

Cross-Shaped Emotions

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What emotions did Jesus experience?

Emotions leading up to the cross:

- Sorrow even unto death – Matthew 26:38–39: Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.” And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” (ESV)
- Peace that passes understanding – Matthew 27:11–14: Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You have said so.” But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?” But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. (ESV)

Emotions on the cross:

- Surprising loneliness – Matthew 27:45–46: Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (ESV)
- Surprising joy – Hebrews 12:1–2: Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (ESV)

In case you don't know Jesus – *this is what He did for you.*

What can we learn from Jesus' emotions?

Emotions aren't inherently sinful:

- *Sinless* Jesus experienced a full range of emotions...
- ...even as He made His *sinless* sacrifice

Jesus can *sympathize* with our emotions.

- Hebrews 4:15
- Frees us up to be honest with Jesus about our emotions
- He's experienced what we have

We needn't be *ashamed* of our emotions.

- Consider the “ups and downs” Jesus felt. So we needn't be ashamed when we do, too.

- I've seen people with a happier disposition feel guilty that they aren't *deep*
- I've seen people with a more melancholy disposition feel guilty that they aren't *fun*

We will experience *many* different emotions.

- Jesus is *truly* human, and He experienced a range of emotions. To be *truly* human, then, is to experience that same range.
- We cannot expect a life of just one "set" of emotions. May seem obvious to say, but it's important, because...
 - Live in a world today where any lack of happiness, any seasons of sorrow are seen as wrong. That's *not* biblical, and it will make us see ourselves as "broken" or "less than" when we're *not*.
 - But we also live in a world today where we can think we're resigned to a life without any taste of joy and peace. That's *not* biblical, either, for it makes us shortchange the power of Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus is *truly* human, and He experienced a range of emotions. To be *truly* human, then, is to experience that same range.

Why is all this so important?

Emotions drove Jesus to do great good.

- Joy ☐ cross, peace ☐ cross
- We've experienced the same in our own lives:
 - Joy has birthed courage
 - Sorrow has produced compassion

Emotions tempted Jesus to do great evil.

- In Matthew 4, Satan tempted Jesus when He was hungry and tired – when His emotions were *ripe!*
- We've experienced the same in our own lives:
 - Joy has become complacency
 - Sorrow has led to cursing
- "If it makes you happy, it can't be that bad" is some of the worst advice you could ever take. How many GPAs, careers, and marriages have been ruined through the unhinged pursuit of happiness?

Why is all this so challenging?

So this shows us the *importance*, but also the *challenge*, of navigating our emotions – which is added to by the following factors...

The same emotions can flow from *the body or the soul*:

- Gethsemane – emotional sorrow primarily flowing from the *soul*
- Cross – emotional sorrow primarily flowing from the *body*
- Forms helpful questions:
 - Is something up in my soul?

- Or do I just need to get some rest?
- Keeps us from unhelpful judgments:
 - Issue *might* be spiritual
 - Issue *might* be physical
 - Most of us are inclined to assume *it can't* be one of the two – or even a mix, and thus are harsh to ourselves and to others
 - Knowing this makes us more gentle
- But nonetheless, it makes understanding & discerning our emotions *challenging*

The same emotions can be a *good or bad* indicator of reality:

- *Good*: Jesus' sorrowful emotions *did* correspond to His physical and spiritual pain
- *Bad*: Jesus' sorrowful emotions *did not correspond* to the Father's love for Him or to His faithfulness
 - Assessing by His emotions, we might think Jesus is weak or outside of God's blessing or disobeying His will.
 - If we thought so, we couldn't be more wrong.
- So again, understanding & discerning our emotions can be *challenging* – but *oh so important*

The same emotions can spring from *righteousness or sin*:

- Compare the cross & Psalm 32
- David felt sorrow unto death because He was *hiding sin*
- Jesus felt sorrow unto death because He was *dying for sin*
- Yet again, understanding & discerning our emotions can be *challenging* – but *oh so important*

So if emotions are important, but challenging to discern & understand, that naturally leads to this question...

