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Psalm 25
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The Way

Who has seen the 2015 Pixar animated film Inside Out? It's about a happy, hockey-loving 11-year-old Midwestern girl, named Riley, whose world turns upside-down when her family moves to San Francisco. In the movie, Riley's emotions are personified. Joy attempts to guide her through this difficult, life-changing event. But, the stress of the move also brings Sadness to the forefront. When Joy and Sadness are pushed aside, the only emotions left in Headquarters are Anger, Fear and Disgust.

Well this summer, Inside Out 2 hit the Hollywood box offices. In this film, Riley has now hit adolescence where Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear and Disgust have been running a successful operation. However, when Anxiety shows up, they aren't sure how to feel. The result is that Riley is a hot mess.

This movie perfectly describes the nature of Psalm 25 to which we turn our attentions to today. David, the writer of the psalm, is also a hot mess. Here, the emotions in his Headquarters are shame, repentance, self-focus, fear, anguish and hope.

Join me as we read Psalm 25 for ourselves.

In you, Lord my God, I put my trust.

2 I trust in you.

Don't let me be put to shame.

Don't let my enemies win the battle over me.

3 Those who put their hope in you
will never be put to shame.

But those who lie to other people for no reason
will be put to shame.

4 Lord, show me your ways.
Teach me how to follow you.

5 Guide me in your truth. Teach me.
You are God my Savior.

I put my hope in you all day long.

6 Lord, remember your great mercy and love.
You have shown them to your people for a long time.

7 Don't remember the sins I committed when I was young.
Don't remember how often I refused to obey you.

Remember me because you love me.

Lord, you are good.

8 The Lord is honest and good.

He teaches sinners to walk in his ways.

9 He shows those who aren't proud how to do what is right.

He teaches them his ways.

10 All the Lord's ways are loving and faithful
toward those who obey what his covenant commands.

11 Lord, be true to your name.

Forgive my sin, even though it is great.

12 Who are the people who have respect for the Lord?
God will teach them the ways they should choose.

13 Things will always go well for them.

Their children will be given the land.

14 The Lord shares his plans with those who have respect for him.
He makes his covenant known to them.

15 My eyes always look to the Lord.

He alone can set my feet free from the trap.

16 Turn to me and help me.

I am lonely and hurting.

17 Take away the troubles of my heart.

Set me free from my great pain.

18 Look at how I'm hurting! See how much I suffer!
Take away all my sins.

19 Look at how many enemies I have!
See how terrible their hatred is for me!

20 Guard my life. Save me.

Don't let me be put to shame.

I go to you for safety.

21 May my honest and good life keep me safe.
Lord, I have put my hope in you.

22 God, set Israel free
from all their troubles!

Let us pray. Prayer of Illumination.

There are a couple of things that strike me in this psalm this morning. First, I want to talk about the format of the psalm. Then we'll consider the many emotions that are identified within it. We'll learn about David's demands on God and how God responds. And finally, we'll ponder what we God is saying to us today through it.

Psalm 25 is part of collection of poems that David wrote at some point during his lifetime. I always imagine the psalms to be like a personal journal that he wrote while shepherding his flocks by night. When you are out in the wilderness alone for extended periods of time with just your thoughts, the stars and the moon, and the sheep, your thoughts tend to wander many directions.

I certainly found this to be true hiking in the mountains or as I walked along the trail of the Camino de Santiago in Spain. One tends to work out things in your mind. Turning them over and over again. Until you come to peace with whatever it was you were chewing on. We learned the latin phrase, *Salvitur ambulando*, or “It is solved by walking.” In the same sense, David seems to be working something out by his walking while shepherding.

David wrote this as an acrostic poem. Each line follows the order of the Hebrew alphabet. So the first letter of the first word starts with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet and the first letter of the last line ends with the last letter in the Hebrew alphabet. We don’t notice this in our English translation since we have a different alphabet. The purpose might have been to make it easier to memorize and keep hidden in one’s heart.

Throughout the psalm, there are a myriad of emotions and actions that David expresses. Worship and Reflection. Shame and Guilt. Forgiveness and Condemnation. Inquisitiveness and Certainty. Fear and Comfort. Godliness and Self Centeredness. Loneliness and Affliction. Distress and desperation. Hate and joy. And like Riley in *Inside Out 2*, he is feeling these things all at once in his body and soul. Like I said, David is a hot mess!

Have you ever felt like a hot mess before? Where you had so many conflicting emotions and actions going on all at once? It can be a pretty difficult soul space to be in. Especially when times get tough and you are searching for which direction to take next. If we rely too heavily on our emotions and what the world tells us how we should feel and act, then we very likely could end up in places we never imagined we’d be.

