

Jesus, Life Coach: “I’m frustrated”

Reconnect – November 8, 2009

Series/Morning Intro:

- Welcome to Reconnect Barrhaven, where we want to be a church that loves God, helps people and builds community
- This morning we’re continuing our series called “Jesus, Life Coach”
- How does HE want to help us in what we all go through? How CAN he? Is he really in our corner? And what would HE do in our situation, anyway?
- Last week, we were scared – this week, we are...
- **FRUSTRATED**

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At that time Jesus prayed this prayer: “O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike. Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way!

“My Father has entrusted everything to me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light.”

Matthew 11:20-30, NLT

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Text: Matthew 11:20-30; James 4:1-3

Key Thought: God wants to help us overcome our frustrations, by changing our perspective through prayer.

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Intro: A Frustration Funny

The story is told, that there was once a young man who, in his youth, professed his desire to become a great writer. When asked to define "great," he said, "I want to write stuff that the whole world will read, stuff that people will react to on a truly emotional level, stuff that will make them scream in disbelief, cry in despair, howl in pain, and vent their anger in ways they've never dreamed of!"

He now works for Microsoft, writing error messages.

Frustration – we all share it:

- Frustration – we all share it, don't we?
- Our hockey team loses – to Tampa Bay – and we get frustrated
- Our kids get up at 6am every morning, when if they got up just a little later, we'd get some more precious sleep – and we get frustrated

Q: What makes you frustrated?

- We have a hard day at work – or we run into someone who annoys us that we can't get away from – or we can never seem to get ahead financially – or we have a problem we just can't seem to fix – and we get frustrated
- Almost two weeks ago now, I tried to buy a memory card for our camera from Best Buy, online
- I need a better memory card to be able to use the video camera feature – and with my daughter's birthday party coming up, I need to have it
- But there's enough time, based on the shipping estimate, and it's a great deal, so I go ahead and buy it
- Four, five days go by – everything seemed fine – I've bought things online before, I know the drill – and still, nothing in the mail – what's wrong?
- And then I get home, and there's the email from Best Buy – "there's been a problem with your order, could you please call us, blah blah blah"

- Turns out that they actually call the credit card company every time someone orders online from them – and my credit card company told them that my personal information that I’d entered online, was wrong!
- Now – ironically – the credit card I used was the card for my Bank – and I KNEW that there was no problem – frustrating!
- So I call Best Buy – and then I have to call Mastercard – and both sides promise that everything will be fine – well, I’m not holding my breath – I went to Staples and bought a memory card the day after
- Sometimes it’s the big things, sometimes it’s just the little things – but it’s enough to make you grind your teeth, as you wait on hold, as you have to fix something that shouldn’t have to be fixed – something that has no right to be wrong – frustrating!

One day, Jesus was frustrated:

- Jesus was just as human as you and I – even if a lot of the time, that can be hard to get our brains around
- And that means, that he did get frustrated, once in a while
- This was one of those days – he’s been teaching and speaking to crowds, but there’s been doubt and opposition
- People don’t believe in him – even though he’s done miracles for people, he’s cured people of diseases, he’s done all kinds of good things for them – they still don’t believe, and that naturally frustrates him, considering all that he’s trying to do for them, and all he’s giving up for their sake
- We pick up the story of that day in Matthew’s biography of Jesus, chapter 11:

...Jesus began to denounce the towns where he had done so many of his miracles, because they hadn’t repented of their sins and turned to God. “What sorrow awaits you, Korazin and Bethsaida! For if the miracles I did in you had been done in wicked Tyre and Sidon, their people would have repented of their sins long ago, clothing themselves in burlap and throwing ashes on their heads to show their remorse. I tell you, Tyre and Sidon will be better off on judgment day than you. And you people of Capernaum, will you be honoured in heaven? No, you will go down to the place of the dead. For if the miracles I did for you had been done in wicked Sodom, it would still be here today. I tell you, even Sodom will be better off on judgment day than you.”

