

What's good church fam, my name is Marcus and I'm one of the pastors here at City Church. If you have your Bibles go ahead and turn to Psalm 55. We have a lot to cover today so I'm going to jump right in.

Over the past couple of years, we are starting to realize that as a society, life is tough. It feels as though the world is unraveling before our eyes. Like Ant mentioned last week, we have plenty of things to grieve over. And sadly the things we are experiencing don't just affect us on the inside, but they also are affecting us on the outside to varying degrees. And while I don't think I need to convince us that that's a true thing, here are some sobering stats for us to consider. According to the National Institute of Mental Health:

- An estimated 19.1% of U.S. adults had any anxiety disorder in the past year.
- An estimated 8.4%, or 21 million U.S. adults had a major depressive episode in 2020.
- The suicide rate in our culture continues to climb, claiming 47,500 people.
- And lastly, as of 2020, 46.2% of American adults have been to a professional counselor or therapist.

Emotional health has taken more of a center stage in the last couple of years from a national level but still the church rarely talks about it if at all and even when it does it over simplifies and over generalizes. And what I would love to see for us here at City Church, is the ability to be able to celebrate and acknowledge all of the blessings that the Lord has given us while also appropriately acknowledging, experiencing and expressing all of the difficulties, pains, and sorrows that we come across. In short I want us to learn what emotional health looks like through the lens of the Bible.

Which leads us to David; who, as we've seen over the past 6 weeks, has been THROUGH SOME STUFF. Like my dude has been on a rollercoaster. And that's just stuff we've covered right. Things that he's done to himself, and things that were done against him.

To recap more specifically for you:

- His father thought so little of him that David wasn't invited to the find the new king search like the rest of his brothers.
- Eventually he is anointed king, but there is no parade or pomp and circumstance. No he's sent back to tending sheep the lowest job in the land.
- He's hunted by the current king, Saul, multiple times.
- When he finally does become king, he's got enemies all around him waiting to kill him.

- He sexually assaults Bathsheba.
- He then has her husband put on the front lines of a battle so that he can be killed, all so David can marry said wife “legally”.
- He loses children in various instances throughout his life.

And that’s just to name a few. Saying David has been through some stuff might be an understatement; yet somehow he navigates it all to come through on the other side still following and worshiping God. But how? How in the world is David not consumed with bitterness and anger toward his father when he thinks so little of him? How does he not have resentment toward God when he’s sent back to tending sheep even though he’s the rightful heir to the throne? How does anxiety not cripple him while Saul is hunting him down to kill him? How does he not do like all the other kings, when confronted by Nathan about his sin against Bathsheba and say “Well Nathan it’s been nice knowing you brother”? How does he instead repent of his egregious sin and accept all responsibility and consequences? When everything seems stacked against him, how does he continue to worship and follow after God?

Well for starters, we talked last week about lamenting and how David cries to the Lord because he knows that his refuge is a person and not a place. His refuge is the one who is with him wherever he goes. And while this is pivotal for David being able to handle much of what comes his way, there’s one more thing that we will focus on today that is sort of part 2 of David being able to deal with the reality of what’s going on around him.

With all that said, what I want us to focus on is reorienting ourselves back to God. This idea of **reorientation is the action of changing the focus or direction of something**. And for us as followers of Jesus, to reorient ourselves to God is to **simply remind ourselves about God in all circumstances**.

There are many Psalms in the Bible where we find David reorienting himself back to God. And in Psalm 55 he does just that.

This Psalm starts with David lamenting and, before we read, I’ll say up front, David doesn’t hold anything back. Some of the things David says in his prayers to God, may end up honestly making you gasp a little bit. He pulls no punches and it’s that realness that I want us to really take note of. As we read, I really want us to try and relate to David here. I want you to feel his pain. I think oftentimes it’s easy to read and not feel what’s being read but today as we read, I want you to feel what we are reading. So, if you need to close your eyes, feel free to do that. If you need to read along, do that. Journal? Whatever it takes for you to feel what is being read, do that. Let’s start at verse 1:

1 Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea; 2 hear me and answer me. My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught 3 because of what my enemy is saying, because of the threats of the wicked; for they bring down suffering on me and assail me in their anger. 4 My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death have fallen on me. 5 Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me.