I love how David very clearly and intentionally sets his heart on God through it all.

“To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul;

“No one whose hope is in you will ever be put to shame.”

“Good and upright is the LORD, therefore he guides sinners in his ways.”

“My eyes are forever on the LORD, for only he will release my feet from the snare.”

Notice also how David desperately wants God to come through in particular ways that he almost demands them.

“Do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me.”

“Show me your ways, O LORD. Teach me your paths.”

“Guide me in your truth and teach me.”

“Remember me, O LORD.”

“Remember not the sins of my youth or my rebellious ways. “

“Forgive my iniquity.”

“Turn to me.”

“Look upon my affliction and distress.”

“Guard my life.”

“Redeem Israel!”

This shows us that it is perfectly acceptable to be honest with God and demanding that God come through. If God isn't big enough to handle our demands, then God isn't God. So be honest with God.

We also see in return what God then does for David.

God does not put him to shame amongst his enemies.

God instructs him in his ways.

God guides the humble in what is right and shows him the way.

God instructs him in the way chosen for him.

God confides in those who fear him.

Clearly David is at a crossroads and needs wisdom on what to do next. He could choose his own way, one that is driven by his emotions, feels right, and what seems best in the world's eyes. But David has walked down those paths before and it didn't lead him to good places. Not at least where God would have had him go.

So instead, notice how David cries out to the LORD for wisdom, and strength, and direction.

And despite all the emotions raging through him at the moment, David opts to not make a rash decision but instead to wait for the LORD and to trust in him, which is a constant thread woven throughout David's cries.

Four times in fact, David says “In you I trust” or “My hope is in you.”

The Hebrew word for trust is batack. It means to have a bold confidence, to be secure, or to make to hope.

The Hebrew word for hope is qavah. It means to tarry, to gather together, or to be patient with. This is not a passive waiting. It is an active hope that looks forward to how God is going to come through in some way which right now seems impossible.

On the Camino de Santiago in Spain, there are many paths we could have taken, but one way to walk. I could have perhaps chosen my own course to get from San Sebastian to Santiago de Compostela. But instead someone smarter than I, more experienced than I, wiser than I already charted the course for me. I just needed to follow their markers.

These yellow arrows and bronze scallop shells were indication signs that we were indeed on the Camino trail. Often times there were white obelisk markers

with the distance to the next major town and ultimately to Santiago de Compostela. But occasionally there weren't any markers at all and we had to just trust our gut instinct that we were still on the path. Sometimes we had to backtrack, ask for directions in our broken Spanish, and head off in a different direction. Sometimes we needed to just stop and wait to see if other pilgrims were coming up behind us.

But waiting is not something that our culture likes to do today. We live in the world of instant gratification. Fast food. Text messages. And immediate dopamine hits from social media posts or video game successes.

Who has watched the Olympics these past two weeks? How many of these athletes do you think picked up the sport and were immediately experts at it? None of them. How long do you think it takes to develop the proficiency needed to be able to compete on the world's stage? Years if not a lifetime.

Competing at an Olympic level takes time. And these athletes have to wait, actively, practicing day in and day out, for years, until their opportunity comes.

But waiting is prevalent throughout scripture as God never seems to be in a hurry to create something great in us.

Psalm 37, "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!"¹

Proverbs, "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding, but in all of your ways acknowledge him and he will set your paths straight."²

Isaiah, "Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore He exalts Himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him."³

Lamentations, "The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him."⁴

Hosea, "So by the help of your God, hold fast to love and justice and wait continually for Him."⁵

Philippians, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And

¹ Psalm 37:7

² Proverbs 3:5-6

³ Isaiah 30:18

⁴ Lamentations 3:25

⁵ Hosea 12:6

the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”⁶

Waiting. Waiting. Waiting.

So what might God be saying to us today?

I guarantee that someone here is a hot mess who is caught up in a whirlwind of emotions that are telling you all kinds of things that you should do.

I believe, God is saying, “Slow down. Breathe. Be still. Know that God’s got you. And even though you may not know the steps to take next, trust that God will give you that wisdom.” And until that time comes, hope and wait with the excited anticipation of what God is going to do in the future.

That is how we wait in the Lord. This is the way of a disciple of Jesus Christ.

So may we, like David, place our trust and hope in the Lord. May we not be tossed back and forth by the turbulent waves of our emotions. And may we know that God always works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purposes.⁷

Amen.

⁶ Philippians 4:6-7

⁷ Romans 8:28