

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November Mike Beecham  
Proverbs 13:12

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life

Good morning, how you doing, and welcome to Friday mornings, devotional for Father's house. And before I get going this morning, I just want to say how much I've really enjoyed the devotionals this week. And they've really spoke to me, you know, Janice spoke yesterday. And I think we had Clive on Wednesday, and we've had George and Andrew as well. And in their own way, they've all kind of really, really helped me. There is such a value to these devotionals, I think certain certainly for me. So before I get started with mine, I just want to say thank you to those who have spoken this week. And you know, they've been really helpful. But you get me this morning. And this morning, I just, I suppose I just want to share my heart. And I do have some notes. And I'll probably read up my notes.

This morning, I just wanted to spend a few minutes sharing my heart and talking about a topic that, for me, is something that I'm on a bit of a journey with...but I reckon it's also something that I think we all, Christian or not, go through from time to time. I want to share some of my story with you, but doing so I'm aware that the story isn't over yet.

Sounds very dramatic, doesn't it, but it was probably around about mid October, where I was contacted by a friend of mine on Facebook who had seen some of my photographs and wanted to buy 3 of my larger images, but he wanted them framed and shipped up to where he lived in the north of the country. I was SO excited and encouraged by the fact that someone wanted to buy my work, and wanted to hang them on the wall. We agreed on prices...and he even paid up front. Let me tell you...as a creative, there's no better feeling than when someone pays for your work. I know that people like Helen Baddeley, Sharon Bielby, Bethan Venn, Trish Venn, etc all know what this is like. I was SO pleased.

I have good relationships with a local printing guy, and also someone who would frame the images, and so the process began. I arranged for a courier company to collect them, and deliver them the next day to the client. Everything was going like clockwork. Anyway, the courier collected them, and I stayed in close contact with the client at every stage of the process.

Anyway, I check in with the courier on the day of delivery, and the client stayed in ready for the delivery. He eventually stayed in all that day and, by the end of the day when he hadn't received the images, he got in touch with me, and I promised to check up the next morning if he still hadn't received them. He hadn't! So, as agreed, I started chasing the courier company to find out when the images might be delivered. For the sake of time, I'll cut out a lot of the story, but what followed next was a series of exchanges with the courier, where they first advised me that the images had been damaged during transit and would be shipped back to me. After 2 weeks of hearing nothing and not receiving my images, I was then advised that they had lost the images altogether, and after an extensive investigation, could not tell me where they were. I would have to provide invoices for the images, and I would have to make a claim to recoup the money.

This all began on the 19th October, and over the course of the past few weeks, I have become increasingly aware of my own heart, my attitudes and judgements. Let me tell you, my heart and mind have not been a pretty sight over the past few weeks. The overwhelming feeling, though, and something that I wanted to share this morning, was just one of absolute disappointment. It's funny, because Clive spoke on Wednesday morning, and mentioned in his devotional about disappointment, but did so in a way that really helped me. What I DO want to say from the outset, though, is the whole topic of disappointment isn't something we can cover and do justice to in 15 minutes, so this is really just starting to scratch the surface.

Disappointment, I know, is something that affects us all from time to time. And as I started to recognise this sense of disappointment in me, and aware that it was affecting my heart and mind, I started mulling it over...rolling it around in my mind and trying to understand it.

I guess it's what we now know as 'mindfulness'...that being present and aware of what is going on inside of us. But disappointment is one of those tricky emotions, because it seems fairly low down on the emotional scale. I mean, it's not anger, or bitterness, resentment or rage. It seems fairly...soft in comparison?

One online dictionary describes disappointment as:

*"Something or someone that is not as good as you had hoped".*

But I'm not sure that this goes far enough to explain it properly. As I was thinking about my feeling disappointed, this phrase popped up in my head. I can't tell you whether it was God thing, or whether I have heard it before but, regardless, I think disappointment is better defined like this:

***"A negative emotional response to an unfulfilled hopeful expectation"***

I'll read that again:

***"A negative emotional response to an unfulfilled hopeful expectation"***

This is exactly what is going on inside of me. I have a negative feeling (and a lot of rather negative thoughts) towards the courier in response to an unfulfilled expectation I had. It was also absolutely a hopeful expectation on my part. Now, the Bible, as it so often does, has a verse to describe how I'm feeling in this situation.

