

## “Wait for God” (Mark 11:25-33)

### 1. Emotions

You may have experienced something unreasonable, unfair. You may have thought, “Why do I have to suffer like this? What did I do to deserve this?” Or you may have even felt anger when you saw someone going through difficulties and suffering under unreasonable circumstances. And you may have felt so powerless or useless when you couldn’t do anything about it.

It is natural for us to feel sad, painful and heart-breaking if we are treated unreasonably. It is natural for us to feel the pain when we see someone treated unfairly.

But if we hold on to those feelings and try to solve them by ourselves, then those grudges, hatred, bitterness and judgmental feelings will grow in our hearts like ivy growing thick. Those feelings will distort, damage and sometimes even destroy our relationships with others, our relationship with God and furthermore our relationship with ourselves. “I hit you on the nose. You cut off my hand. I kill you. Your brother kills me and my family.”<sup>1</sup>

God removes those bitter roots, growing ivy in our hearts one by one, carefully and slowly. Many of them are entangled with one another, and there are many layers. It is like apple pie. If we push too strong, it will crumble. Our hearts are so delicate and weak. God never pushes us too strong to the degree that might break our hearts. God removes them slowly but surely one by one. He will fix, restore and heal the broken part of our hearts. The ivy that was covering our heart will be removed little by little and we will be set free little by little. The freedom will spread.

For this to happen, we must bring those problems in our hearts honestly before God. In order to do that, we must understand what is in our hearts.

Dr. Dan Allender, in his book, “The Cry of the Soul,” discusses how our emotions reveal our deepest questions about God. I learned a lot.

“Emotions are the language of soul. They are the cry that gives the heart a voice.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *Challenging Lifestyle*, Kingsway Publications, 1996, p.106

<sup>2</sup> Dan Allender, *The Cry of the Soul*, NavPress, 1994, p.7

Shopping at City mart. There was a long cue. The cashier was working very slowly. “Can you do it a little quicker? Can anyone think of ways to improve efficiency here?” I murmured in my heart. The customer slowly took out money from her wallet. “Do you have 200 kyats?” “Wait, yes I have, hmm no I don’t...” Seeing this kind of exchanges again and again, I found myself getting more and more irritated. “Well, finally the one after the next is my turn.”

Then, one middle-aged lady came with the basket full of items. With an innocent look, she cut into the line and push herself in front of the person before me. She just let her do it without saying anything. The cashier is working as if she sees anything. “Why do you let her do that? You must cue properly! You must say something!” I cried in my heart!

Then I waited and waited and at last it was my turn. The cashier asked me, “Do you have 200 kyats?” I shook my head without speaking. She looked into the cash box again. Then grinning, she gave me a candy instead of change. “What’s going on here! Everything is going wrong!”

*What do I feel?* is in fact another way of asking, *Who I am? What direction am I moving in? Am I moving toward God or away from him?*<sup>3</sup>

Today we will look at two emotional reactions: anger and fear.

## 2. Anger

In the previous lesson, we looked at Mark 11, the scene where Jesus cleaned up the temple. He drove away sellers from the temple. He made the temple the temple.

On the way to the temple, he saw a fig tree. He came to it, but it had no fruit. He said, “Never again will anyone eat fruit from this tree.” The following morning, Jesus and his disciples walked pass the fig tree. They saw it was completely dried up, roots and all.

Peter said, “Look! It happened!” Jesus said, “Have faith in God. Don’t you know the power of prayer? If you have faith in God and don’t doubt, you can tell

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.7

this mountain to get up and jump into the sea, and it will. Everything you ask for in prayer will be yours, if you only have faith.”

What is the point here? Now we know prayer has power. So, our prayer is the means by which all our wishes come true? We got a magic wand? Through our prayers, we can take revenge on those who did something wrong to us? “May God bless this attack so that we can successfully destroy that city.” No, that’s not the prayer Jesus talked about. Actually it’s totally opposite.

### Mark 11:25

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.

In short, the point for prayer is what kind of relationship we have with God. Who he is, and who we are. And how the relationship with God reflects on our relationship with others.

It is also true that how we relate to others reveals how we relate to God, how we believe God. Anger spins around the question, *Is God just? Will he let the wicked win?* Fear centers on the question, *Will God protect me?*<sup>4</sup>

Are all anger simply wrong? In Eph 4:26, Paul says, “In your anger do not sin.” It shows that not all anger is sin. We can be angry without being dominated by sin. There is righteous anger as a reflection of God’s character.

