John 11:35

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[0:00] That he should know such a depth and such a tumult of emotion as to express it in this way, in this visible and public way.

! Jesus wept. And I want to explore the theme for a moment, this fact of the emotional life of our incarnate Lord and Saviour.
I want to reflect first of all on the joy of the Lord Jesus, the joy of Christ.
I know that the Bible never tells us that Jesus laughed or even that Jesus smiled.
We know that he was the man of sorrows and he was acquainted with grief. But sometimes I think we abuse that fact as if the Lord's life were one of unrelieved misery and unrelieved dejection.
[1:18] And we abuse even further when we extrapolate from that the conclusion that for ourselves laughter is wrong and smiling is wrong.

And we ought to be ourselves men and women only of sorrow and of grief. It's very important to face the reality of the joy experienced by Jesus.
In actual fact, the joyless life is a godless life. And had Jesus lived without joy, then that joylessness would itself have been sinful.
For example, the Lord himself forbade anxiety. The Bible forbids discontent.
The Bible challenges our own depressions and our own despondency. Now I'm not saying at all that God doesn't tolerate anxiety.
[2:36] That God rejects us if we're discontent or disowns us if we're depressed and dejected. I'm not saying that at all.

But I'd say that the Bible challenges our worry. It challenges our discontent. It challenges our depression.
And really, if these things are sinful to some degree, then we can't portray the Lord as living a life which was wrought by anxiety and tormented by discontent and by depression.
In fact, we're told of Jesus that at one point he rejoiced in spirit. We're told twice in John's Gospel, once in John 15 and once in John 17 of what the Lord referred to as my joy.
He prayed that we might have his joy fulfilled in ourselves. There was something which he referred to as his own joy.
[3:57] And we know too that he was filled with a spirit. And one precious fruit of the spirit is joy. The spirit's fruit is love and joy and peace.

Now, of course, that doesn't at all diminish the importance of the fact that he was the man of sorrows.
And yet, right beside that, there is this rejoicing in his spirit. There is this joy which he shares with his people.
There is the rest that he offers to us, come and I will give you rest. There is this precious fruit of the spirit of God.
Right at the core of our Lord's existence, there was joy. Without that joy, he could not have survived or obeyed or finished the work that God had given him to do.
[5:04] Where did the joy come from? While Jesus rejoiced in the being of God's Father, He saw the glory of God as no man ever saw the glory and the beauty of God.

And as he looked at the glory and the beauty, I am sure to rejoiced in sheer joy and ecstasy at the wonder, the glory, the magnificence of God himself.
That I have been human beings, recovered, saved human beings, who have seen the glory of God in wonderful ways. And they have known this great sense.
Jonathan Edwards, for example, one day out in the forest, he had this great vision of the beauty of God. And it filled his soul with ecstasy.

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Just the magnificence of God himself. Jesus rejoiced in the assurance of his Father's love, in the knowledge of his Father's approbation.
[6:17] Those recurring words that came from heaven and said to him, You are my beloved Son. In you I am well pleased. That gave him joy.

The glories of God's creation. The flowers of the field. The lilies of the field. The birds of the air. The glory of God's heavens and of God's earth.
These gave him joy. The work of his Father's hands. The doing of his Father's will. The completion of his Father's purpose.
The saving of his Father's people. The assurance of the glory and of the rest that lay before him. These gave him joy. It has been said that joy is the oil or the lubricant of obedience.
[7:17] The inspiration out of which our obedience comes. The absence of joy in our lives. It's a symptom maybe of some deep-seated spiritual malady.

A sign that there is something wrong when the joy goes. It seems to me that except at the very end of his life.
The agony in the garden. The deliction on Calvary. Those moments apart. The Lord knew what it was to rejoice.
He had this rest. This peace. This contentment. This tranquility. This joy. This rejoicing. At the heart of his own soul.
And in those ways, he's a model for ourselves. And then I turned secondly to the anger of Jesus. Several times the Gospel tell us that he was indignant.
[8:25] That he was enraged. That he was angry. Now, for us, anger is a sinful emotion. And yet, in itself, it is not sinful.

