

The Gospel And Your Sorrow

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[0:00] This morning, we're taking a one week break from our exposition of the book of Hebrews to begin what we purpose to make a periodically presented series on the gospel and counseling.

! We have much opportunity as a church of the living God to make him known in the world through the careful application of the gospel to the daily struggles of this life.

Beloved, we have chance to walk through the world differently than others, that we might be able to speak to them of the hope that we have.

This, of course, does not preclude gospel proclamation, but it should accompany it. It should give us a platform from which to speak the gospel truth.

So today's sermon, as I very rarely do, but is entitled The Gospel and Your Sorrow. Each of us have and will experience sorrow in some measure in this life.

[1:29] Some of us have a greater propensity toward it than others, but it is inevitable that fallen people living in a fallen world will, from time to time, feel the weightiness of the reality in which we live.

I hope two things for our time together this morning. First, that you will have a clear understanding of your personal sorrow and be better equipped to battle for your joy.

I recognize that some of you might be feeling sorrowful even this morning. Some of you may not. If you are feeling sorrowful this morning, I hope this will be an aid to you.

If you're not, I hope it will be a future aid to you. Secondly, that you will have a clear understanding of another's sorrow and be better equipped to battle for their joy.

This is why the title of the gospel and your sorrow is applicable in either case, whether you're experiencing sorrow or someone else is experiencing sorrow.

[2:43] Beloved, we are instructed to love one another. And Paul tells us in Galatians chapter six and verse two, that if we love one another, we will bear one another's burdens.

And in Romans chapter 12 and verse 15, we're instructed to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

Now, I know that I could fake rejoicing. I think it's possible that I could put on the outward expression of rejoicing, although I don't think this is what Paul is instructing us to.

But I can tell you this, that for me to weep with someone who is weeping means that I am going to experience their sorrow.

I'm going to make their sorrow my sorrow because we are members of one another. We are to take on the joy of others and we are to take on the sorrow of others.

[3:47] If you are in relationship with other people and you are in any way modeling Christ likeness, you are going to be asked to give advice.

People are going to ask you for help. They're asking you for counsel. You should aim to give biblical answers to spiritual problems.

As a culture, we are a psychologized culture. We have lots of influence around us telling us the way that we should go.

And too often when confronted with spiritual problems, we are quick to give the world's answers.

Out of a genuine desire to be helpful, we are quick to give answers that are not ultimately and finally helpful at all.

So we need to know how to give good counsel. Whether you consider yourself a counselor or not, you will give counsel in your life. So we are going to look this morning at Psalm 77.

[4:58] This is a psalm of Asaph, a songwriter. Some of my favorite psalms are psalms of Asaph. You will find within this psalm the Hebrew phrase, Salah.

And we don't know exactly what this means. It's widely understood to be some kind of musical direction. Most agree it's probably meant to be a pause, an interlude.

So imagine the lyre and the harp playing for a bit in that gap. And I'm telling you this simply to say I'm going to pause for a moment when you see that word.

Before I begin reading in verse 1, let me remind you, beloved, that this is God's word to us. It was written for his glory and our good. We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and he will hear me. In the day of my trouble, I seek the Lord.

[6:02] In the night, my hand is stretched out without wearying. My soul refuses to be comforted. When I remember God, I moan.

When I meditate, my spirit faints. You hold my eyelids open. I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I consider the days of old, the years long ago. I said, let me remember my song in the night. Let me meditate in my heart.

Then my spirit made a diligent search. Will the Lord spurn forever and never again be favorable? Has his steadfast love forever ceased?

Are his promises at an end for all time? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion?

[7:02] Then I said, I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High.

I will remember the deeds of the Lord. Yes, I will remember your wonders of old. I will ponder all your work and meditate on your mighty deeds.

Your way, O God, is holy. What God is great like our God? You are the God who works wonders. You have made known your might among the peoples.

You, with your arm, redeemed your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph. When the waters saw you, O God.

When the waters saw you, they were afraid. Indeed, the deep trembled. The clouds poured out water. The skies gave forth thunder.

[8:02] Your arrows flashed on every side. The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind. Your lightnings lighted up the world. The earth trembled and shook.

