

Good morning!

How are ya feeling today?

Isn't that the question we always get.

How ya feeling today?

Especially at church. You walk into church and there's a pressure to say, "Great!"

It doesn't matter what's going on in your lives, how stressful it is at work, or how much conflict there is at home or even threats in the car ride to church.

It doesn't matter how much trouble your marriage might be in or how overwhelmed you feel as a parent.

When you come to church and someone asks, "How ya doing?" "How you feeling?"

Our response, at least our spiritual, church response is "Great" or "Fine" or "Good."

If you're really spiritual, then you say "Blessed", "So blessed."

Then it can become a competition.

"I'm so blessed, if I were anymore blessed there would be two of me."

I was in Kansas recently and I asked someone how he was doing,
"If I was any more blessed, I'd have to sit on my hands to keep from clapping."

I've found that a lot of times, the most "spiritual" or "churchy" answers are not the most honest, not the most vulnerable.

In life we respond, "Good" or "Okay" or "Fine" or "Great, so great" and we just go back and forth with this.

So this morning, I would like to talk about feelings and emotions.

Talk about our feelings and emotions in a way that honors God, in a way that leads us toward His purpose for our lives.

Now, I know some of you this idea of talking about our emotions for the next several hours isn't your idea of fun.

It sounds miserable.

Some people just don't want to do this, but I will say this from my experience,

The ones who really don't want to do this are the ones who really need to do it.

Like, anger...you don't know where your anger comes from, but there is a connection between your anger and your refusal to talk about your feelings.

You don't know where your apathy comes from.

You don't know where your indifference comes from.

You don't know where your jealousy or resentment comes from.

But all of these come from some emotions that haven't been surrendered over and redeemed by Jesus Christ.

So we are going to talk about emotions and feelings, but I understand this is a bit tough to do in church.

Because we have been taught that feelings and faith don't always go together.

Feelings don't fit into the faith equation.

A lot of us grew up in homes or in a church where, when it came to our feelings, we were taught one of two things:

There are right feelings and there are wrong feelings.

There's the way you should feel and there's the way you shouldn't feel.

So when you feel a certain way, you were taught, "Don't do that. Don't feel that way, feel this way."

That's how you were taught to think as a Christian.

"Don't feel that way, just feel this way."

"Don't feel sad, feel happy."

"I feel anxious." "Well, don't feel that way. Don't be anxious. Be at peace."

This was our spiritual solution.

"If this is how you're feeling, don't feel that way anymore."

"Well, what if I don't feel like not feeling that way? How do I fix that?"

And here's what happens: We start pretending.

We start pretending we feel some way that we don't actually feel.

So when people around us ask us how we are doing.

We say, “Fine, Good, Okay”

But we are not Fine, Good, or Okay!

We know that’s not the right answer.

But that’s what’s expected of us.

So it’s difficult for some of us to talk about emotions.

You know what I think has been one of the greatest inventions?

Emoji’s. Have you ever really looked at these?

We use them so much in our texts and they can convey so much!

Like sometimes I’ll see an emoji, and I think, “wow that’s exactly how I feel.”

So to use the emoji language:



We know we want to feel this way. 😊

But sometimes, we feel another way. ☹️

I know we want to feel cool, calm, confident.

But sometimes we feel pretty anxious or uncertain or overwhelmed.

We want to feel cheerful, but sometimes we feel differently.

And a lot of times, we just feel numb.

Like there's just no feelings there at all.

We just feel like shutting down.

So when that happens, we don't feel happiness or sadness.

We don't necessarily feel grief, but we don't necessarily feel joy.

In our relationships, we don't necessarily feel love and connection, but we don't feel bitterness and anger either.

We're just numb.

So this morning, I want us to talk about what it looks like to have emotional health.

Because if we are going to be spiritually mature, we need to be emotionally healthy.

Amen?

To do this, I want us to take a very close look at Jesus and how He handled His emotions and His feelings with His life here on earth.

If you have your Bibles, you can turn to **Matthew 26**.

In Matthew 26, we're going to see Jesus in this very emotional time in His life.

Now, I know the idea of Jesus being emotional may not feel quite right because we've been taught that emotions aren't exactly very spiritual, that they aren't a part of faith.

There was a study that showed Jesus experienced 39 emotions in His life.

Some of you didn't even know there was 39 emotions.

I'm married with two daughters, a female cat and a female dog.

There's at least **39** emotions.

When Jesus met the Centurion who demonstrates great faith, Jesus is delighted.

But Jesus is sad on the Mount of Olives when He looks over the City of Jerusalem and He thinks about people who have rejected Him.

