

The Trouble with the Heart

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Preacher: Julio Pena

[illegible]

And we welcome you. Good morning again. I see some of you all during Sunday school, but if I didn't say hi yet.

Hi, it's good to see you. For those who don't know me, I am Emily Julio. And Julio is going to bring kind of the sermon.

But first, I'll give a quick little update on some things. And we're going to start off with some door prizes. Yeah, are we allowed to do that in church? So I have two prizes.

And this will be for anyone who can raise your hand. Because it's school time again, right? So raise your hand to be called on. And if you can tell us a country that we have been to this year for ministry.

[1:31] Gretchen? That's okay. Go ahead, Gretchen. New Zealand. Yes. And I saw Kathy's hand here.

We did go to both New Zealand and Colombia. So I've got some honey from New Zealand and some coffee from Colombia that I'll bring back to you all. You won. Other countries.

Thank you. Okay. Thank you. We also got to go, well, what were we doing? In New Zealand, we were teaching for a couple weeks there at missionaries who were doing counseling training.

So we taught them for a couple weeks. And then we went to Mexico after that, where Julio was teaching in a biblical studies program. And it was a bilingual setting.

So he was teaching in Spanish. I was translating into English for those English-speaking students. In Colombia, we led a team from another supporting church who wanted to do a missions trip, first time ever international missions trip.

[2:32] And we led them. It went great. And then this coming weekend, we'll be on the move again. I'm invited to go teach at a counseling training in Switzerland.

And because when we were coming back from New Zealand, they canceled our flight because there was a problem with the plane. I said, that's fine. I don't want to get on it anymore. But because they inconvenienced us, they gave us some flight credits.

So yay, Julio gets to go with me to Switzerland. Thank you, Delta. And then we have a really close friend who's like a son to us, who he and his wife live in Spain now.

So we'll, you know, if you're already across the ocean, go see people that you know, right? So we'll go spend a few days with them. And then in, well, we're supposed to go back to Colombia in October, but I don't know if you heard there was an earthquake there a week or two ago.

And it was very close to where Julio again was going to be teaching in a biblical studies program. And so they've had to kind of postpone things.

[3:37] And we're still scrambling a little bit to see, is this still happening? When is it happening? Can we still make it work? So we may or may not be going back to Colombia sometime this fall.

That's still kind of up in the air. We appreciate your prayers as we're trying to figure that out. And then coming up still this year in December, we're supposed to be going to Guatemala that we've been to in the past to lead a retreat there for some people in ministry.

So that's kind of our comings and goings, just to give you that update. Julio is going to talk a little bit more about a lot of what we do in our day-to-day while we're here, home-based.

But we also do that when we're on the road. And that's we connect online with people and we do a lot of counseling. So he's going to – I won't talk about that because I know he's going to mention it. But we thank you all so much for your prayers, your encouragement, your support. I know the church supports us financially. I know you all are praying for us. I did just put up on this bulletin board right out in the hall a newsletter that went out yesterday.

[4:43] So you can get that. There's also on the table right there some printed copies of – in June we did like a mid-year report.

What have we done so far this year? So I printed out a bunch of copies of those if you want to grab one to take. And there's also a paper there on that table that has a big QR code. If you want to scan it, send us a message if you want to get our email newsletters that go out usually every couple months.

So that's out in the hall, just so you know. That's there. Oh. Okay.

Well, then just make sure he has your email address, and then we're fine. We're covered. Thank you. One more thing before I get off the stage and let Julio share this morning.

Earthquake updates. Most of you know Julio is from Venezuela, and so when – has it been a month ago? Over a month ago, two months ago. There was two back-to-back earthquakes in Venezuela.

[5:51] We got lots of messages. Hey, we heard. Are you guys – is your family okay? That kind of thing. The answer to that is yes. Thankfully, where our family there lives, they're far enough away that they didn't – they felt it like a tremor, but it didn't impact their lives directly.

But it has been – I mean, it's very discouraging for a country that's already – has been in crisis for a long time. And there are some pictures on that most recent newsletter as well of ways that as people – I know that Moncier Baptist had a way of sending support to Venezuela through the Baptists, and we're grateful for that.

For those who weren't here, some people chose to send us money for us to send on to people. So we have – Julio has a good friend who actually is a pastor in the town of La Guaida where the epicenters were.

And so he was a main one that we were able to channel resources to. And then some other missionary friends who maybe went from Colombia there to help right away or from his church. They packed up a truckload full of stuff, and a bunch of men went and distributed and helped. And so we were able to pass offerings and donations along to these Christian brothers and sisters that we knew who were on the ground.