Your way was through the sea. Your path through the great waters. Yet your footprints were unseen. You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

I would like to begin our study this morning by helping you see the commonality of sorrow in the life of our culture and of our church.

I will tell you this morning, I personally struggle most with sorrow. This is the emotion I struggle most with.

For some, they may be inclined to struggles with anxiety or struggles with anger. But for me, my greatest emotional struggle is with sorrow or depression.

[9:14] I emotionally find myself very often fighting for joy. Sorrow just seems to creep up on me.

And I suddenly find myself feeling bummed out for no particular reason whatsoever. And I have to fight for joy. I think because of my great desire to see the proverbial glass filled to the very brim.

I think I have a glass. Yep, I do have a glass. Unplanned illustration, right? I so want to see the glass filled to the brim, overflowing, that I focus far too much on the empty space.

This glass is not half empty, but you get the point. And I neglect altogether all of the liquid in the glass. Just ignore the filled portion altogether.

I'm very concerned about the space that exists in that spot. I think as I desire to see the kingdom of God come to pass in the world, I particularly feel the tensions of why we're not in that place.

[10:25] The weight of sin bears on me heavy. I am not alone in this. Depression is the single topic I give the most counsel for.

Sometimes people don't know that's what they're coming to me for counsel for, but we find that they're finding themselves in a particular place of sorrow. Antidepressants, as a category of

medication, are the number one prescribed medication in America.

And I'm not currently commenting on the medication itself. I may not have time to this morning, but merely the rampancy of sorrow in our country.

So many people who are seeking help because they are sad. Many of our church heroes struggled with what they most often called melancholy.

As you read around, it's a deep sorrow. It's a besetting sorrow. It's what we would commonly call depression in our day. From Luther to Calvin to Spurgeon.

[11:33] Spurgeon once wrote, the mind can descend far lower than the body, for in it there are bottomless pits. The flesh can bear only a certain number of wounds and no more.

But the soul can bleed in 10,000 ways and die over and over again each hour. And he was a man that experienced great anguish for reasons explained and for unexplained reasons.

Sorrow is more common than I think that we would like to admit. We've become very accustomed to put on our Sunday best and deal with each other in a way that I like to call plastic.

Fake. Because we feel a pressure to do so. I'm really grateful that many of you now on a Sunday morning, when I say, how are you doing?

You'll say, not that great. And of course my impulse is that I want to help you. And so in the past, I haven't felt inconvenienced by that because I don't have time in that moment to help you.

[12:47] But I'm so glad for the honesty. And now if you ever say that to me, I'll say, well I am really glad you're here. Good place for you to be when you're not doing that great.

And I'll be sure to follow up with you later. As a church maturing, right, growing up as a church, we noticed across time that our gatherings did not leave much space for sorrow.

I particularly noted this when some members of our church lost an in utero baby, still born. And I preached the funeral of that baby.

And I thought, how do I give comfort the following day? That Sunday morning. Will they come and will they join us? And will everything just be cheery and happy?

Or will they feel like they've got a spot that we could grieve together through that process? And I think in many ways we've been working to rectify that.

[13:57] Some of that is expressed in the way we pray. Much of it is expressed in the songs that we sing. We should be very thankful for old saints who wrote five verse hymns.

If you only ever sing the first, the second, and the fifth, you miss the couple of verses that are about this life. And the trouble of this life. You begin to pay attention to many of the songs we sing.

I know they begin to feel long, but it's expressing the totality of the Christian experience. Right? Being both called and justified and then sanctified growing up in Christ-likeness in this world and then finally fully glorified.

But we still have work to do in this area. We will not be able to answer all of the possible questions that will arise this morning.

There's just not enough time for it. But as we consider how to love each other well through sorrow, I hope that our study will at least get us started.

[15:05] We'll skip a stone off the surface that we might continue to study and learn together about what it means for us as a church to weep with those who weep.

So my outline this morning is simple. It has three points. I'm going to give them to you before I begin speaking about the first one. Number one, the Bible affirms sorrow as normative.

The Bible affirms sorrow as normative. Second, the Bible gives us language for our sorrow. The Bible gives us language for our sorrow.