- Jesus, for the most part, hasn’t been violently opposed – but it’s been a “ho-hum” response – he’s been ignored
- That’s the problem – God cannot get their attention in any significant way – they are much more concerned to just “do their thing”, as they have always done
- The towns that Jesus mentions aren’t hotbeds of wickedness – they’re regular sorts of places around the sea of Galilee, filled with regular people doing regular things
- Korazin and Bethsaida, we don’t hear a whole lot of them in the biographies we have of Jesus, but they’re not that far away from places we know he DOES go

- But Jesus tees off on them! Think about what he compares them to – Tyre and Sidon – the twin cities of Phoenicia known for all kinds of vices – port cities, centres of trade and industry and finance – the closest “bad places” to the Jewish homeland – that’s where the bad people are, that’s where they go, that’s where they do bad things – Tyre is a fortified island, like Manhattan, full of swagger, figuring that it’s the centre of the universe, and Sidon was the city that founded Tyre (both in modern-day Lebanon), and they’re in constant competition
 - It takes Alexander the Great seven months to conquer Tyre, some 400 years before Jesus – he builds a causeway, a ramp out into the ocean to connect Tyre to the land – and even though in Jesus’ day they are fading from their glory days, they are still the most exotic destination that you can get to on a budget from Palestine
- But Jesus says, if I had gone there and done what I did for you, they would be completely different today! THEY – the bad people, the ones who we don’t talk about in polite company – THEY, he says, would have turned their lives around – they would have come to God in droves and completely changed – but you “respectable people” haven’t done that
- “Capernaum” – Jesus moved to Capernaum as an adult – it became his home base of operations, where he lived – and he did a number of miracles here – so many so, that when people in his hometown, Nazareth, didn’t believe in him, they asked him why he couldn’t do miracles there like he did in Capernaum? (in other words, Jesus can’t win for losing when it comes to people who just don’t want to believe, in spite of the evidence in front of them)
- Jesus tees off on Capernaum even more – he compares it Sodom – that’s the Sodom of “Sodom and Gomorrah” – the historical “worst place in memory” if you’re a Jewish person, the place that God torched in a hail of fire and brimstone, it was so wicked
- God’s friend Abraham, way back at the beginning of the Bible, begs God to spare the city – and God says he will, if there are 10 decent people there – but they can’t even find that many – this is the place that Jesus says would have welcomed his coming – but Capernaum can’t be bothered to care
- Jesus is definitely frustrated – so what’s he going to do next? Call down fire from heaven himself? Open up a can of wrath and judgment on them? No, not exactly...

At that time Jesus prayed this prayer: “O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike. Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way!

- Instead of doing anything rash, he... prays
- Takes his concerns to God – reconnects with life and love and everything good
- He remembers the reality of God in his life, the priority of God in his life, the importance and centrality of God in his life – and it changes everything in his reaction
- Instead of acting in anger and frustration, he turns his attention to God and everything changes
- God’s at work – evening things up – making things right – turning things around
- “childlike” – insignificant to some, but willing to learn and accept the new – innocent and believing
- Jesus prays, and everything comes into perspective

“My Father has entrusted everything to me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

- Jesus’ relationship with God the Father roots all else – it’s the foundation, the bedrock, the connection point that is rock-solid
- This is all about perspective – and it’s not clear here whether Jesus is still praying, or teaching
- I almost wonder if he’s talking to himself – reminding himself of the way things are – of the way things TRULY are – almost like a pep talk he’s giving himself, to keep going in the face of human beings and how frustrating we can actually BE... !

Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light.”

- “rest” – relief, peace, calm
- “perfectly” – earlier times, earlier translations, it said, “for my yoke is *easy*, and my burden is light” – fits perfectly – a poorly fitting yoke will choke an animal, or wear it out – but one that is well fitted will allow it to be most effective, and suffer the least pain for wearing it
- Jesus once more offers himself to people – the frustration has passed, and he’s back on track, trying once again to communicate the great love of God to people

Frustration: being blocked in what we want to do

- Frustrated, as in upset, versus frustrated, as in blocked – the adjective versus the verb
- When we’re blocked, we look for control, assuming that we still want to get our own way – and then we’re frustrated even more, when we can’t control people – the ones around us, the ones we know, the ones we love – because we will try to control
- What does Jesus get frustrated at? Unbelief – or maybe better, disbelief – those that choose NOT to believe, even when confronted with the truth, even when it should be convincing – they refuse to give God a place in their lives, and prefer to go on themselves instead – they won’t be helped, they won’t be saved – they prefer to be in opposition to God