There is anger in God. And there was anger in the man, Christ Jesus. And it's intriguing to notice the exact things that did elicit or evoke anger from the Savior.
What things made him angry. We're told in Mark chapter 3, for example, that one day, the Lord went to the synagogue.
And there was a man with a withered hand. And it was the Sabbath. The man needed healing. The man needed healing. And the Lord was able to heal him.
And the Lord was willing and wanted and longed to heal him. Because of his love for the man. But the Jews and Pharisees, they looked. And there was only one question in their minds.
[9:34] And it was this. Would he heal on the Sabbath? Would he break the rabbinical rules by healing on the Sabbath day?

And the Lord looked about them, around them with anger. Being grieved by the hardness of their hearts.
They had no compassion for the man. They were judged the Messiah by this one criterion. By their own Sabbatarian traditions.
And that was all. And it made Jesus so angry. This legalism. This reduction of the faith of his Father.
To those casuistical rules. This losing sight of the real purpose of the Sabbath day. As a day for works of mercy and kindness and compassion.
[10:35] And what made him angry was the hardness of the human heart. Again, in Mark chapter 10, we find something similar. We find mothers.

And they bring their infants to Jesus. Babes in arms. And they want them to be brought to the Lord. They want them to know the benefits of the kingdom of God. may those mothers, those women had

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made such an effort to bring their infants to Jesus, maybe traveled long distances at great inconvenience and great personal cost.
And now at the last hurdle, this man's disciples were coming between them and the object of the object they had in mind, and so the Lord is angry. But maybe the real thing is this. He's angry because they misunderstood the nature of the kingdom of God. Or they said, this kingdom isn't for infants, it's not for babies, not for children. They can't be saved, they can't be members of this kingdom.
This kingdom is not for the weak and the helpless and the frail and fragile and dependent. And that's what steered the Lord to the quick. As if the kingdom of God were only for the strong and the mature and the independent and the self-sufficient and the self-important.
[12:49] And then we see the Lord angry again in this very chapter itself, in John chapter 11. You all know the story, the raising of lessons. And the Lord has arrived here and he sees Mary weeping, her heart broken.

And he sees the Jews mourning and weeping along with Mary. Verse 33. And we're told this, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. Now this is a very tame translation. The real point here is that he was enraged in spirit and he was outraged in spirit and he troubled himself. It points to the deepest and the most intense emotion. The Lord was really, really enraged. He was outraged by what he saw.
And what was it that made the Lord so angry? Some say it was the cynicism or the professional mourners. I don't believe that. Others say it was the unbelief of Mary and her companions. As they mourned forgetting the resurrection of the body.
It may to some extent have been that. But the real thing is this. It is the Lord in the presence of the outrage of death itself. This work of the devil. And as he sees what the devil has done to the human race, as he sees this broken heart, his broken heart. And as he ponders the recurring phenomenon of death and bereavement and entombment and sorrow, he is outraged at what the devil has done to his people. He is the son of a man. He has come to destroy the works of the devil. And here are these people whom he loves so much and their lives have been shattered by the work of the devil. And he is enraged in the presence of death, in the presence of the damage wrought by sin and wrought by Satan. The challenge to us is this. What is it that evokes our own anger? What enrages us?
I remember some years ago in Jerusalem in a quarter known as the Mea Shireen, where you have very Orthodox Jews. We were walking through it one day and one member of a party was wearing a short sleeve dress.
[16:15] And a man came absolutely enraged. He was utterly furious, this Orthodox Jew, because of his breach of the rabbinical rules.