The glass is less full now. number three, the Bible gives us relief from our sorrow. Number one, the Bible affirms sorrow as normative.

This morning we have opened before us a song of lament. In fact, over a third of the Bible's inspired songbook is made up of such psalms.

[16:19] Over a third of the psalms are psalms of lament. And, there's an entire book called the book of lamentations.

In a new book I will come in to you by Mark Vrogop, I think I'm pronouncing that correct, entitled Dark Clouds Deep Mercy. He defines lament this way. Lament is the honest cry of a hurting heart wrestling with the paradox of pain and the promise of God's goodness.

Lament is what we do with this gap that's experienced between what's going on in our lives when we're hurting and in the full and final promises of God to be good to his people.

It's that stretching, it's that pulling in between. The biblical authors felt that gap between the way things were for them and the way they thought they ought to be.

Our Lord and Savior is said to be a man of suffering and acquainted with grief, sorrow. In Isaiah chapter 53 in verse 3.

[17:42] When Jesus sees the sorrow of Lazarus' sister at his passing, John 11 35 tells us Jesus wept.

He was not disconnected from that gap. If there was ever a man who could realize the good promises of God as he was the fulfillment of God's promises, it was Jesus.

In the case of Lazarus, he knew full well that he was about to raise him from the dead, but he felt the pain of a world that is not as it should be.

A world being restored, but not yet restored. Now we must be careful at this point because just because sorrow is shown as normative in the scripture does not make all sorrow okay.

Some sorrow is sinful sorrow. Not all sorrow is sin, but it can be caused by sin, it can produce sin, and it itself can be sinful.

[18:54] It can be entirely devoid of faith. Sorrow can be caused by physical ailment. You may be hurt, being hurt is painful, and pain typically causes people to be sad.

I don't know a lot of people with serious injury that are joyful over the injury itself. Some of you may deal with chronic and ongoing physical pain.

You hurt in really deep ways, and it causes a sadness as a result. Sorrow can be caused by physical ailment of the mind.

It would be silly for us to think that while our bodies are affected by the fall, that sin runs rampant in our flesh, I have type 1 diabetes because of the fall of man, but that the gray matter encased in bone in our head wouldn't also be affected in some way by the fall.

It's very difficult to understand these things because the mind is encased in bone. It's difficult to study the way other organs have been studied. But it's very possible for someone, probably this is over diagnosed, but to experience a physical ailment that tends them toward sadness.

[20:28] Sorrow can also be circumstantial. The loss of a loved one, diagnosis, the loss of a job, relationships that are severed, all kinds of reasons that in this world we will look out and feel sorrowful, look out at injustices in the world.

Some of the psalms of lament, many of them are about that. Look at how others are doing. Psalm 73 Asaph writes, how well the wicked are doing and look how poorly I'm doing.

This seems unfair. And it causes him grief until he goes to the Lord. Sorrow can be circumstantial. Sorrow can be spiritual. Have that emotional root within us. Sadness that we can't quite put our finger on.

And sorrow can and likely is a mixture of all three. And so as you're trying to sort out your own sadness or trying to help somebody else sort out theirs, it is one of the most complicated works to do.

[21:47] And if you've ever sat with somebody who is sorrowful, they don't tend to want to talk very much. It's a great challenge to help sort through the complexities of besetting sadness.

sadness. Now because we tend to use the word depression and we use it fairly often in our day, I want to define depression and this is my definition of depression.

I like to speak of depression in this way as disproportionate sorrow. sorrow. So if you were to lose a loved one, it is good for you to grieve that loss.

It's proper for you to go through a process of being sad about someone you cared about being taken out of your life. But there's a point at which it's reasonable to be recovering from that sadness, to be moving on from that sadness.

We enter into a depression when it becomes disproportionate. It's not in proper measure to the thing that has happened. It's irrational sorrow.

[22:59] And this is another great challenge of helping yourself and helping others. You don't really quite know why. It's hard to put my finger on why.

Sam has learned how to very graciously love me as I'm sad at times. And more than I like to admit, I'll come home and I'm just sad.

I have no real reason to be. I like coming home. I really enjoy my family. The weight of the day carries with me. I just say, are you okay?