So David here is processing his fear, his anguish, his pain, his complaints to God. He feels overwhelmed by the horror of those that want to do him harm. Verse 6:

6 I said, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. 7 I would flee far away and stay in the desert;

And the church said Amen. Some of us in this room can relate very strongly to this. Some of us in the room are in a difficult spot right now and all we want to do is run away. Some of us feel overwhelmed right now. Maybe it's a relational strain or a financial one. Maybe work has been really tough and you don't know what to do and you would much rather just fly away and be at rest. You feel like maybe if you can go live somewhere else, get a new job, love with a different set of roommates, that that will be the fresh start you'll need to be okay. Verse 8:

8 I would hurry to my place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm." 9 Lord, confuse the wicked, confound their words, for I see violence and strife in the city. 10 Day and night they prowl about on its walls; malice and abuse are within it. 11 Destructive forces are at work in the city; threats and lies never leave its streets.

David isn't just talking about how this injustice affects him. Now he moves to how it's affecting the city. And in verse 12, it gets personal again. Very personal.

12 If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were rising against me, I could hide. 13 But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, [et tu Brute]

Part of David's pain is coming from the fact that the person who is harming him is one he called a companion and familiar friend. David is experiencing betrayal. The one he trusted is now out to harm him. The one that should be fighting side by side with him is against him. The one that should try to protect him is actively trying to hurt him.

Some of you know what that's like. You can empathize with David right here. The last person that you thought would be against you has sought to harm you. That's where David is here. Verse 14:

14 with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship at the house of God, as we walked about among the worshipers. [David is saying, "Man we used to worship together. We used to receive Godly counsel together! We grew together! And now you're trying to harm me!"] 15 Let death take my enemies by surprise; let them go down alive to the realm of the dead, for evil finds lodging among them.

This is raw isn't it? I don't know if you have ever been at a place where someone has caused you so much pain that you wish evil on them. You wish punishment and judgment on them because of how badly they hurt you. Your hurt has caused you to be very angry. This is where David is and he pulls no punches in his conversation with the Lord. He holds nothing back. If he feels it, he vents it to God. He doesn't wait to be politically correct. [Oh come on somebody, you know exactly what I'm talk'n about here.] David just comes out and says it right? God I wish you would kill them.

David is being raw and unfiltered with God. Have you ever expressed this sort of rawness with God before? I'll be the first to say, not to this level. I know oftentimes we can get in a cycle of asking or praising but this level of rawness hits different. It's like we're not supposed to be talking to God this way right. But God already knows our thoughts and our feelings. So if that's true what do we do with that? He already knows what you're feeling and to suppress those feelings when we talk to God doesn't do us any good. If you have a really good friend, a spouse, a counselor, we often will tell them everything right? We'll divulge everything. Complete with all the emotions intact. "Well then so and so did this and maaaaaan I was so mad and you know what another thing..." But have we ever thought that God wants to listen to this same conversation from you? He wants your honest thoughts, he wants your sadness, your anger, your indignation, or whatever else you are feeling.

We see David doing just that in the first 15 verses. He's expressing all the feels; but then we see a bit of a shift, we see this *reorientation* when he gets to verse 16. It's not that he stops being raw and honest with God. He continues to be real about the reality that he's in... but beginning in verse 16, he starts being honest with himself about who God is. Previously, it seemed like he was preaching about how messed up this world is and how messed up those in this world are... but in verse 16, he starts preaching to himself how good God is.

And as we read, I want us to note just how many things he says about God as he is re-orienting himself to focus on God.

