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# Sermon Notes

July 22, 2018

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

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## Pray With Jesus: When You Are Depressed

Psalm 88

### Depression

- ❖ A depth of sadness that goes beyond normal sadness
  - no single cause for depression (causes may be physical, chemical, circumstantial, spiritual, psychological)
  - everyone gets depressed at one time or another (ranging from “down in the dumps” to being “nonfunctioning”)
- ❖ Sometimes, Christians try to hide their depression
  - denial
  - drown sorrow with work, addictions, exaggerated externally happy behavior

### Psalm 88

- ❖ Begins in gloom and ends in deeper gloom
  - the psalm begins with God
  - ends with the words: *darkness is my closest friend*
- ❖ “This is the darkest, saddest Psalm in all the Psalter. It is one wail of sorrow from beginning to end.” (J. J. Perowne)

- ❖ Life is filled with trouble, even mature believers can find themselves getting sucked into the vortex of despair
- ❖ Heman, the psalm’s author
  - grandson of Samuel
  - a man of notable wisdom (1 Kings 4:29-31)
  - chosen by David to be over the musical portion of Israel’s worship
- ❖ Heman has been unrelentingly crying out to God day and night with no apparent answer
  - a lifelong pattern (v. 15)
  - Psalm 88 gives us a model of how to be open and honest with ourselves, with God, and with others
- ❖ The psalm grows darker as it moves along
  - a soul full of trouble (v. 3)
  - on the edge of the death (v. 3)
  - counted among the dead (v. 4)
  - eyes that are dim with grief become blind to the good things in life
- ❖ The other side of Calvary
  - OT saints who lived and died in faith before the coming of Christ, had a somewhat cloudy and incomplete understanding of life after death
    - some had glimpses (Job 19:25-26, 2 Samuel 12:23, Psalm 23:6)

- some did not (Psalm 30:9, Psalm 6:5, Psalm 88:12)
- We are blessed to live in the light of Calvary and the fulfillment of God's promises to His people (2 Peter 1:19)

### Praying Psalm 88 WITH Jesus

- ❖ The psalms are words that Jesus inspires, words that Jesus Himself prays during His earthly ministry and words that Jesus now invites us to pray **WITH** Him
- ❖ Did Jesus get depressed?
  - Hebrews 5:7
  - we have a Great High Priest who is sympathetic with/for those to whom He ministers
  - Jesus fully enters into, understands and sympathizes with all of our human frailties and foibles
  - Jesus chooses to come to earth and to personally participate in every dimension of our feelings
- ❖ The intensity of Jesus' reliance on prayer shows up most clearly in the Garden of Gethsemane
  - Jesus' agony and prayer is so intense that He sweats drops of blood
  - for One who is sinless, perfect and completely holy, the prospect of becoming sin and bearing sin's curse must have carried an unfathomable weight of depression
- ❖ Jesus weeps when we weep (John 11:35)
  - a bruised reed and a faintly burning wick (Isaiah 42:3)

- we can pray Psalm 88 knowing that Jesus knows, understands and cares all about our trouble
- unlike Heman, we do not have to say: *darkness is my closest friend*

- ❖ What sustains Jesus in HIS darkest moment?
  - the ability to see all the way to the end of the story (Hebrews 12:2)
  - Jesus can give you the same persevering grace that sustained Him up to the end of His suffering in sorrow
- ❖ Pray with Jesus and do not let darkness have the final word!

### Personal Reflection

1. Why might Christians think that they should not be depressed? Are such thoughts reasonable? Why or why not?
2. Based on Psalm 88, would you say that seeking God is a guaranteed cure for depression? Why or why not? If not, how can seeking God help us in the midst of depression?
3. What comfort is there in knowing that this life is not all there is? Does that mean we should just "give up" and suffer until we die?
4. How might failure to confess your sins result in depression? (cf. 1 John 1:9)
5. Read James 1:2-4. Does being mature mean that you will no longer struggle? Why or why not? How can perseverance finish its work in you?