And I go, no, but I don't know why. And she's learned to give me a little bit of space because typically I can reason myself to why. Oh, I know why.

I know why. And I know the promises of God that combat this sadness in me. And I can turn that sadness then by God's grace into joy. So, but again, not all sorrow is sin, but it can be caused by it, it can produce it, and it can be itself sinful, faithless, unwilling to think about the promises and believe the promises of God for us.

[24:14] Let me show you an example of what I mean by sinful sorrow before we proceed. So turn with me to Mark Psalm 77, turn with me to Genesis chapter 4.

This is a story you're probably familiar with, Cain and Abel, but likely have not seen it in this light. Beginning number 1, now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.

And again she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. In the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground.

And Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock, and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering, he had no regard.

Now listen, this is not just an unfair judgment on God's part. Notice the text gives us some very specifics about what Abel did. He brought the firstborn and he brought the fat portions.

[25:35] It was a sacrificial sacrifice. He understood the way in which he was meant to devote his trade to the worship of God.

Notice that Cain just brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground. It's just an offering. It's not the firstborn and the fat portions as Abel's won.

And we know God is good and righteous in his judgment. He has no regard for Cain's offering. It was an unacceptable offering.

It wasn't an appropriate offering. Cain had not done well in regard to his worship to God. And then it says what was his response? God not regarding it, not Lord, how then will you regard my offering? I would like to please you with my offering. Can you help me? Correct me that I might please you. Instead, what does Cain do? He was very angry. And his face fell.

[26:39] Which is a common Hebrew expression for he was deeply saddened. His face fell. So all of that was an unacceptable emotional response.

He did not respond righteously. He responded in sin. Verse 6, the Lord said to Cain, God's great kindness to Cain, Cain angrily shook his fist at the Lord for not accepting his unacceptable sacrifice. The Lord says to Cain, why are you angry? And why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? If you do well, will you not be accepted?

And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it. So it gives him correction, loving correction.

What does Cain do? Cain spoke to Abel, his brother, and when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

[27:52] An unacceptable physical response. You see the downward spiral that's happening in Cain's life, right? Presents an unacceptable offering. He has an unacceptable emotional response to God not receiving it.

God corrects him, and what does he do? He goes and commits an unacceptable physical crime against his brother. Then the Lord said to Cain, where is Abel, your brother?

And Cain said, I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper? And the spiral goes deeper, as now he unacceptably responds to God verbally with a lie.

And if you read on in the text, he's judged for this. So this is an example of sorrow. His face falls. Things didn't go the way he wanted them to go. His face falls, and it leads him into furthering and furthering sin. sorrow. Now in our text, we can see faithful sorrow.

[29:00] And catch this very carefully. There is a complaint. I get uncomfortable when I read Psalms of Lament. I think you should go, whoa, you're asking these kinds of questions?

But it's really important for us to note that Asaph goes to God. He has a complaint against God. He feels as if God is not there, but he goes to God in faith.

That's what he's going to say. I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and he will hear me. He has faith in the fact that God will in fact hear his complaint against him.

In the day of my trouble, I seek the Lord. In the night, my hand is stretched out without wearying. What he's saying is I'm constantly, I'm constantly reaching out.

I'm constantly trying to have my complaint heard by God, but my soul refuses to be comforted. When I remember God, I moan.

[30:06] When I meditate, he's talking about on the truth of God, my spirit faints. We do not know the circumstance of Asaph's sorrow, but we do know that it goes to God.

It takes faith to turn to God in our anguish. It's the place we most need to be when we feel this gap in which we live in the world.

So the Bible affirms sorrow as normative. We're going to experience this in our life. There is an unhealthy way to deal with it, and there is a healthy way to deal with it.

And that starts with language. So secondly, the Bible gives us language for our sorrow. The Bible teaches us how to properly issue a faithful complaint to God.

We do not have to learn how to complain. We're all pretty naturally good at complaining. Again, some of us better than others.

[31:16] It's hardwired into us. We know how to complain. Babies know how to cry. It doesn't take them long. If all is well in the delivery room, they start complaining right away.

They say, what have you done to me? And they're right to do so. It's traumatic. They don't have to learn how to cry.