Proverbs 13:12 says this:

***"Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life"***

The Bible (again) nails it. As is so often the case, the word of God is held up as a mirror to my heart and reflects pretty truthfully what is going on in me. I started to reflect on my attitudes and feelings and I can see that my heart is sick over this situation. If you were to look inside of my heart you would be able to tell that it's frustrated, angry, upset, annoyed and maybe just a little bit hacked off over something which, I thought, should have been a fairly simple thing. I think that being aware of what is going on inside of you emotionally and mentally can be a really healthy thing. But it also leaves you without excuse. Let's be honest, we can't hide these things away from the Lord, and why would we want to? He knows us inside out anyway. But along with us being aware of what we're thinking and feeling, also comes the understanding that we have to decide what we're going to do with those thoughts and feelings.

Let's be honest...we all feel disappointed in situations or people from time to time, but what are we going to do with that disappointment? I think that one of the biggest things that 'the world' gets wrong about Christians is that we never seem to go through tough times or difficult circumstances...that, somehow, we have this magic force-field of holiness around us that protects us from all of the rubbish going on in the world. But, come on, we all know that this isn't true. We are just as open to the pain of life as anyone else. We get sick, we lose our jobs, we have difficult family relationships, and we experience things like pain, loss and, sometimes, disappointment. And we know that when this happens, it feels like a sickness of the heart, as Proverbs says.

Over the years, I've embraced the fact that there are still parts of my character and nature that are not as 'sanctified' as I would like them to be. But I'm also embracing the fact that one of the reasons the Lord gave us His word, is so that it can teach us and shape us to be less like ourselves and more like Him.

So, just what DO I do with these feelings and thoughts? Clearly, I can't ignore them or push them under the spiritual carpet of my Christianity. If I do that often enough, then eventually everyone around me will start to see that huge lump hiding under the carpet that I'm trying to really hard to hide and ignore.

You see, for me, all of this has sprung up quickly and suddenly over something as silly as 3 framed images and a courier company.

But what about if these kinds of feelings had been stirred up over something different, such as that hopeful expectation of a healing we were sure the Lord had promised. Or maybe that new job that went to someone else, or that person we thought we were going to marry and didn't, or that exciting opportunity that we thought had our name written all over it. What about those prophetic words or promises that were given us, or dreams that we had which haven't yet been fulfilled? What about if, in those things (and others like them), we recognise that we're feeling disappointed...and it's the Lord we're disappointed with?

What do we do with that? I'm only asking these things, and kicking the tyres on this idea because I can look back and see times where I've been disappointed that the Lord didn't act or move in the way I thought he would (or should!).

What DO we do with it?

Well, the good news is that we have a saviour that absolutely understands what we're going through. In fact, we can always say that he went through worse. Unfairly accused, mocked, humiliated, spat on, brutally whipped, and eventually hung on a cross to die. Don't get me wrong, it's not to make light of what we go through, but in reminding ourselves of everything that Jesus went through, it helps bring a perspective to what we're feeling. If there was ever anyone who had a right to feel a bit hacked off it would be the Lord, for sure. He willingly took all of that on Himself and chose the cross, because He knew exactly what was at stake. The bible says that knowing the joy set before him, he went to the cross. That's you and me that the Bible is talking about. Having that restored relationship with us WAS the joy that was set before Him.

And also we can see, all the way through the Bible, that there are people whose stories show them going through really, really difficult circumstances, whether that's vengeful kings, the stiff-necked whiney people of Israel, Cowardly Gideon, the disciple who denied even knowing who Jesus was (3 times). You've got displaced people groups, martyred disciples, faithful people who tried to pretend their wives were really their sisters, the list goes on and on. These are real people with real stories, and there must have been a fair share of upset and disappointment in there, I think.