And he was very angry. And he was very angry. And how often that is the case, that some breach of what we deem a rule, some impropriety in the dress that people wear to church, something wrong with the version used in the worship, or some such other detail. And it makes us really angry. Well, the Lord, you see, there's no record of his anger being evoked by things of that kind. When he sees legalism, when he sees misunderstanding of his own kingdom, when he sees the havoc wrought by sin, when he sees human sorrow and human tragedy, when he sees the injustices of society and the pain of humanity, then the Lord becomes really, really angry.
And it seems to me, it seems to me, looking back over my own life, that so often we've been discussing questions which have no real relevance to religion.
Questions of caste history, questions of regulations, questions about dress, and questions about this and that relating to the minutiae of personal conduct.
Questions of conduct. The things that really enraged the Lord lay somewhere else. This damage wrought by sin, this endemic, this recurrent human tragedy.
[18:30] And he beheld the city and he beheld the city and he wept over it. He stands here in the presence of bereavement, the presence of broken hearts, of death. He stands there and he is really, really angry and I'm asking what makes you angry.

it is possible to get dreadfully upset because somebody wears jeans to church and yet to walk through some horrendous urban slum and feel no anger at all.
And that's what the Lord is asking us. What is it that makes us angry? What steers us to the depths of our souls and fills us with a sense of outrage?

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What enrages us? Jesus was troubled in spirit. I'm asking in a way, you've been to many funerals. You have stood by many an open grave.
Have you ever been angry? Ever, ever been angry? Angry there, you see, in the presence of death itself.
[19:53] Angry sometimes in the presence of an unfinished, an unfulfilled, an attrunkated human life. That's what made Jesus so angry.

The damage Satan had done, the pain that sin and Satan had caused, he was really angry. And then I turn to this thirdly, the grief and fear experienced by Jesus.
There was joy and there was anger, but there was also grief and fear in the life of our Savior. And that grief and fear were not the consequences simply of us being human, but of the peculiar position he occupies as the sin bearer, as the one who is identified with sinners and who bears what's due to sin.
It is possible to be human and not to know grief. Adam was human without grief. In the world to come, we shall be human without grief.
But the Lord's humanness was conditioned by the sin that he bore, and as such, he knew grief and he knew fear. And that's particularly evident in the closing days of his life in Gethsemane and in Calvary.
[21:30] In Gethsemane, for example, we have a very clear stress on the emotional disturbance experienced by our Savior.

We're told that he was exceeding sorrowful unto death. born down by a mortal weight of disconsolateness and of distress.
We're told that he was very heavy. We're told that he was so amazed that he trembled with a sense of awe in the presence of the will of God, and that he shrank from the cup that the Father gave him. So there is grief at its most extreme. There is a sense of the eerie and the awful at its most extreme. There is a sense of being overwhelmed, this feeling that he cannot cope and the awful at its most extreme. And there is the fear.
[22:46] He was heard in that he feared. He was afraid. The Son of God was afraid. The Son of God was so distressed, his heart was filled with grief.

I'm full of grief. I'm full of grief, he said. He said, I'm full of grief. He said he was so amazed.
I mean this. He had known from a very early point that the cross would be his destiny. And yet as the meaning of that cross unfolded, it became more and more astonishing, more and more dreadful. And so he was amazed. He trembled. Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. And there was the Lord Tremulous in Gethsemane on the threshold and in the shadow of Calvary. And there he is amazed. And there he is afraid. He's afraid. He's frightened. He's really, really frightened. God's Son is frightened.
[24:00] God's Son is afraid. The mighty God incarnate, he is afraid in the garden. And he throws himself on the ground in a paroxysm of prayer.

In an agony, he prays more earnestly. And he pleads with God that things might be altered and that things might be different and that those things that cause the grief and cause the astonishment and cause the fear that somehow they may go away and they may be modified and divided.
There's no doubt in the reality of the emotion. Right down. Right down in the abyss of our human disturbances.
This great emotional storm. This great emotional upheaval in the heart of our Savior, the Son of God and the Lord of all, filled with grief, unfilled with astonishment, and filled with fear, afraid of the will of God.
And why is it? Why those terrible, terrible emotions? Because of what that cross involves.
[25:25] There he is as the sin bearer, going into the presence of God to be dealt with as sin deserved. Remember it was said of Moses way back in Exodus, when he saw God on Mount Sinai, that so terrible was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and tremble.