[7:11] And so they were able to, you know, give food and water and buy mattresses and buy – one of the neat things that, like, you wouldn't think about this, but family members were by hand digging through rubble trying to find people.

And it's dark in there. And so we were able to help buy a bunch of headlamp flashlights so that they can have light as they're down inside these buildings, digging around and trying to find their family members.

So just really practical ways. And also Julio had previously recorded sort of a seminar about lament, you know, how through the Psalms especially we can learn to bring our heartbreak to the Lord. And so we made that accessible to anybody there who wanted it. And some of the missionaries were passing out little QR codes like scan this, scan this. So they're getting God's word and encouragement.

And those are just some of the ways we've been involved. Our friends in Colombia, where he's supposed to be going to teach, their building – it's a missions base that's like, I don't know, four or five stories tall in a row of buildings.

[8:20] Their building is fine. Praise the Lord. On either side of them, buildings collapsed. And so – and I think one of the side buildings damaged their roof a little bit.

So they're having to move all their people somewhere else while that gets repaired. But I think their friends and neighbors that they knew there on the street survived, even though maybe buildings collapsed and things.

So there's a lot happening, a lot to be grateful for. A lot of people are still injured or missing or they've lost loved ones. So we do appreciate you guys keeping us and kind of by extension all of these other folks in your prayers.

And, yeah, I think that's all I'm going to say. So I'm going to get off the stage and let this good-looking man share God's word with you. Thank you. I showered today.

So one of the things that we do pretty much daily is that we do counseling with people, especially in South America or anywhere in the world, that they speak Spanish because we do it online.

[9:31] So I do biblical counseling with them. A lot of them come and they want to specifically talk to me because they are struggling with sexual brokenness.

So there are a lot of things that I'm not going to talk about here, about that. But just for you to have an idea, I think that so far this year we already counsel about 500 people, either individual or in groups.

So one of the things that I would like to do today is kind of like do a little bit of what I do with them and to see how we can show the gospel to others.

So, yeah. Many times what I will face in counseling are kind of like two different kind of people. A lot of them will come to me and they will say, am I really safe if I still struggle with this sin?

I don't know if you ever think about yourself and wonder, where is my faith when I keep struggling with sin?

[10:44] And I'm not only talking about sexual sin. But sometimes they will say that they feel ashamed because they feel that they're a disappointed guy.

Many times they are, I don't know, parents afraid that they're ruining their children's lives.

Sometimes there are people, and actually I mentioned this today in the class for Sunday school, that I see people that they are tormented thinking that they ruined God's will in their lives because they took a wrong decision.

And they feel like I should have married this person or I shouldn't make that decision. And now everything is ruined for me, which is very sad.

But I also see people on the other side of this. These are people that find it really hard to say I was wrong or please forgive me.

Maybe you know one of those. Some people are convinced that almost every problem in their marriage is their spouse's fault.

[12:05] So I also meet with Christians that they pray, they read their Bibles. I meet with a man that every day at four in the morning is reading his Bible and praying because that's the only time that he can do it.

A lot of them know theology. A lot of them, they know a lot of good things. Yet sometimes they have a difficult time seeing their pride, self-worthiness, control, or the unbelief that they have in their hearts.

So these people may look completely different. You know, some of them will say, I'm too bad for God.

And others will say, I'm really not that bad. You know, so I guess we can divide even ourselves in the church in these two different groups.

But they both need something. They need the gospel. So for this, often when people come to me on the first session, I will ask them this question.

[13:18] How does the gospel respond to this situation? So think about a situation that you're going through or maybe a friend of yours or a family member that is going through a situation.

Have you ever wondered how does the gospel respond to this situation? Before you think, oh, you need to improve your communication skills or you need to work harder or pray more or wherever.

It's like, how is it that for us as Christians, the gospel is the answer for this kind of situation? And for this, I'm going to invite you to read Psalm 73, Psalm of Asaph.

And we're going to see a little bit how we can use this to present the gospel and also to see our own situation that we may be going through. So I'm going to try to read the first verses.

So remember, this is not my language. If you don't understand something, talk to your pastor. So, verse 1.

[14 : 36] Truly God is good to Israel, to those whose hearts are pure. But as for me, I almost lost my footing.

My feet were slipping and I was almost gone. For I envy the proud when I saw them prosper, despise their wickedness. They seem to live such painless lives.

Their bodies are so healthy and strong. They don't have troubles like other people. They are not played with problems like everyone else. They wear pride like jewel necklace and clothe themselves with cruelty.

These fat cats have everything their hearts could ever wish for. They scoff and speak only evil. In their pride, they seek to crush others.