Toddlers do not have to learn how to be whiny. Later in the book I mentioned earlier, Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy, Mark Rogop writes, to cry is human, to lament is Christian.

God teaches us how to faithfully complain in the midst of our sorrow. He gives us a language for it. He models it out for us through the inspired word of God.

Various circumstances, various writers issuing faithful complaints to him. Have these psalms ever made you uncomfortable?

[32:22] Have you ever wondered, like, what in the world do I do with this? This seems so against, so set against God. What we need to do with them is learn from them.

We need to recognize that God is capable of handling your hard questions. If you ask me these kinds of questions, I might crumble into a ball.

God can handle difficult questions. And Asaph asks some difficult questions. I don't think he's being rhetorical.

I try to read it in that way. You might be going, wait a second. These are all rhetorical questions. I don't think so because in verse 10 he says, then I said, right?

If we understand the Hebrew word salah, right, there's this break there and then there's a turn in verse 10 when he says, then I said, right?

[33:24] And this is the pattern throughout these psalms of lament, right? Difficult questions asked, complaints issued, and then remembering then responses to those complaints.

So listen again to what he says, verse 4 and following. You hold my eyelids open. I am so troubled that I cannot speak, right? He cannot sleep and he cannot speak.

speak. I consider the days of old, the years long ago. I said, let me remember my song in the night. Let me meditate in my heart.

Then my spirit made a diligent search, right? Read this, he's troubled, right? He wants the restored song, right? And so he's searching for it.

He's trying to sort out this emotion that he's feeling so deeply. And he asked the questions, will the Lord spurn forever and never again be favorable?

[34:24] That's how he feels in that moment. God has just left him, he has abandoned him, is the emotion he's expressing. Has his steadfast love forever ceased?

This would be your strongest argument that he's being rhetorical, right? The language steadfast love ceased. Has his steadfast love ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time?

Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion? Beloved, it's okay to ask hard questions.

It's okay in faith to cry out to God, where are you? What is going on? This isn't how things are supposed to be.

The Bible affirms sorrow is normative. The Bible gives us language for our sorrow. It invites us to hurt, but to hurt in God's presence.

[35:34] And thirdly, the Bible gives us relief from our sorrow. The Bible gives us relief from our sorrow. sorrow. There's some sub points here.

Number one, through remembering what God has done. The Bible gives us relief from our sorrow through remembering what God has done. There's a turn now, right?

Verse 10, Asaph says, then I said, I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High.

He's going to remember God's powerful work. His right hand represents his sovereignty. He says, verse 11, I will remember the deeds of the Lord.

Yes, I will remember your wonders of old. He's speaking very generally and generically. He's remembering all of the things that God has done for his people and for him.

[36:30] Verse 12, I will ponder all your work and meditate on your mighty deeds. Right? Not just have them told to me, but I'm going to roll them around.

Right? I'm going to let them sink deep within me. And your way, O God, is holy, perfect, set apart. What God is great like our God? You are the God who works wonders. You have made known your might among the peoples. You with your arm redeemed your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph.

He turns now to praise for who God is because of what God has done. And I don't think when we read these Psalms of lament that we should be reading them in real time.

I don't think that we should read them and feel like Asaph went through an emotional process that took all of 40 seconds. These are songs written in retrospect of a time in his life.

[37:41] Was it days? Was it weeks? I don't know. But there seems to be a deep anguish when we read the Psalms of lament. Not a I'm feeling bummed about that.

Well, God's promises are good. There are nights spent awake. there there is a pouring out that seems to be expressed in these psalms of lament.

Sometimes finding yourself turning in faith to God and coming through times of sorrow takes great patience and it takes repetition meditating on and being reminded of over and over and over again of God's goodness to you.

The surety of his promises. Beloved, this is at least a reason you should come and fellowship with the church each and every Lord's day. You're slow learners and quick to forget to be reminded again and again and again.

An expression of this is Psalm 88. And I don't really like Psalm 88. I'll be honest. I think I like the lesson it teaches me.

[39:02] It makes me so uncomfortable. The other Psalms of lament end on a positive note. This one does not. I'm going to read the first six verses and then I'll jump down and I'll tell you where it would go if you'd like to follow along.