But, remember, that passage in Proverbs starts off with deferred hope, for sure, but ends with a tree of life. The passage describes how a desire fulfilled is a tree of life to us, and this kind of passage always points back to the Father, and OUR story in the midst of the trial. And we have a story, don't we? Even in amongst the pain and trouble of life, even in the moments of utter disappointment in people or situations we have a story which ends with the tree of life. That's our destination point. Eventually, the word says, that Jesus will wipe away every tear, right every wrong, and bring us into a place of everlasting intimacy before the father. That's REALLY good news.

Of course, we might have some desires along the way. Some of them will be fulfilled quickly, some slowly, maybe some not at all...but our ultimate desire of being with the father will absolutely be fulfilled, and in there is our hope. We can be honest and say that, sometimes, knowing the peace and joy that comes from the father seems a very long way off but, the bible says, the Lord sticks 'closer than a brother'. He is always there, closer than we know, even if we don't feel it.

I think the Lord is absolutely fine with us being real with the feelings and emotions within us, and when we're in that place of disappointment, even maybe disappointment in the Lord, we can come to Him. We can do this, just as Janice said yesterday, because we know God's character. We know that he is good, and he is kind, loving. We know that he has committed himself to us. We have that covenant with the Lord. Remember that Jesus said:

***“No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you”***

We have in Jesus that great advocate and high priest who, even right now this morning, is praying for us to the Father. He is interceding for us, and making us known to the Lord at all times.

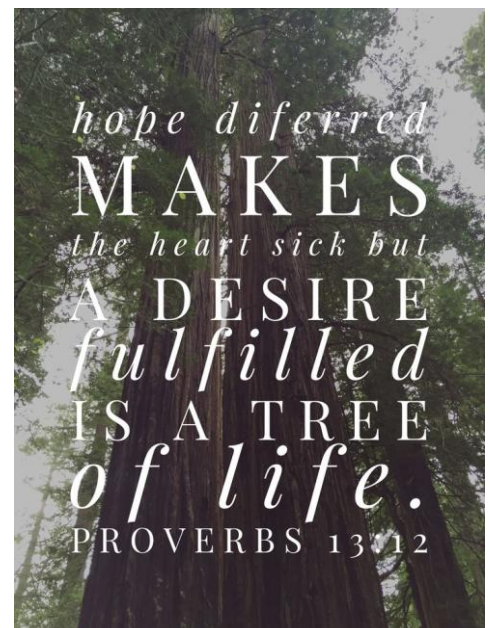
I’m stirred this morning, remembering again, that there is a tree of life waiting for us in the garden. Even though the stuff we go through in this life can be difficult at times...and it CAN be difficult, for sure. We have that great high priest who beckons us forward toward the tree of life. Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, we can be reminded that, even in the tough times, the tree of death that bore the weight of Jesus at Calvary became the tree of life for us. We get to live because He died. The burden we carry is easy, because He took our heavy burdens on Himself, and in doing so gives us life in a way nothing else can.

Hope deferred definitely makes our hearts sick at times, but at the cross, Jesus fulfilled that ultimate desire of bringing us back into relationship with the Father. And in Jesus doing that, there is more life than we can imagine.

So, I hope that was a little bit helpful today. Again, it’s really difficult to drill down into the whole topic of disappointment and do it justice in 15 minutes, but I hope a part of my story has helped you in some way this morning.

But I hope this morning has been helpful, that we remember again, that there is a tree of life. And that desire to be with the Father gives us that life. And we know that it points us towards that tree of life in our ultimate destination.

So I just want to pray really quickly. And then I'm going to call it to a close. So Father, I thank you. I thank you so much that You are a faithful advocate, a faithful and loving High Priest who intercedes and prays for us even now no matter what we're going through. And Father if we are in that place of disappointment this morning, I pray would You warm the coals of our hearts with the reminder again that there is a tree of life waiting for us and our ultimate desire of being with You and being close to You, being restored and loved by You will always be fulfilled. Father, we love you. And we thank You for all that You do for us and all that You are in Jesus name. Amen. Thanks, guys. I hope you have a really good day. Take care



Mike’s Notes with additions transcribed by <https://otter.ai> Ed Perrys