16 As for me, I call to God, and the Lord saves me. 17 Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice. 18 He rescues me unharmed from the battle waged against me, even though many oppose me. 19 God, who is enthroned from of old, who does not change—he will hear them and humble them, because they have no fear of God. 20 My companion attacks his friends; he violates his covenant. 21 His talk is smooth as butter, yet war is in his heart; his words are more soothing than oil, yet they are drawn swords. [He's still making sure God knows how he's doing in case he forgot. Lord don't forget about this companion of mine. Verse 22] 22 Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken. 23 But you, God, will bring down the wicked into the pit of decay; the bloodthirsty and deceitful will not live out half their days. But as for me, I trust in you.

David is preaching to himself. He's preaching a greater reality than all of his pain. Is he going through it right now? Yes, but he's saying through all of this pain when I talk to you Lord, I know you hear my voice. Some of us in this room need to hear that right now. We need to hear that we can talk to God about what's going on and that he is actually listening to us. That our words are not fall'n on deaf ears.

He finishes on a note that says that God will bring judgment on all who do not follow and trust him. David says, God I'll let you handle that and I will trust you with all of this pain.

So catch the sequence that David uses in Psalm 55. He first laments his problems and his pain. And man does he really go in on that section right. Then he flips it, and reorients his thoughts back to God. And not only that, he speaks the true things about God over himself and decides to trust in God despite everything that is going on.

The shift he makes is very powerful and important. **He processes his emotional responses to his problems, but his emotional responses don't rule him. He feels his emotions. He acknowledges that they are real, but he also acknowledges that God is real and that God is still good.** He acknowledges what has caused him hurt and harm but he also acknowledges where His help comes from. He's able to consider his difficulties and pains without being consumed by them.

But church fam that isn't always easy to do, is it, right? It's not always easy to point our eyes to God and his goodness when we are in the depths of our pain and suffering. Pain and suffering has the ability to dictate how we perceive everything. It can easily be the

lens that alters how we look at our lives. It has the ability to consume all of our thoughts. Yet we see here in Psalm 55 that when life is stacked against him, David is able to both be raw and honest and *also* reorient himself back to the reality of who God is. He's able to move forward and not be conquered by his circumstances. Being able to reorient ourselves and focus on God can save us from a number of things. One of which is:

DESPAIR

Despair is the utter loss of hope.

We can't fully pursue mental and emotional wholeness without allowing ourselves to feel our real emotions. Many educated therapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists would agree that suppressing and ignoring our emotions is bad for us long term. And for many of us, even though we know this, we still don't allow ourselves to process and deal with our emotions.

Some of you, during the sermon last week, during LifeGroup, and maybe also during this sermon, have felt feelings of fear about processing your emotions. Last week, Ant mentioned how writing out your emotions is often helpful, and some of you felt timid and afraid when he said that. You might have felt that was going a tad further than you wanted to go. So you didn't.

We're afraid that if we process our painful emotions, it will cause us to spiral into misery. Or maybe we're afraid we'll get stuck in a state of despair. And deep down we believe that it's better to create a false reality and try not to let ourselves grieve even though there are things in our lives and in our world that are worth grieving. Some of us have not properly processed all of the shootings that have gone on in our world in the last few years. Some of us in the room have not processed this pandemic we've been in and how it's literally altered how we do life. Some of us have had death in our families and haven't processed it yet. Oh I'll be strong for so and so. I'll get to that later. I have a ton of work to do and then I'll process. Oh trust me church fam I know all too well how this works because this is me. **We've concluded that emotionally trying to live a lie just feels better than acknowledging the actual emotional weight of living in a fallen and broken world because it strikes fear in our hearts.**

We live in a world that is full of darkness, and I'm convinced that we're often afraid to process those emotions because we're afraid that if we do walk through the darkness, it will overtake us. That if we allow ourselves to feel the darkness, we won't be able to handle it.