They boast against the very heavens. And their words strut throughout the earth. And so, the people are dismayed and confused, drinking in all their words.

[15 : 46] What does God know? They ask. Does the Most High even know what's happening? Look at these wicked people, enjoying a life of ease while their riches multiply.

So, the first thing that we see in this psalm is that we are very good at looking at everyone else. You know?

Asaph is looking at other people. And you will see that he sees that they're prosperous. And he feels envy. He feels this is not fair.

He feels, why? Why them? Why is it that they're so evil? They do all this evil stuff. And nothing bad happens to them. Why is it that my country have two earthquakes when we already have a crisis? And now you will see all these people in America having this wealthy, prosperous life. And they are running away from God. Is this fair? Is God fair?

[16 : 54] Do you think that God cares? How is it that this is happening? You know? And this is something that we usually do. We usually do, even in our families. We will also look at others to blame.

We will say, well, it's my spouse. You know? My children. My parents. My boss. My circumstances. So sometimes people really do sing against us.

And sometimes we understand that there's cruelty that will be bringing pain. And the Bible is not ignoring that. But the Bible answers with another question.

What is happening within me? What is happening in my heart while this is happening around me? And this is something that we'll see from the beginning in Genesis 3.

We will see that we will blame others. Or we will blame God. Hiding our sin. Blaming others. But then later, we will see that Asaph made another mistake.

[18 : 03] He stopped looking at others. And he will start looking at his own righteousness. And came up with a deceitful conclusion. In verse 13, he said, Did I keep my heart pure for nothing?

Did I keep myself innocent for no reason? I get nothing by trouble all day long. Every morning brings me pain.

If I had really spoken this word to others, I would have been a traitor to your people. So Asaph believes his suffering means that God is absent.

He starts doubting God's faithfulness based on the circumstances. You know? Asaph didn't understand that God is so committed to fulfill his promises into our lives that he's willing to sacrifice our temporary happiness to make us holy.

Many of you know, if you haven't realized so far, that I'm struggling with the language. And one of the problems with English is that sometimes many words sound the same.

[19 : 21] For example, the other day, Emily was saying something about, like, disguise. So I was thinking, disguise. You know, like, disguise, disguise. But actually, it was disguise.

Like, custom? Yeah, welcome to my world. So then I was learning about this word because she said, well, disguise is like a costume.

But at the same time, you can use it in different ways. So I look it up online. And I learned that to disguise something means to hide what it really is.

To make something look different from reality. And I thought, that is a pretty good description of what we often do with our hearts.

You know, we disguise ourselves. We hide behind being responsible. We hide behind being in ministry.

[20:23] Behind our Bible knowledge. Behind being a good spouse. Or a good children. Or a good parent. Or a good Christian. But when scripture begins to show us something uncomfortable, usually we will start to defend ourselves.

And we will say, well, yes, that was not good. But sometimes I'm very good at doing this. Or, yes, I said that.

But often I don't say that. You know, oh, yes, I did that. But you don't know what they did first. And you know what I mean by that. We are very good lawyers for ourselves.

Not for others. And we know how to present the evidence so that we don't look quite as bad. But then when I see King David in Psalms, he will say, search me, oh God, and know my heart.

Test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you. And lead me along the path of everlasting life.

[21:39] So think about it. Are you more into defending yourself? Or are you more into asking God to show you your wicked heart?

This is something that Asaph did in verse 16. He said, so I tried to understand why the wicked prosper. But what a difficult task it is.

Then I went into the sanctuary, oh God, and I finally understood the destiny of the wicked. So then God allowed us to see our hearts.

Asaph entered in God's presence. It is very difficult for us to stop looking at others. And eventually he stopped talking about them.

And now he begins to talk about himself. And verse 18 says, truly, you put them on a slippery path and sent them sliding over the cliff to destruction.

[22:47] In an instant, they are destroyed, completely swept away by terror. When you arise, oh Lord, you will laugh at their silly ideas as a person laughs at dreams in the morning.

Then I realized that my heart was bitter. I was torn inside. I was so foolish and ignorant. I must have seen like a senseless animal to you.

So we see that he recognizes the bitterness and foolishness of his own heart. And that is important for us to grow.

You know, the closer we come to the light, the more clearly we will see our wickedness. And sometimes we don't like what we see.

Pride, envy, loss, selflessness, a critical heart, a desire of control, a desperate need for approval, or unbelief.

[23:56] If you see yourself here, I have some encouraging news for you this morning. So take heart. You are worse than what you think.

So tell the person next to you, take heart. You are worse than you think. Maybe this is not exactly the motivational sermon you were looking for, but stay with me.