The psalmist here writes, I think it's the son of Korah if I remember correctly. Oh Lord God of my salvation, I cry out day and night before you. So here we are. There's days going by.

Let my prayer come before you incline your ear to my cry for my soul is full of troubles and my life draws near to shield. I am counted among those who go down to the pit.

I am a man who has no strength like one set loose among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, like those whom you remember no more for they are cut off from your hand.

You have put me in the depths of the pit in the regions dark and deep. Oh, what an expression of anguish this man is feeling.

[40:16] And if this was following the normal pattern, at some place in here he would say, but you, oh Lord, then I recalled. But he never does that in this psalm.

And you'll see how it ends beginning in verse 14 to the end. Oh, Lord, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me?

Afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer your tears. I am helpless. Your wrath has swept over me. Your dreadful assaults destroy me.

They surround me like a flood all day long. They close in on me together. You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me.

My companion have become darkness or darkness is my only companion. And it ends.

[41:15] And I want the textual critics to find the text that goes, we found the last three verses of Psalm 88. But it ends at that point.

And that does not mean that there's not relief for our sorrow, but it does mean this is the lesson that I hope to learn that we need to be patient and we need to rely upon the Lord that he will deliver us from sorrow.

Second, the Bible gives us relief from our sorrow through being reminded of what God has done. So we're meant to remember, but sometimes we need to be reminded.

The great preacher, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones once said, we need to stop listening to ourselves and start talking to ourselves, reminding ourselves of great truths. And I would like to add to that, and we need others to talk to us, to tell us important truths that will draw us from a place of sorrow to a place of hope.

We often, and I would say more often than not, need others' help in the work of remembering. So come to church. We are working this into the fabric of what we do together.

[42:38] The pattern of being with God's people and participating in God's graces to you in being with God's people will help you in these times, and it will prepare you for them.

Look for wise counsel within the church. Look for people who have walked through sorrow and can show you how the scripture speaks to that sorrow.

And be willing to listen. Be willing to take up and hear good truth. And sometimes that is so difficult to do, particularly when you're experiencing an irrational, disproportionate sorrow.

Everything is gray when you're feeling sad like that. Let other people try to paint the picture for you. Try to hear the good truths they're speaking into your life.

Proverbs chapter 18 and verse 1 says, whoever isolates himself, seeks his own desire. He breaks out against all sound judgment.

[43:48] It's so often that when we're feeling sad, we don't want to be around other people because we don't want to show people that we're not doing well.

We feel a pressure to be doing well all the time. We may not want to repeat the reason for our sorrow again and again, but it's the thing most needful for us, that we would come together, that we would press at one another.

Proverbs 18 verse 1 says that we would not break out against, but that we would seek sound judgment. And if you are in the process of helping someone else, reminding someone else of what God has done, this also often takes great patience and repetition.

It takes time to sit with somebody and to hear what they're experiencing and help them to sort through the complexity of it. you may speak truth to someone and they say they get it and they go live in absolute contradiction to it.

In counseling people who are experiencing depression, I so desperately want at the end of that counseling session the person to go, I feel great now. Thank you so much.

[45:11] And very rarely they do. It takes time for truth to settle into our hearts, right? To take root and to bring forth fruit. And especially when people are dealing with an irrational sorrow, it's just so difficult for them to pick them up and to carry them around as they should.

So be patient with your church members, your friends and your family that are experiencing this kind of sadness. Continue to sit alongside them.

Sometimes they need you to be quiet and just let them speak. Proverbs 25 and verse 20 says, whoever sings songs to a heavy heart is like one who takes off a garment on a cold day.

They're saying you're foolish. Don't sing songs to a heavy heart. This is not what they need right now. And then the verse goes on to say, and like vinegar on soda.

Because of all major volcano erupt at some point. It's agitating. Come around a person who's sad and just be cheery and think that's the resolution for their sadness.

[46:24] So often it's a listening ear, a kind word, a prayer, and a hug. And that's what you can do for the person in that moment.

Proverbs 20 verse 5 says, the purpose in a man's heart is like deep water. But a man of understanding, will draw it out. It's a patient work.