And while we don't think about it, do you know what that functionally tells me what we don't believe about God? It means we don't believe that we can find enough peace in knowing that God can deal with the darkness. We don't believe he can actually sustain us. We don't believe he can supernaturally give us the peace and the strength to deal with every arrow shot our way; which is why we feel despair. We think the darkness is too great to conquer. That this is just how life is from now on. And that church fam is the essence of hopelessness. To believe that the darkness has won. That it's too great.

If this is you, you might notice in your life a, "what's the point" attitude when it comes to seeking God and praying to him when things are going on in your life. You're like what's the point. I don't expect God to act. Where is God in all of this? I don't expect him to sustain me. I don't expect to find any peace so why should I engage in this with God. Let me say it another way: "Why would I pray to God cause it's not like he's going to fix it? It's not like the problems are going to go away."

I want to expose what we are saying when we say that. We are saying we only truly believe we can find peace and joy if our circumstances change and not in the solid rock that is our God. It exposes that we only truly believe that we will be ok if the circumstances change, so if I don't believe God won't change it then why pour our hearts out to him. We functionally don't believe he is our refuge as the Psalms say. Really what we believe is that the only safe place is getting away from whatever this thing that is troubling us, and hear me say, I get that fam, I truly get that; but Jesus says I will be with you always even to the end of the earth. That our peace is not a place but in him, who is with us at all times. We don't trust him. We don't believe him to be *the prince of peace* like Isaiah says. We don't believe him to be *the God of all comfort* like 2 Corinthians says. We think peace and joy are only circumstantial.

We need to be honest with ourselves and acknowledge that we don't believe what [Philippians 4:6–7](#):

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Ultimately we don't believe this will happen. We don't trust God to give us his peace when we practice prayer and thanksgiving in all things so we ask what's the point. We become apathetic towards seeking God in times of trouble. We start developing a defeatist mentality where we have no expectation for God to actually give us

supernatural peace in our lives. And so we try to not think about it. We try to escape our problems. We use any and every means to escape.

Because we don't trust God and because we don't believe his Word, all we have left is despair. And what God is calling all of us to do is repent. He's pleading with us to look at him. He's saying you've been down in your feels for so long. You've been dealing with this without me for far too long. Repent and turn toward me. Reorient yourself back to me. We see that David does just that, where he re-orient his life and lifts his eyes off of the reality of the things that grieve him and intentionally puts His eyes back on God.

I love how this is done in [Psalm 42:5–6](#):

5 Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. 6 My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.

Sometimes reorienting yourself looks like preaching to yourself. Sometimes we do way too much listening to ourselves and not enough preaching to ourselves. The psalmist notices this turmoil inside himself and tells himself that he's still going to praise God even though he's feeling cast down. Even though there is a disturbance in his soul, he says let's make sure we give God praise. He says my soul is downcast but I will remember you. He sees his state of being cast down as a reason to remember God. He's not defeatist or apathetic towards God because of his pain. He sees it as a reason to turn to God. Your pain and suffering are real church fam and God is also real.

You see when we reorient ourselves to remember God, God uses that to save us from our despair. But not only can reorienting ourselves save us from our despair but it can also save us from living with a...

VICTIM MENTALITY

This might seem disconnected from reorientation but stay with me. Many of us in the room have been hurt by others, have had extreme loss, and grief and hear me say upfront that it's not wrong to feel those feelings. We just said at the top that you need to feel these feelings and to go to God with them but it's easy to not go to God and allow these feelings to consume us entirely. For some of us in the room we might perceive life in such a way that now our pain, our loss, our grief, determines our interpretation of most events in our lives.

Examples of our past experiences determine how we interpret future occurrences. Some of us have been told that we're failures. And maybe you've failed quite a bit over the years. And what this mentality does is sow the seed that we now always expect to fail. For some of us in the room, we are afraid to take risks because of how much we expect to fail.

