God's emotion regarding that situation? When you hurt and are in pain in the hospital and cry out to God, God wants you to know not just what the Bible says about the concept of suffering, God wants you to be aware that nobody pains with you as much as God does. Yes, God wants you to have a relationship with Jesus in which you can feel what God is feeling.

People talk about having a relationship with Christ. But there is much more to it than that friends. Christ just does not want to have a relationship with you. He wants to have a **meaningful, emotionally intimate** relationship with you. Start by bringing your emotional wounds to him and receive healing from him. Then you will be free to be in touch with your own emotions. Then you can bring your emotions to Jesus in prayer. And when you do that, God will surprise you by giving you an awareness of what He is feeling too. And that my friends is the deepest friendship you can have. Would you like a friend like that? Let us pray.