Jesus is angry when He thinks about the religious leaders how care more about religious tradition than about life transformation.

Jesus is full of joy when 72 disciples come back they're telling stories of the powerful ways God has worked in them and through them.

Jesus weeps and grieves when His friend, Lazarus dies.

And Jesus feels shame. **1 Peter 2**, says Jesus felt shame. It wasn't His shame, it was our shame.

If we read through the Gospels, we will see that Jesus had a lot of emotions.

He knew discouragement, He knew delight.

He knew loneliness, He knew love and longing.

Jesus shows us that emotions and feelings are not associated with being weak; they're associated with being human.

This is who we've been made to be.

The question is not, "Are emotions or feelings right or wrong?"

The question is, "What do we do with them? How do we manage them? How do we deal with how we feel?"

I think it will help to understand where the word emotion comes from.

It comes from the Latin word *emovere*, which just means "to move," "to move."

God gives us emotions to move us.

The question becomes "Where are they taking us?"

Think of it like this:

If your emotions are like a vehicle.

You get in a vehicle of anxiety. Where's your anxiety taking you? That's really the question.

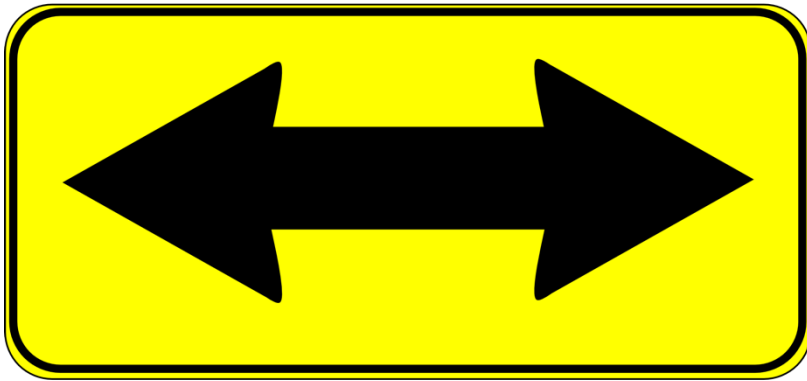
You get in a vehicle of guilt. Where's your guilt taking you?

Where's your loneliness taking you?

Where's your anger taking you?

These are emotions that aren't wrong, but what direction are you gonna go?

Think of it like this: a Road sign.



We go left. We go right.

We're going to go one direction or another.

Every time we experience an emotion or a feeling, we're getting in a vehicle and we're going to go this way or we're going to go that way.

We experience shame and we find ourselves in that vehicle, it's either going to take us to a place of isolation or it's going to take us to a place of forgiveness and freedom.

We experience loneliness. That vehicle is going to take us to a place of depression and despair, or it's going to take us to a place of connection and dependence on God.

Here's the point: There are all kinds of emotions that we might feel.

These emotions are an opportunity for us to move closer to God.

Matthew 26

Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane and there are all kinds of emotions going on.

It's already been an emotional evening for Him.

- He was in the Upper Room for the Last Supper.
- Judas has left to betray Him.
- Jesus knows what is going to happen to Him.
- Jesus is going to be arrested.
- He is going to be beaten.
- He's going to be crucified.
- He knows all of this.

In Matthew 26, He's overcome, just overwhelmed with emotion.

Verse 36, “Then Jesus went with them to a garden called Gethsemane and told his disciples, ‘Stay here while I go over there and pray.’ Taking along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee (James and John), he plunged into an agonizing sorrow. Then he said, ‘This sorrow is crushing my life out. Stay here and keep vigil with me.’ Going a little ahead, he fell on his face, praying, ‘My Father, if there is any way, get me out of this. But please, not what I want. You, what do you want?’”

Luke, who was a medical doctor, as he tells us about this moment, he points out that Jesus experienced some physical symptoms of just feeling so emotionally overwhelmed.

Luke 22:44, “He prayed on all the harder. Sweat, wring from him like drops of blood, poured off his face.”

Did you know this is a rare medical condition known as “hematidrosis”?

This is when tiny capillaries in the sweat glands break because of overwhelming emotions or anxiety, and it creates this bloody sweat, usually followed by the body going into shock.

Jesus is clearly emotionally overwhelmed. He says, “My soul is overwhelmed to the point of death.”

You know, I think there are Christians who would have tried to counsel Jesus out of that.

“Don’t feel that way. Feel this way.”

“Smile.” “God loves you.”

Jesus, haven’t you read Romans 8:28? “In all things God works together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.”