For others in the room it hits a little deeper and personal. It's more hurtful than that. For some of us, we've been victims of neglect, abandonment, betrayal much like David himself. And for some of us that list could go on and on. You have experienced great pain from what has been done to you. And for that I'm sorry. Some of us have gone through counseling and are going through counseling because of someone else's sin toward us. And we are trying to deal with everything. But for some of us who even go to counseling, and for many who don't, unbeknownst to us, we now have a tendency to read every situation, every relationship, every interaction through the lens of our past pains. We do this because we have let the fact that we've been a victim dictate our perception of our whole identity. So now, we interpret what happens to us in life through the lense of "I will always be the victim".

In all painful relational experiences we have, even if we may have contributed as much sin and wrongdoing as the other person, we now only see the other person's sin and oftentimes not our own. Seemingly in every scenario it's always someone else's fault. And sadly this hits at our culture at large. Everyone is pointing their fingers at one another and no one seems to be accepting any responsibility, and even when they do it feels superficial, almost like it's a part of some marketing ploy to look a certain way and not one out of humility. And the sad news is that this tendency can often find its way into the church. Instead of the church being shaped by God and how he asks us to deal with our experiences, we are shaped by the culture around us instead.

I say all of that, because we need to be able to recognize these tendencies in our church family so we can lovingly expose this mindset to help people. This mentality is more damaging than we might realize because it prevents us from being able to pursue growth. And the only way to grow is to admit when we are off in the things. This mentality robs us of our ability to thrive and progress because we never deal with the behaviors that are keeping us from prospering. When we won't admit our fault and continually blame everybody else we essentially stagnant our growth.

Someone with a victim mentality ends up convinced that they're a helpless victim of their circumstances because everything that is hindering and harming them is external; which means there's nothing they can do about it. They become resentful and bitter towards God because their minds are consumed with their hardship and they keep asking God,

“God, haven’t I been through enough?” They lack the joy that comes from being able to play a role in one’s own healing and progress.

Church fam, hear me say, if someone tries to help you see where you might be off in things, and does so lovingly and graciously and patiently overtime, I need you to hear me say they are not your enemy; your enemy is this victim mentality.

Some of you need to have honest conversations with people in your LifeGroup about their victim mentality. Not in a self-righteous “holier than thou” way, but in a way that exposes the lies that the enemy feeds to our brothers and sisters. We need to be able to expose these lies and point them to the truth that we find in Jesus. And if you have been made new in Christ through faith in him, hear me say, your victimization doesn’t ultimately define you.

Now you might be asking, “What does all of this have to do with reorientation?” It feels like we took a left turn somewhere along the way. If you are a follower of Jesus that suffers from this mindset, then you are in desperate need of re-orientation. **When we are hyper focused on and consumed by this mentality, we end up viewing ourselves exclusively through this lens. And we don't allow the good news of Jesus Christ to tell us who we are. The enemy burrows into our minds and tries to use our pain to tell us who we are, but our identity is in who our SAVIOR says we are.**

The reality that we all must face and should lament is that all of us are victims. See if you suffer from this mentality you only look at yourself as being a victim but the reality is that you are not just a victim. Everyone in this room is a victim. See, I know you’ve been through a lot. I know you’ve probably seen a lot, experienced a lot. But I’m here to tell you, you’re not the only one. **1 Corinthians 15:22** says this:

22 For as in Adam all die,

Ever since Adam ate from the tree that God told him not to eat from, the world was plagued with death, and we inherited from our first forefather, the curse of sin. The biggest implication of this is that we all will die. In fact, from birth, everything that’s alive in this world moves toward death. Our bodies will eventually break down and die. No matter if you’re Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson and you’re seemingly at the apex of health and fitness or if you’re the President of the United States and have access to the best of everything when it comes to healthcare and medical advisors, we all die. And we don’t just die but through life, we also have physical ailments and injuries and illnesses.

Every possession you own will one day fall apart. Every relationship that you have will not last in its current state because time always wins.