Which emotions can you trust?

Emotions try to *take you somewhere*. Our emotions *often (and attempt to) direct our words, actions, and decisions*. So which should we listen to? Which should we trust?

Trust the emotions that lead you *away* from sin, not toward it.

- Jesus died for sin. Jesus sends His Spirit to sanctify. Jesus will one day eradicate evil.
- So the emotions that lead you away from sin will be *cross-shaped emotions*.
- Sin preys *on* our emotions.
 - Remember Satan tempted Jesus when He was hungry & tired – when His emotions were ripe.
- Sin can use happiness *as temptation*: "I'd be so much happier *if...*"
- The Spirit can use happiness *for holiness*: "I *already* have reason to be happy *because...*"
- But it's not always the *same kind of emotion*. Take greed, for example

- Sometimes you're tempted by greed because you think that more will make you *happier*. Sometimes you're tempted by greed because you're *sorry* you don't have more.
- Sometimes you can overcome greed by realizing that you are *happy* to do without. Sometimes you can overcome greed by remembering the *sorrow* of past mistakes.

Trust the emotions that lead you *toward* the church, not away from it.

- Jesus died for the church. Jesus loves the church. Jesus is coming back for the church.
- So the emotions that lead you toward the church will be *cross-shaped emotions*.
- Even more – importance of community in processing, discerning emotions!
- Further – a joy that says, “I don't need church” or a sorrow that says, “I'm not welcome at church” is not to be trusted, is even to be resisted
 - Of course, times to weep and lament and leave a church
 - I'm talking bigger picture here

Trust the emotions that lead you *toward* the Bible, not away from it.

- Jesus fulfilled the Word. Jesus is the Word (John 1). Jesus spoke the Word.
- So the emotions that lead you toward the Bible will be *cross-shaped emotions*.
- Personal for me
- Easy to not “feel” like reading the Bible – that cannot be a healthy emotion

Trust the emotions that lead you *toward* Jesus, not away from Him.

- Jesus experienced the full range of emotions for our salvation
- So any emotion that leads you away from Christ is not to be trusted, is even to be resisted
- Whether an emotion leading to unbelief or even just to prayerlessness – don't trust it!

Trust your emotions to *Jesus*.

- He did this Himself – back to Gethsemane.
- He'll do the same for us – Matthew 11:28–30: Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (ESV)

Closing comments:

- Lots more to get to today – just an overview, just a beginning – more application and specificity to come
- Lots of imperfections in our diagnosing & examining. Our emotions can be so mysterious at times – not sure any of us will ever have it all figured out.
 - So don't be discouraged when you don't
 - And don't put your hope in “figuring yourself out”
 - Which leads to...

- There is *grace* for you in Jesus.
- There is *hope* for you in Jesus.
- There is *welcome* for you in Jesus.

Using all we've learned about *Jesus* and all the wisdom we've seen in *the Bible* today, discuss the following questions at your table:

1. What's your disposition? That is, what kinds of emotions do you experience most *naturally*, without any effort?
2. What's *good* about your disposition?
 - a. How can your disposition bring glory to God, serve the church, and help others?
 - b. Take some time to *encourage* each other and *help* each other, here, so that no one is *ashamed* by their disposition.
3. How can different dispositions *complement* each other for the glory of God and the good of the church?
4. What *temptations* tend to accompany your disposition?
5. How can you *test* the emotions you experience? And what practical steps can you take to make sure you're using your disposition for good?

1. What surprised you about the emotions of Jesus?
2. What did you learn – or need reminding of – from the emotions of Jesus?
3. Why are our emotions so important?
4. Why are our emotions so tricky to understand?
5. How can we have *cross-shaped emotions*?
 - a. What have you learned so far today?
 - b. What wisdom can you share from your own walk with Jesus?
 - c. How can you put these steps into practice this very week?