“Jesus, you just need to have more faith.”

I’m not going to tell Jesus that.

My hope, is that for people who read about this emotional time in the life of Jesus, that it frees them from this pressure Christianity puts on us to always be happy.

Because here’s what I know.

If you are here this morning and you feel:

Overwhelmed

Angry

Jealous

Confused

Sad

Stressed

Scared

Shame

I promise you Jesus is not going to come to you and tell you not to feel that way.

Jesus is going to come to you and say, “I know how you feel. I know how that feels.”

And the sooner we understand this, getting that theology right will completely change how we process our emotions and our feelings.

Now, what can complicate this, especially in churches where there are different generations is how different generations process emotions.

My thesis for my Master’s of Theology was on the different Generations and how they relate to the Christian faith.

I studied The Greatest Generation, The Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X.

Since my these, we have Millennials, Generation Z and Generation Alpha.

All of these generations will process feelings and emotions differently, but if I were to do another thesis on generations, I would conclude them to two areas.

Emotional Avoidance

Simply put, avoiding emotions, not allowing them.

Stuff it down.

The problem is when it surfaces, and you have to ask yourselves, “Why? Why do I deal with what I deal with?”

Why do I drink when I drink?

Why do I go on a shopping spree online?

Why do I compulsively look at porn?

Why do I eat a whole carton of ice cream?

Where’s that coming from?

Why do I go from relationship to relationship, but can’t seem to make a commitment?

Why do I yell and scream and then promise I won’t and then yell and scream some more?

Emotional Avoidance, we just stuff it down.

But the Bible talks about this. What’s in our hearts, it will eventually come out.

The other way is called Emotional Indulgence.

Simply, we just feel what we feel. Whatever we feel, that’s right.

We find our identity in our desires, our feelings. We let ourselves be dominated by our feelings.

Our feelings are our GPS.

We wake up, and however we feel, that's going to determine our day and how we treat people.

And if there are people around you, "well, sorry, that's just how I feel."

The danger is that our feelings become a thermostat in our home or workplace or school. It just determines the temperature for the people around us.

There was a study by Dr. Daniel Coleman who studied the power of this dynamic. He says, "Emotions are more contagious than the flu."

He writes, "This dynamic is so powerful that in one study, three volunteers sat silently in a circle for two minutes, and at the end of the time the most emotionally expressive person transmitted his or her mood to the other two without saying a word. In every such session, the mood the most expressive person had going in was also the mood the other two felt coming out – whether happy, bored, anxious or angry."

Maybe you or someone you know is sharing life with somebody like this – just emotionally indulgent, just feeling their feelings.

As we study Scripture, we are going to learn that our emotions are like a gauge.

They are meant to get our attention, and they are meant to move us in a direction that makes us more like Jesus where we're able to accomplish God's purpose for our life.

We become more spiritually mature as we become more emotionally healthy.

But we have to pay attention to the gauge.

I want to show you a picture of my first car.

1980 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme.

I still don't understand how I couldn't get a date with a car like that?

I loved this car, but it did have a lot of problems.

At one point the engine light came on.

I knew I had to do something, but I didn't know what to do. I looked at the engine, but I didn't really know what I was looking at.

So I kept driving. Friends would get in the car, "Hey your engine light is on."

Eventually I just took some black electric tape and covered it. Problem solved, right?

I just kept driving. I eventually forgot that underneath that tape was a flashing light.

Eventually, I was driving and it just started smoking and shut down. And I was in big trouble.

See, car manufacturers design cars in a way that when the check engine light comes on, it's supposed to get our attention to let us know something isn't right, we need to look under the hood.

We can't keep driving.

Eventually there's going to be a much higher price to pay to get it fixed.

For many of us, our emotions are trying to get our attention.

We may try for awhile to just look away, avoid it, cover it up.

Other people may even point it out to us.

But we just keep driving, and eventually the whole thing blows up in our face.

So, what are we going to do?

How are we going to deal with our emotions?

Matthew 26, Jesus models this for us.

He gives us an example of what it looks like to release our feelings to God

so that those feelings can be redeemed,

so that He can do for our feelings what He wants to do for all of us – make them new.

The first thing we see Jesus do is this: **He tells His friends how He's feeling and He asks His friends to stay with Him.**

Verse 38, "The He said to them, 'This sorrow is crushing my life out. Stay here and keep vigil with me.'"

We can't miss this: Jesus is vulnerable with some of His closest friends.

It wasn't weak for Him to do that.

It was strong!

