

## **“Your Faith and Your Feelings”**

*The Rev. S. Shane Nanney ~ October 6, 2024*

*Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:5-12*

In the Pixar movie, “Inside Out” kids learn about their emotions. It all starts when the character; 11 year-old Riley Anderson wrestles with conflicting emotions that comes from moving from her stable life in Minnesota to her unknown “to be” life in San Francisco.

The gist of the movie is to see how our basic emotions often control our acts: Joy, sadness, fear, disgust, and anger seem to be standing at the control booth of Riley’s life and directing it; literally, from inside out.

One of the quotes from the movie asks a simple question: “Do you ever look at someone and wonder what is going on inside their head?” (Joy)

The Book of Hebrews is a book that gets inside our head. No one really knows who the writer of Hebrews is and perhaps that’s by God’s design and will.

The reason is that it’s simply “the Word of God.” It’s God’s response to a bunch of people who weren’t feeling it. They started out the Christian life with the excitement of Pentecost. They rode the wave of the resurrection and the joy of hearing the stories of Jesus spread like wildfire and came to the area where they lived.

When they heard about Jesus; everything they had learned from their parents and teachers about God came alive and they quickly embraced and invited Jesus into their lives.

In response, they enjoyed the celebration of worship, lifting their hands in praise, and sharing the testimony of how Jesus changed and transformed their life completely.

Yet, in time, their feelings began to falter, the difficulty of living the Christian life in a time of persecution set in, their attendance at church seemed less enjoyable and being on God’s team was no longer popular; they were tempted to give up.

Perhaps they wanted to be like the traveling Christians who had seen the miracles of Jesus, were the eyewitnesses of the resurrection, and felt the joy of seeing the ascension. Yet, distance had left them out of such opportunity.

Suddenly discouragement set in. Perhaps a difficult diagnosis led them to fear and their faith started failing. Or an unexpected event shook their faith when they would have preferred the shaking of the ground beneath their feet like Paul experienced in Philippi.

Hebrews is not written to the people flying high spiritually; it's written to the people who understood the struggles of life and the challenges that come to everyone; including Christians.

It's written to the people who were simply: "Not feeling it." It's written to people who felt like John the Baptist who was in prison about to be martyred for his faith who said: "Go ask Jesus if he is the promised one or should we look for someone else? (He wasn't feeling it)

It is written to people like you and me who face life's struggles and silently ask God questions such as: "Where are you God?" "Why did you let this happen God?" Or even worse, "God, do you even care?"

Unlike the believers in Palestine, Paul was writing to those who had heard about Jesus second hand. Yet, they had enough time to mature as believers and to have their own life experiences journeying through life with Jesus like you and I do.

Yet, they were on the struggle bus. One of the greatest reasons why was because their faith was following their feelings instead of the feelings following their faith.

Listen, feelings change just like the flipping of calendars pages. Feelings switch like the weather switches in the seasons of life. Yet, God does not change. He's always present and relevant. He's not going anywhere. He will never leave you nor forsake you.

If you are frustrated at God or emotionally bouncing around because of the changes of your life; you need to make a pit stop at Hebrews 1:1 and re-discover our never changing, always present, immutable God who is present and there for you.

Sometimes the best thing to do when we get disappointed and frustrated with God is to go back to the basics and just remember—God is there.

We need to return to the facts because our feelings have somehow gotten ahead of the facts. When our feelings take over, they coach our faith; instead the facts coaching our feelings.

Feelings are fickle – they can change day to day; and when feelings are left unchecked, they can step us away from God instead of into the will of God.

Which dictates your thoughts and behavior? Does your faith direct and govern your feelings or do your feelings direct and govern your faith?

The writer of Hebrews understood a simple fact: Feelings are supposed to follow faith that is based on a fact. The path God has for us.

Several years ago, Fox News carried a heart-warming story about a 43-year old British Dad named Lawrence Brewer who is a computer programmer and was diagnosed with a disease called (MND) Motor Neurone Disease that takes away his voice allowing him to only speak through a speech synthesizer.

So, he recorded 1600 words and stored them in a computer program that will break them down to individual sounds and mimic Brewers real voice forming every word he wanted to say.

Years have passed and his son is now 13 years old and has not only has he heard his dad's voice through childhood, but knows his dad's accent, voice tone, and words of instruction as a parent.

Throughout history God has spoken in many ways and they are recorded in the Bible. In times past, God spoke in dreams and visions. He used nature; miraculous signs; prophets; a still, small voice; fire; trumpets; fleece; the casting of lots; and angels.

He has spoken in the middle of the night, during worship services, at mealtimes, during funerals, while people were walking along the road, through sermons, in the middle of a storm, and through the movement of His Holy Spirit.

God makes it clear that if you are a Christian; you've heard God's voice because John 10:27 says: "My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me."

Hearing God is not all that difficult. If we know the Lord, we have already heard His voice - after all it was the inner leading that brought us to Him in the first place. But we can hear His voice and still miss His best if we don't keep on listening.

Rick Warren said something similar when he said: "We often miss hearing God's voice simply because we are not paying attention." God is still speaking to the listening heart.

When you feel far from God; we also feel that He's not hearing us because we are not hearing Him. Jeremiah must have felt the same yet as He became still, listened, and waited on the Lord. This is what God said:

“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.” Jeremiah 33:3

Sometimes dry spiritual times are just a season and a pathway to the Promised land where Jesus reveals Himself to us in a fresh way, if we will stop, listen, and experience a deeper and firmer foundation for our trust and faith in the Lord.

When people depend on feelings; and the feelings they often “let go” – “step away”—or “go astray.” They “lose hope”. Other things attract them. The magnetism of the world seems more enticing. Following Jesus seems cumbersome. Joy seems to fade.

Yet, the writer says: “in these last days he has spoken to us in his son...” To those who has lost heart, he directs to the heart of the gospel. The person of Jesus.

The writer of Hebrews puts Jesus front and center. He shifts our eyes directly upon Him and draws us to fix our eyes on Jesus and remember who he is; He is greater! He is Jesus; the one and only.

The Psalmist understood how awesome of a gift we received when Jesus came because he looked into the heavens and knew there was a God and said: “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you visit him?” Psalm 8: 3-4

Yet, this same God who created this planet and created us; died for us. This is mind blowing. He is the greatest thing that has ever come to this world.

Jesus described Himself saying: “I am the light of the world.” When we get to heaven we will literally live in the light of Jesus' glory. The verse says he's the exact “representation” of God. He's not a “reproduction” of God; He is the exact representation of God in human form. The word for “representation” is the word Eikon. He is the person of God put in human flesh. He is God become man.

Do you want to know what happens when we get our eyes on Jesus; there's something that wells up in our soul. Worship starts happening. Praise begins. Joy returns. Peace invades. Life is transformed. Faith grows. Feelings return.

Perhaps the old hymn writer said it best as he began worshipping and said: “It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus, life’s trials will seem so small, when we see Christ; One glimpse of His dear face, all sorrow will erase, so bravely run your race till we see Christ.” Amen.