It takes time to help somebody work through that. I know I'm running a bit short on time, but I'm going to read a children's book to you. And I hope you'll forgive me the time. That's why I've done a foolish thing with a shirt this morning, and now I'm going to read a book, a children's book, on Sunday morning.

This book is phenomenal. As a person who deals with sadness, I cried the first time I read it. my mother-in-law got it for Silas, because Silas is sometimes grumpy, and the book is entitled Grumpy Monkey.

And I don't think she realized that it's a book about depression. So I said, hey buddy, let's read your new book. And it brought me to tears. Now, this is not a complete prescription for how to help somebody with sorrow.

[47:34] That's not the point I'm trying to make. But I think you'll appreciate it, and I'll try to show you the pictures as best I can. Sorry if I don't pan them around for the sake of time. Okay. One wonderful day, Jim Pansy woke to discover that nothing was right.

The sun was too bright, the sky was too blue, and the bananas were too sweet. Disproportionate, right? None of that makes any sense. Jim was confused.

Jim was the gorilla. What's going on? Maybe you're grumpy, suggested Norman from next door.

I'm not grumpy, Jim insisted. On his walk, he met Marabou. Jim's grumpy, Norman told Marabou.

Why are you grumpy, Jim, asked Marabou. It's such a wonderful day. They're singing songs to the person who's heavy-hearted. What's wrong with you? It's such a wonderful day. Grumpy?

[48:41] Me? I'm not grumpy, said Jim. But look at how you're standing, Marabou said. It's true, said Norman. You're all hunched. So Jim loosened up.

I don't know if you can see that picture, but he goes like this. Then he ran into the lemur. Jim's grumpy, Norman told the lemur. Why are you grumpy, Jim, asked lemur.

It's such a wonderful day. Grumpy? Me? I'm not grumpy, said Jim. Your eyebrows look grumpy, said lemur. It's true, said Norman.

They're all bunched up. So Jim raised his brow. He's going like this, pulling his eyelids up. Then he tripped over snake.

Oh no, said Norman. That's the last thing you need when you're feeling so grumpy. Grumpy? Me? I'm not grumpy, said Jim. Then why that frown, said snake. I think it's because he tripped over you, Norman whispered snake.

[49:39] So Jim put on a smile. Finally, Jim looked happy. I hope you can see this. But people who are dealing with deep sorrow, with depression, this is how they feel like they have to act.

This is why sometimes they don't come together. Because they just can't do it. They're just exhausted. They can't put this face on. I really hope one of you comes in doing that some Sunday morning.

I'll know how you feel. But he didn't feel happy inside. Everyone wanted Jim to enjoy this wonderful day. You should sing with us, said the birds.

Jim didn't feel like singing. You should swing with us, said the monkeys. Jim didn't feel like swinging. You should roll with us, said the zebras. Jim didn't feel like rolling.

You should stroll with us, said the peacocks. Jim didn't feel like strolling. You should lie in the grass. You should stomp your feet. You should take a bath and make a splash.

[50:47] You should hug someone. You should laugh. You should take a nap. You should eat old meat or some honey. You should jump up and down.

You should sit in the sun. I love all these animals are doing things that are characteristic of their animal. And then the porcupine says, you should dance. So everyone's got a solution.

Everyone's got an offering, some piece of advice for Jim and his grumpiness. But Jim didn't feel like doing any of that. Why are you grumpy, Jim? Asked the others.

It's such a wonderful day. Jim yells, I'm not grumpy, shouted Jim as he beat his chest. And he stormed off.

Jim felt sorry. A little sorry for shouting at everyone, but mostly sorry for himself. I guess I am grumpy, Jim sighed. And just as he was starting to feel really sad, he came upon Norman.

[51:53] Norman was slumped, his eyebrows were bunched up, and he was frowning. What's the matter? Are you grumpy? Asked Jim. No, I dance with porcupine, said Norman.

Circumstantial sorrow, right? Something happened, he's feeling pain, a little grumpy about that. Are you okay?

Asked Jim. It hurts, but I'll probably feel better soon enough, said Norman. Are you still grumpy?