If the message ended up here, it would be terrible news. But this is not what the gospel shows to us.

Because then it comes the most beautiful words in the psalm. Look at verse 23. You know, Asaph has just confessed what was happening in his heart.

And then he says, Yet, I still belong to you. You hold my right hand. Yet, I love that word.

[25:04] I was foolish. Yet, my heart was bitter. Yet, I envy. Yet, I look for life somewhere other than God.

Yet, you hold my right hand. Asaph sees the ugliness of his heart and discovers that God has not let him go of him.

So this is why the Christian can look honestly at their sin. We do not need to disguise our sin. We do not need to minimize our sin.

We do not need to convince God that I am better than I really am. Because my hope is not in my witness. My hope is in Christ.

The only way you can impress God is through Christ. God shows us. God shows us the depth of our sin. Not for condemnation.

[26:13] But so that we can see more clearly the greatness of our Savior. And his goodness towards us. To be a Christian, I need to stop being a good person.

That is what we tell someone when we preach to them. This is the reason why Christ's eye, our sinful DNA, is selfish and is looking to please ourselves.

Jesus himself said, Those who are well have no need for a physician. But those who are sick, I have not come to call their righteous but sinner.

Or Paul said in Galatians 2.21, If one could become righteous by obeying God, his death will be unnecessary. In other words, for Jesus, your greatest problem is not your sin, but your goodness. You attempt to change without his help. You know, John 3.16 says that I cannot save myself. John 15 said I cannot save myself.

[27 : 28] Well, the opposite. 3.16 said I cannot save myself. And 15 said I cannot change myself. We need Christ. And I know sometimes we feel, or we can feel, unworthy because of our sin.

Sometimes when we are before the church or when we want to pray or when we want to be, I don't know, in the worship team or serving in the church, we feel I'm not worthy because of my sin. But the problem is not that you sin that day and because of that you feel unworthy. The problem is that you don't feel unworthy every day.

Sometimes we trust that we are worthy to be here, to serve God, to be called a Christian, because sometimes we can be good Christians. But actually, it's the opposite.

I need to see that I need to see that I will never be good enough. I'm worse than what I think I am. And this is the good news of the gospel.

[28 : 37] And this might sound confusing because you may think, well, if God forgives all my sin and then it doesn't matter how I live, I can do whatever I want.

But this is quite the opposite. You know, the standards are higher. So high that God himself became human and died for us.

It's not about taking this easier. You know, the gospel doesn't tell you, look, the goal is on the other side of the ocean.

So go swim. The gospel is the goal is on the other side of the ocean. There's no way you can get there. So come with me and I'm going to take you there.

So how do we change? Well, stop trying. Draw near Christ. As on the day of the day that you became Christian with empty hands.

[29 : 43] You know, Asaph discovered what he really needed. Now listen to the end. Verse 24. You guide me with your counsel, leading me to a glorious destiny.

Who do I have in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth. My heart may fail and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart.

He is mine forever. Asaph says that God is the strength of his heart and his portion forever. At the beginning of the psalm, we noticed that he was saying, look what they have.

But now at the end he's saying, I have God. This is a deep change. Asaph does not deny his reality. His body and his soul were suffering.

But God is my strength. Change starts when Christ is more precious than anything else. Because you can obey without love.

[30 : 53] Like a Pharisee. So what do I do when God shows me my sin? We live a life of repentance and faith.

You know, at the end, verse 27 said, for you destroy those who abandon you. But as for me, how good it is to be near God.

I have made the sovereign Lord my shelter. And I will tell everyone about the wonderful things you do. So he switches his view from others or himself to the Lord.

He understands something. When we come to Christ, we need to acknowledge how weaker we are. We are worse than we think. Without a clear perspective of my wickedness, God's mercy would not be attractive.

So humbly acknowledge your condition. And this is what is going to lead you to be a recipient of Jesus' abundance grace.

[32 : 01] This is the beginning of change. And I want to finish with a quote from Tim Keller. He said, you are more of a sinner than you ever thought you were.

And you are more loved than you ever dreamed you could be. So let's pray. Lord, thank you. Thank you that we can see how wicked we are.

Thank you that sometimes we try to hide our sin or blame others. But today we acknowledge that your gospel is the way that we can see how wicked we are.

And because of that, we can appreciate and be in awe of your goodness in our lives. Help us remember when we try to hide or pretend that we are better.

Or help us in the moments that we attempt to justify ourselves with our good deeds. And remember that your Holy Spirit is bringing conviction, not for condemnation, but so that we can trust in your goodness and care for us.

[33:12] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.