And in Gethsemane, the Son of God had this sight, this terrible, terrible sight of God as the judge of all, as the avenger of sin.
And he was the sin bearer, and he was so mightily, mightily afraid. And I want us to know tonight as gospel and as good news for ourselves, sometimes we too know the dark night of the soul.
And sometimes we too live on the edges of providence, on the edges of society, on the edge of the church, lives sometimes on the margins of sanity.

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And that's where the Lord was, right on the margins of sanity. And how precious, precious it is to know that he understands, that he is touched with a feeling of our infirmities.
[27:04] I looked for one to pity me, but none I found, comforters found by none.

And then that terrible movement from Gethsemane to Calvary, to that moment of dereliction, the darkness in the Lord's soul, the sense of abandonment by God the Father, and the terrible why, my God, my God, to know that darkness in which there was no light, to know that sense of the absence, the unreachableness of God, that terrible knowledge that one has no answers and one has no understanding, and one sees no purpose, one sees no meaning, and one sees no fruit. There is darkness, and there is terrible, terrible solitude, and there is terrible, terrible incomprehension and uncertainty.
There again, the Lord's emotions. There again, the dark night of a soul, there at the very, very edge of sanity.
within a hair's breadth of destruction, under the pressure of the burden of sin. This terrible knowledge that God's Son has for the first time in His whole existence, that the knowledge of unanswered prayer.
[29:00] All day, my God, to Thee I cried, yet I'm not heard by Thee. God wasn't hearing.

He had never known that. He prayed, and all he heard was the mocking echo of his own voice. There was no answer, no response. It is the agony of the loss of the sense of his own sonship, the inability, the inability, unable, utterly unable, to call God Father.
Never before had he known that. There is a terrible sense of desertion, that here he is by himself. There is no divine presence. There is no divine encouragement. There is no divine comfort. There is no touch of the divine hand on his heart or soul.
[30:12] soul. And there is what I can express but can't understand. I know it no more than I know what a black hole is, the curse of God.

And there is my Savior, this Son of the blessed God, this blessed Son of the blessed God. this man to whom all disturbance and distress and all commotion, this being to whom all of these were alien. And there he is not only agonizing in the garden but asking why on the cross of Calvary. Unanswered prayer, the loss of the sense of sanction, the absence of any sense of the presence of God, the knowledge that he is accursed before God.
And there he is for this brief and almost unsustainable moment in a darkness in which there is no light.
[31:24] And I take it this way, what attribute it is to the courage of our Savior, that knowing what the cross was to involve, he still went to it and went at it.

As John Duncan said, it was damnation and he took it lovingly, he took it willingly. In my place, he went into the anathema, the courage of that.
it wasn't the courage that wasn't afraid. It was the courage that was terrified, that was terrified of what it was able to imagine and was aware that its imagination was able to envisage only a little of the truth.
And yet, in the face of the terror, in the sense of the fear, for the love he had for the people, he went into it, he went at the cross, the courage of our Lord.
And I take it this way too, here is the great foundation of his compassion. The night of my soul can never be as dark as his.
[32:52] I can never go as near the edge as he. I can never know that desertion that he knew because the glory of the dereliction of the why, the why of Calvary.

The glory of that why is that it is not a why that the Lord speaks with me or beside me, but a why that the Lord cries in my place so that I shall never myself know it, never know what it is to be accursed.
I never know that. So there is the joy of Christ and there is the anger of Christ and there is the grief and fear of Christ and just for a moment there is the love, the love of Christ and I mean the love of the man Christ Jesus.
This man who loves as a man, who loves as neighbor as himself. You find it for example in relation to the man we call the rich young ruler.
Jesus beholding him loved him. Well that man you see he came to Christ. He wasn't converted. he was rich and he was covetous.

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[34:21] He went away unsaved and as far as we know he was never saved. The Lord met him as a human being, loved him as a human being.

He was neighbor. The Lord loved him as neighbor and the great challenge the neighbor in whatever form we meet him. Here was the unelected neighbor.
He was the unsaved neighbor. He was the neighbor who rejected the witness, rejected the gospel and yet here is the Lord loving him. There is the Lord's love for his own disciples.
He chose the twelve and the wonder of it. The Lord's own human need for a circle of love. The Lord made us man in the image of God.
The God who is triune, who is three in one, who is fellowship. The Lord for whom it is not good to be alone. And it chooses the twelve to be with him.
[35:34] The marvelous thing it is. And how foolish in the light of it are all efforts to be emotionally independent.