Yes, said Jim, but I'll probably feel better soon enough too. For now, I need to be grumpy.

It's a wonderful day to be grumpy, said Norman. Jim agreed. And he already felt a little bit better.

So, I've read this to a lot of people in my study.

People who are feeling sorrowful need fewer porcupines and more Normans. Someone who's willing to sit and willing to listen and be patient through the process.

[53:11] Now, the book falls apart because, of course, Norman doesn't offer him any biblical wisdom. I would like to write Grumpy Monkey 2 where Norman helps Jim see that his countenance should be lifted because of what the Lord has done for a monkey.

Okay. Finally, the Bible gives us release from our sorrow lastly, through remembering and being reminded of what God is doing and what he has promised to do.

what he is doing and what he's promised to do. What he's done roots for us what he is doing and what he's promised to do. He's done good things. Meditating on that helps us to believe that he's doing good things and will finally do good things.

Verse 16, Psalm 77, verse 16, where does Asaph's mind specifically go to relieve his sorrow?

In the previous stanza, it was general, but now specifically, it goes to the Exodus story. Asaph remembers that God delivered his people from the shackles of slavery.

[54:55] We know that this Exodus was a shadow of a greater delivery. It was with this in mind, as Paul writes in Romans 8, about living in the spirit that he says, in verse 15, for you do not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, Abba, Father.

The spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

So in the midst of this train of thought, life by the spirit, a spirit not for slavery, but a spirit for sonship, freedom as children and heirs, Paul recognized that we will suffer, we'll share and experience the suffering of Christ.

we're united to the man of sorrows. Then he says, verse 18, for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Because of who we are in Jesus, we have this greater hope, right? It pulls us through the gap. And then down into Romans chapter 8.

[56:25] used so tritely, like beloved, don't miss what Paul is saying in Romans chapter 8 and verse 28. And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose.

And what's the foundation of that? Right? He goes on to say, for those he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son. The good he's working in us is that we would be like Jesus in order that he might be the first born among many brothers.

And those whom he predestined, he also called. And those whom he called, he also justified. And those whom he justifies, he also glorified. Justification by faith alone is the foundation on which to build sorrow into joy.

For the fact, beloved, that we could do nothing to save ourselves. We were set in every way against God as his enemy. But because of Christ's sacrificial death, he takes on our sin, his great exchange as Luther calls it, he takes on our sin, he suffers the wrath of God on our behalf, and he grants to us his righteousness, his perfect living.

And God in the great courtroom declares us righteous, justified, right? Not only having our sin forgiven, but being found perfect in Jesus.

[58:08] Justification by faith alone in Christ alone is this foundation on which we can build sorrow into joy.

We can do that in this life, and we are promised final relief from sorrow forevermore. John chapter 16, verse 20 and following, Jesus says, truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice.

You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. Your sorrow, he's saying, is going to become joy.

Not that it's going to just simply go away and be replaced with joy. It's going to become joy, turned into joy, and catch his explanation. He says, verse 21, when a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come.

Pain, I'm told. But when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish for joy that a human being has been born into the world.

[59:22] All of that suffering suddenly becomes, it's transformed into joy. It was so worth it. Men, have you heard your wives say this?

The day that Cade was born, Sam said she wanted to be pregnant again, and I went, what? Do you remember anything that just happened? All the sorrow had been turned into joy for her.

She suffered. It hurt, I'm told. But she was rapturous to now hold our firstborn in her arms.

Incredible reality that God's going to make everything we experience, all the sadness we experience in this world, work for our good, Christlikeness which is to his praise. Charles Spurgeon once said, this is on your bulletin if you care to look at it, your sorrow itself shall be turned into joy. Speaking of this text in John, not the sorrow to be taken away and joy to be put in its place, but the very sorrow which now grieves you shall be turned into joy.

[60:29] God not only takes away the bitterness and gives sweetness in its place, but turns the bitterness into sweetness itself. So the Bible affirms sorrow as normative.

The Bible gives us language for our sorrow, and the Bible gives us relief from our sorrow in Christ. May we be helped by the grace of God as we struggle with sorrow in this world and set our eager hope on the world to come, and may we help each other in that struggle.

Let's pray together.