The reality is that we are all victims in this life. That is real. That is true. And that truth is worthy to be mourned and lamented. We all have either suffered or seen others suffer. But people of God there is another truth for those that have been made new in Christ that is greater than the truth that in Adam we all die. And you don't have to look far to find it, it's in the second half of the verse in [1 Corinthians 15:22](#).

22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

It's crucially important that we acknowledge the fact that we have suffered under the curse of sin because of what Adam did. But it's also crucially important that we realize that though in Adam we are victims, in Christ we are also victors!

Practicing reorientation looks like remembering that even though I am a victim of many things, I am also a victor in Christ! ...and here's the part where you need to listen...in Christ you are more of a victor than you are a victim!

Can I just speak over you right now? I need you to hear me. You are more healed than you are broken! You are more forgiven than you are guilty. You have been given more grace from God than you have sin in your life! God has given more to you than has been taken from you! And one day soon, you're gonna go home to be with him and because of Jesus' victory at the cross, you will never ever be a victim of sin again!

So now you can take responsibility for your actions because you're not just a helpless victim of your circumstances. You have been empowered by the Spirit of God to:

- Repent and grow out of living in ways that aren't honoring to God
- Identify and turn away from all of the behavior patterns in your life that cause you to not live as God calls you to live
- Practice humility and listen and receive correction from your brothers and sisters in Christ
- See yourself as God sees you, as a victor and not just a victim
- Walk in the joy and freedom and dignity of being ready and able to take responsibility for all of the steps you need to take towards your own growth, and prospering, and flourishing

You see for the Christian, reorientation is lamenting the darkness of this world and remembering what we see in [John 1:5](#) where it says:

5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Family, when we are given to despair and/or a victim mentality, we are allowing our minds to be overcome by the darkness of this world... but when we fight against those enemies via reorientation...it's like we're walking through the darkness, while holding onto the light, that's greater than the darkness! You can walk through darkness if the light you have is strong enough and bright enough to invade that darkness and provide for you what you need to continue on your way!

It's helpful that John phrases the work of Christ as the light shining in darkness because it reminds us that undoing the effects of darkness is what Jesus is always doing. When he walked the earth, people would be sick because of the darkness, and he would heal them. He came by a blind man that literally walked in darkness, and Jesus gave him sight and allowed him to see the light of day. Every follower of Jesus in the room was once a part of the kingdom of darkness. Do you realize that? We were once enslaved by darkness, but now the Son has set us free from it.

When he went to the cross, he took on the full weight of the darkness when He took our sins upon himself and died. His situation seemed worthy of nothing but despair. He was truly the innocent victim; but he was and is the light that shines in the darkness, and he was raised from the dead because the darkness could not overcome him

Since Jesus came to save us, He has always been about the work of infiltrating the darkness and shining His light on it. Which means, reorienting our thoughts to focus on Christ, then, is bringing the reality of our salvation in Christ to bear in our life. And as we do so, may we draw the same conclusion that David draws at the end of this Psalm.

23 But you, God, will bring down the wicked into the pit of decay; the bloodthirsty and deceitful will not live out half their days. But as for me, I trust in you.

David concludes by saying, God, the men that have harmed me and want to continue to do so, I'll leave it in your hands. I know you're good and you're just. I'm not gonna try to get vengeance. I'll trust you.

As we close, band you can come on up. Here's what I want us to be able to remember:

- If we're afraid to process our negative emotions: **Remember He'll sustain us through the darkness.**
- If we are in despair because of our pain and grief: **Remember that He can give us joy and peace in the midst of your pain and grief.**

- If we have allowed the wrong done to us to tell us we are ultimately just a helpless victim: **Remember when He tells us that we are victors even if we don't feel it in the moment**

Romans 8:37 says this:

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

If we follow after Jesus we have to come to a place where we can acknowledge our pain and sufferings to God and but we also need to reorient ourselves back to God. You can acknowledge that your emotions are real and also that God is real and is still good.