A pattern to follow:

- Jesus’ pattern: emotion first / then prayer / then take action – seen last week with fear, as we looked at his prayer the night he was about to be betrayed by those closest to him and killed – he felt the fear, he prayed, and then he took positive action – he went forward to the cross, to carry out his mission, to take the world’s punishment for evil
- This week, it’s the same pattern: the emotion is frustration / then he prays / then he takes positive action: he offers himself once more to people, renewing his efforts to connect them to God
- How can we adapt that pattern? Why is it important?

- There are different approaches that you can take, in a message on anger:
 - There's the "don't ever get angry, because Jesus said angry is bad" tack
 - Then there's the "everyone gets angry, but you need to use it for good" approach
 - And then there's the "let's talk about practical ways to overcome our anger" take on it
- These all have their place – but more than anger management this morning, I want to stress the role that prayer plays in the response of Jesus to the emotions, the circumstances that life brings
- We can't really control our emotions – they are a reaction to the stimuli, the circumstances around us
- When good things happen, we're happy – when bad things happen, we're sad – when things don't go our way, or we see bad things happen to someone we love, we get angry, and so on – they come in response to something else
- Jesus was the same way – but instead of just riding the reaction – instead of just going with it – or instead of thinking things through, or any of a hundred different management methods that people would give – what does he do?
- He prays
- We've been conditioned to see prayer as something that pious people do – that's fairly useless, but they do it to make themselves feel better
- Or it's something that we do because we feel guilty, and we know we should pray
- Or we do it when we're desperate
- But for Jesus, prayer is like breathing – he realizes that he shares his life with God – he WANTS to share his life with God, every part of it – and when something happens, when something doesn't go his way, he takes it back to where his life comes from – he prays about it
- Jesus doesn't pray just to do it – like saying grace before dinner, because he's Jesus and it's expected of him – he prays because he needs to – he prays because that's where the answers are, that's where the power is, that's where he's going to reconnect with the person that he wants to be, with the person that he needs to be, to be able to see the bigger picture – to gain the right perspective again
- He has this trust relationship with God, where he wants God to be a part of every part of his life – and God brings the balance into his life that he needs
- And he wants to do the same for us
- When we are working with God – when we see things as He does, when we trust that He is in control of our lives – then we don't need to be frustrated by nearly as much – sometimes frustration just means that we have to change what we're doing – but other times, we need to let it go as we entrust our lives and our minds to God
- When we pray, God often will show us a different approach to take – the "positive action" in the pattern of emotion/prayer/positive action – and doing that will take us through the situation, whatever it is – if we will connect ourselves to God to get that action from him

Key Thought:

**God wants to help us overcome our frustrations,
by changing our perspective through prayer.**

What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Isn't it the whole army of evil desires at war within you? You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous for what others have, and you can't possess it, so you fight and quarrel to take it away from them. And yet the reason you don't have what you want is that you don't ask God for it. And even when you do ask, you don't get it because your whole motive is wrong – you want only what will give you pleasure. **(Jesus' brother James, in James 4:1-3, NLT)**

Conclusion: perseverance

- Remembrance Day this week – the example of the military, those that have fought and died on our behalf
- They have persevered through many frustrations, many difficulties – we can learn from their example, as they face hardship on our behalf, even this morning
- One of the great things about “Remembrance” Day is that it brings perspective – life doesn't seem quite as hard when you don't have someone shooting at you
- (etc.)

Response: Q & A

Getting through anger:

- 1) Why are you angry? (Is it really what you think it is? Does it “match”?)
- 2) Getting angry at the right things
- 3) Processing your frustration/anger – giving it to Jesus
- 4) Anger – a response to powerlessness, being blocked – what is your anger a response to?

Q: Is there a “good anger”? What sorts of things SHOULD we be angry at or frustrated with?

Q: How can we get “unblocked” or break through in those areas?