He doesn't do it with all of His Disciples. Just 3 of them.

The point is not to throw up all of your Facebook page or Instagram feed or Twitter account.

But there does need to be 2 or 3 people that we can be honest with. It's not weak to do that.

That's like Jesus for you to do that.

It takes strength.

It takes courage.

It takes humility.

When Jesus says to Peter, James and John, “I am overwhelmed, stay with me, stay here with me.” Jesus is saying, I need you here with Me.

The second thing he does is **He prioritizes His faith over His feelings.**

I’ll put it this way, He aligns His feelings with God wants for His life.

He aligns with what He knows is true. This is not easy.

Verse 39, “Going a little ahead, he fell on his face, praying, “My Father, if there is any way, get me out of this. But please, not what I want. You, what do you want?””

It’s not how I feel that matters. It’s what you want God.

Now for those who are more in emotional indulgence, this is really significant because you’ve been taught, “if that’s how you feel, then that’s what is right.”

“If that’s how you feel, then that’s what you should do.”

“If that’s how you feel, then that’s who you should be.”

Jesus does not do that!!!

That’s not the example He sets for us.

Instead, He is honest with how He feels.

He doesn’t pretend to feel something other than what He feels.

But He takes it to God, processes it with God, and He concludes, “God, whatever you want is what I want.”

You may feel like losing your temper and punching a hole in the wall.

You may feel like staying in bed all day and feeling sorry for yourself.

You may feel like avoiding social situations that create anxiety.

You may feel lonely in your marriage and want to move ahead with the affair.

You may feel like getting a divorce and starting over.

You may feel like running up the credit card debt.

You may feel that way – and that's ok, but where's that feeling going to take you?

I'm not going to say don't feel that way, but I will ask you where's that feeling going to take you?

Because this is what I've learned in my sinful life and my counseling.

What you feel is real, but just because it's real doesn't make it true!

What you feel is real, but just because it's real doesn't make it true!

You may feel lonely.

Ok, that's the worst way to feel. That's real, but it's not true.

If you're a follower of Jesus it's just not true.

The truth is, you are not alone.

Jesus will never leave you.

Jesus will never forsake you.

We have not been left as orphans.

We've been filled with the Holy Spirit.

There are people who love you and care about you who are brothers and sisters in Christ.

You are not alone.

You may feel shame and guilt, and that is real, But it isn't true.

Jesus has set you free from shame and guilt.

Jesus has forgive your sins.

Jesus has redeemed your life.

Jesus has restored your life.

You've been set free from the law of sin and shame.

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!

Amen?

Amen?

When we are honest with God about our emotions and we align our emotions with what God wants for our lives, this is following the example of Jesus.

Jesus, comes into the Garden.

Overwhelmed with anxiety and emotion.

He spends hours praying on His face before God.

The soldiers come. Jesus is resolute.

Something has changed.

He is not on His face.

He is on His feet.

He is standing up.

He is strong.
He is determined.
And He sets His face toward Calvary.

The third thing that Jesus does, **He is honest with God. He pours out His feelings to His Heavenly Father.**

V. 39, “Going a little ahead, he fell on his face, praying, ‘My Father...’”

Abba, Father, Dad, Daddy.

This is who we process our feelings and our emotions with in prayer.

It’s not about big words, fancy words.

It’s just talking to our Daddy.

I’m just so
I’m just so stressed out.
I’m so sad.
I’m so disappointed in my marriage.
I’m so bitter toward my parents.
I’m so anxious about my future.
I’m so lonely.
I just want to die.

When was the last time you talked to God that way?

God wants to redeem these emotions, but He can only redeem what we release to Him.

Our challenge,

We need to understand our emotions are a vehicle that are going to take us somewhere.

And it’s time for us to pull over to the side of the road.
Open up the door and invite Jesus in.

He doesn’t want the passenger seat.
He wants the driver’s seat.
He wants the wheel.

He wants us to get out, walk around, sit in and open the back door for a couple of friends to get in the backseat with you.

That's how Jesus has set it up with us.

He is with us, and then we are with one another.

And we say, "Jesus where are we going?"

And we invite God to meet us in our emotion.

We invite God to meet us in that feeling.

You might not think He wants in the car when we feel that way.

He does.

We invite him into our fear.

We invite him in when we feel overcome with lust, and we say, "God, this is how I feel. Would you redeem this? Would you sanctify this?"

We invite Him in when we feel sad and we don't want to be around people, and we say, "God, would you get in the car with me?"

God will join you.

Our feelings and our emotions are an opportunity to invite God in and to move us to a different place.