“God designed and blessed anger in order to energize our passion to destroy sin. Anger can be loved and redemptive, but it can also be ugly and vindictive [or nasty]. It depends in part on the object of the anger, how it is expressed, and why the anger is unleashed.”<sup>5</sup>

“Unrighteous anger is a dark energy that demands for the self a more tolerable [or better] world now, instead of waiting for God’s redemption according to divine design and timing.”<sup>6</sup>

I’ve watched a movie, “Dead Man Walking.” A young man has been in prison for six years. He was waiting for his execution after being sentenced to death for killing a teenage couple. The families of the two victims were very angry

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.27

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.38

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.38

with him and aggressively desired "absolute justice"—his life for the lives of their children. The murdered boy's father attended the ceremony still filled with hatred and anger.

After I finished watching, I had kind of impression. That young man's life was taken away legally by the anger of the families of the two victims. But their anger still remained in them.

Sometimes our anger may look like directed toward the people who did something wrong, but ultimately we are attacking God. God seems to be either unable or unwilling to deal with injustice; sometimes it even feels as if He was on the side of the evil, joining them and beating us up. Unrighteous anger is a hammer that tries to fight with God and break up with God as they want to do what they desire to do. Unrighteous anger hinders us from trusting God who does not grant our wishes.

By God's mystery, unrighteous anger may draw us to the point of encountering with something which we didn't expect. When we are angry with God and others, we want judgement. We desire to see that the wicked is destroyed. But instead we will see something totally opposite. God's only Son, beloved Son who is perfectly holy and righteous bears the wrath we deserve.<sup>7</sup>

"Righteous anger warns, invites, and wounds for the greater work of redemption. It allows the offense to be seen as an issue between the offender and God."<sup>8</sup>

Our reaction to the pain and injustice of life will only move toward godly anger if we own up to our struggle with God and move toward Him with our questions. "Are you just? Are you going to let the wicked violate me with no justice in sight?"<sup>9</sup> In the struggle with God, the righteous heart waits for God to reveal His character.<sup>10</sup>

God is "gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love" (Ps 145:8). But when his anger comes, it is hot, hard, and consuming (Ps 78:49).

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.42-43

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.46

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.47

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.48

God's anger comes for a holy purpose: to provoke fear ("leave your in or be destroyed") and dismantle those who do not heed His warning.<sup>11</sup>

The most amazing thing is that God's anger against sin has not been directed against us, but against Himself. The holy, sinless, perfect righteous one, Jesus received the cup of God's wrath. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). It is beyond our understanding.<sup>12</sup>

Now what shall we do with our anger?

### Ps 37:7-8

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret – it leads only to evil.

Here what Dr. Dan Allender suggests. When you are angry, No.1, stop, take a deep breath, don't take quick action. No.2, wait for God, wait for God's solution. Waiting does not mean that we deny the evil thing, nor we pretend we are not attacked by evil. We wait to see God's justice and goodness upon the evil situation. And it drives us into a deeper battle with God. That's No.3, ponder. Anger should lead us into silent pondering rather than direct action (Ps 4:4).

Then, what are we to ponder? Three things:

Ponder your desire. You may be bound by a strong passion to control, consume, and destroy. Think carefully about: What direction is it taking me, moving toward God or away from him?

Ponder your sin. If we hate the sin in our own hearts more than what we see in others, we will grow in the quiet, patient sorrow of true righteous anger.

Ponder God. Your anger pushes you to smash the evil one. Remember what the Father did upon the Son. What kind of God is he?<sup>13</sup>

"Our pain is to be a bridge to understand the pain of God. He grieves for both victim and abuser. He feels sadness for the pain of his children and the arrogance involved in all sin."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.51

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.52

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.53-55

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.57

### 3. Fear

#### Mark 11:27-33

They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. <sup>28</sup> "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you authority to do this?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus replied, "I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. <sup>30</sup> John's baptism-- was it from heaven, or from men? Tell me!" <sup>31</sup> They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' <sup>32</sup> But if we say, 'From men'...." (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.) <sup>33</sup> So they answered Jesus, "We don't know." Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

Fear of men prevents us from responding to God's Word freely. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law had their opinion. But they hid it from Jesus because of their fear.

When we look at the gospel, we notice something interesting. What kind of people wanted to be with Jesus? Sinners. They are very happy to be with Jesus. Sinners love Jesus. But those who think they are righteous, especially religious people hate Jesus. They are annoyed and upset when they are with Jesus. Isn't it interesting?

At all times and places, religious people make rituals, rules and regulations. They teach them to others and demand them to observe them. Of course, they observe them too. As long as they follow rituals, they can cover up their shortcomings. It doesn't matter what kind of character he has, or what kind of life he lives. As long as he observes the rituals, rules and regulations, he will be okay. Those who don't observe them are not okay. It doesn't matter what he thinks, imagines or desires.