What a tragedy that so often in the church of God the men and women are driven to that. To be without friends.
To be without those who can be with them. The Lord chose the twelve to be with them. Their physical presence, their confidence, their friendship, their solicitude.
They were his confidence. They were simply there. He needed them. That's the great thing. He needed them. And I suppose I'm asking in some ways where are your twelve?
How compacted are we within the church of God? How compacted in the wonders of Christian fellowship? The twelve to be with them.
[36:45] And how guilty we feel because sometimes we love some more than others. And yet within those twelve of the three, Peter, James, and John who were especially close.

And within those three, the one who was the beloved disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, who was particularly, particularly close. And again, what a great model that is for our own Christian lives. There is no need to feel guilty that we don't feel equal affection or equal closeness to or for all of God's people.
We need them. We need them in some ways we need them all. And yet there were the twelve and the three and the one. And the love that showed such solicitude even on the cross itself for Mary's mother.
Long ago she'd been told that because of her special son, the sword would pierce her soul. And in his agony he sees her there and he knows something of what his pain means for her.
[38:14] And his heart goes out to her. He was the eldest son. He was her support in this world. And he knew how much she loved him.

He knew how much she needed him. How vulnerable she was, how much the salvation of mankind was costing her.
her at that moment involved in his passion. And he turns to John whom he loves and he says, Son, behold thy mother.
Mother, behold thy son. And from that moment John, who loved him so much, took her into his own home. And it's John who tells us about Jesus that having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.
And it's not simply loved them to the last day and to the last moment, but that he loved to the very end, the very absolute limit of cost, when the cost became so horrendously apparent, that then he didn't stop loving.
[39:44] Love so demanding and love so costly. It is easy enough sometimes to embark upon the adventure of love, and then to know something of the cost of the love, and to modify and draw back and renege on the commitment.

Well, Jesus had loved these people, and as he stood on the threshold of Calvary, the end became clear, the cost of that love.
It would cost him his life, and it would cost him in a way more than his life. It would cost him, if only momentarily, it would cost him his whole relationship with God.
It would cost him an experience with which he had no familiarity, and with which as far as his human knowledge went, he didn't know if he was able to cope.
it was the love that would lead him, that demanded from him, that he go into that darkness of the why, the darkness of the curse, the darkness of the loss, of the presence of God.

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[41:20] And he loved to the end, to that very, very, very last drop. When the cost became clear, he took a towel and dirt himself, and washed the disciples' feet, there consolidating, and there reflecting, the intensity, the unqualified nature, of his own commitment, he loved so much, he would love to the very uttermost of its cost.

Well, where shall I leave it? Shall I leave it with that vision of a Savior's love, or with a challenge that asks you, now as you experience what love means and love costs, are you going on to the end? Do we have the spiritual wherewithal to love to the end? And I'm asking this too, and I say it briefly as I close, is your Christian life authentically human?
Is it one in which you dare to express your own emotions? Do you know the kind of joy that Jesus knew?
Do you know the anger that Jesus knew? Can you understand something of the grief of the Savior? Do you know something of that intense, passionate, immoderate love that the Lord Jesus Christ showed?
[43:28] Where is it the passion? Where is the emotion? God so often we are keeping the lid on our own humanity, as if our emotions were always, always so under control, and sometimes they have to be.

But her liberating is this great picture, as I stand just for a moment with my Savior, at the heart of the tragedy of man.
And I read there not only that Jesus felt deeply, but I read that Jesus wept.
May God help us to be human. Let us pray. O Lord, we ask for the breath of thy spirit, for a vision of the glory of our Savior, for the grace to be ourselves fully and authentically human.
Go before us into the week to come, protect us from all that threatens us, and pardon us all our sin for our Savior's sake.
[44:58] Amen.

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