We may think, "I am all right because I am doing this Christian ritual, that Christian activity." Are you really all right? What is within your heart? The Pharisees and the teachers of the law observed the law pretty well, but what about their inside? They feared men.

Fear of men binds our hearts. That takes away our freedom. When we fear men, we cannot live out God's Word. Fear moves us away from God. When we fear men, we cannot be honest about ourselves.

We fear and wonder, "What if others might find out this problem in me?" We fear that we might lose our current status. So we keep up appearances. We don't want others know our weaknesses, shortcomings and troubles or emotional needs. We also don't want to admit that we have those problems and needs. So we pretend as if we had no problem at all.

We fear something might be decided where we cannot see or hear. We are anxious about that. That is also one form of fear of men.

We worry about how others might think, and keep up appearances, and, we pretend to be someone else. We try to make ourselves look different from who we really are. That is false self. And if we try to keep up this false self, we end up acting according to this false self. And before long, even we ourselves think that is our true self. That's very dangerous. Because as long as we act as false self, you cannot understand God's love essentially. Because God loves your true self.

It is just like, we actually have a sickness, but we don't admit it, we pretend that we are fine, and we don't go to see a doctor. As long as we do this, we would never appreciate a doctor.

It is not until we become honest before God, admit who we really are, and come to God as we are that we truly understand God's love.

Please listen carefully. What we are dealing today is the fact that we cannot do it ourselves.

We are in trouble because we cannot do it ourselves. We need liberation. We need to be set free. God can set us free. God can set us free from unhealthy fear. He sets us free from acting as false self. He will enable us to recover our true self and live as our true self.

I used to fear God. I used to think God is always watching me to judge me and to grade my performances. He will never overlook even small mistakes. No matter how hard I try, I will never reach the passing mark. He is merciless in judging. What salvation meant for me was to escape from this God, merciless judge. For a long time, I thought like that.

But I was touched by God's love, and I began to understand his grace, not as a mere word, but as reality, through experiences. So now I don't have that kind of fear of God which I had before.

But I still have fear now; the fear of losing this relationship with God. Fear of turning away from the love of God again. As I know the suffering I would face, I don't want to lose this relationship with God. Fear turned into passion for God.

So, wait for God. Wait for God. I think that is what we miss most. That's why we are just turning around unhealthy fears. Fear centers on the question, *Will God protect me?* If we don't have regular intimate time with God, this question always remains in our mind.

We are of course busy with our works, with our kids. We look forward to next holiday, and become busy for vacation, leisure, activities, social things. In the midst of those busyness, we are pretty active for ministries, bible study, helping others. We are too busy to wait for God.

Here I want to share what I'm trying to do. Besides regular bible reading and quiet time, I take a short prayer once in the morning, and once in the afternoon. I intentionally stop whatever I'm doing, return to God, focus on him. It helps me a lot. It reminds me that I'm with him. I can rely on him. I can wait for God. And this short break doesn't diminish the productivity of my work, actually it increases its efficiency.

For this short prayer, I'm using one book, "Kingdom Streams 366 Devotions." Sandra K. Dubois, the author shares what she heard from God in her quiet time. It sounds like God is speaking to you. For example:

Joy

"Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me. Don't throw me from your presence, and don't take your holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation" (Psalm 51:10-12a WEB).

I [God] Am restoring your joy. Real joy only comes from Me, from My salvation. Have you slipped away from walking right next to My heart? I Am renewing your heart, your spirit, and your mind. I paid it all, beloved, so come. Come here. See how large My heart is for you. Lay down those things that are separating us. Lay them at My feet. I Am the Creator! I created you in your mother's womb, and I re-create you now. I Am forming you into the likeness of your Father; your Father

with whom you will walk forever. I Am renewing your life. It's not over. It's not set in stone. I Am breathing My life into your heart, your mind, your body, and your circumstances. I Am your eternal salvation, and I Am your salvation today, here, this moment. I Am restoring your joy.<sup>15</sup>

Wait for God. Because He is waiting for us to come, like a father who looks forward to spending time with his kids.

Next time, we will look at how important to take care of our emotional health for our spirituality.

For Lifenet groups and personal reflection

When was the last time you really get angry? How did you handle it? Can you see where the anger come from?

How would you respond? "Getting angry is always wrong."

Read 1 Samael 13:8-14. What did Saul fear for? What did it cause for his life? How could he have dealt with his fear?

How does fear of men (or fear of loosening face) affect our relationship with God, with others and with ourselves?

What do you fear most now? Why? How would you deal with it? What help do you need? From whom and when would you receive it?

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<sup>15</sup> Sandra K. Dubois, "Kingdom Streams 366 Devotions," 2017, Kindle, p.10