

God Knows How We Feel (Sermon)

Old Testament Lesson - Micah 5:2-5a

The Epistle & Sermon Text - Hebrews 2:10-18

The Gospel - John 7:40-43

Psalm: 148

Dear Children of God:

You're hurting. You're feeling pain. Something has just gone wrong in your life--some trial, some problem, some loss, some tragedy. And someone comes up to you and says, "I know how you feel." A part of us wants to scream, "No, you don't! You don't know how I feel. You don't know what's going on in my head. You don't know what's going on in my heart. You're not me, so don't tell me you know how I feel." And to a large degree, we're right. No other human being ever does know how we feel -- not totally, not completely. Nobody can ever live our lives for us.

Except for one Person. One human being does know how we feel -- all the time. One human being does empathize with us -- completely and totally. One human being does feel with us in everything we go through, and that one human being is also true God -- our Savior, our Lord, and our best Friend. That one human being who knows how we feel is the Baby born in Bethlehem, Jesus Christ, and because of Him we can rejoice in our sermon theme today:

God Knows How We Feel

- 1. When we live**
- 2. When we suffer**
- 3. When we die**

Life is not easy; it's quite a challenge. There are lots of bumps in the road as we grow up and conduct our lives. As little children, we have to learn to feed ourselves, to dress ourselves, to take care of our bodily functions. School and education are difficult, taking 12 or 16 or 20 years to prepare for our life's work. As human beings, we have to learn to interact with other people, learn to communicate with others. The whole dating scene, dealing with members of the opposite sex is a challenge. Then there's marriage and family life, with all of the pitfalls and difficulties associated with that. We have to go to work, day in and day out. We have to manage our finances and control our spending and use our money correctly. When we consider all the things that life throws at us, it's quite a challenge.

God knows how we feel. Jesus faced these challenges of life. The writer to the Hebrews says: "Since the children have flesh and blood, Jesus too shared in their humanity." He says: "Jesus had to be made like his brothers in every way." This is the marvel of Christmas. God became a human being and faced the human condition. In the Person of Jesus of Nazareth God knows how we feel. Jesus was in Mary's womb for nine months. Jesus had to learn to feed himself, had to learn to talk, had to learn to do basic math skills. Jesus had to interact with other people, had to

obey His parents and teachers, had to submit to the laws of the land and the customs of society of His day. Jesus had to make a living and take care of people around Him and face all the things of life.

God knows how we feel when we live. When we struggle with our homework at school, Jesus knows how we feel. When we feel overwhelmed by what we have to do on a certain day, Jesus knows how we feel. When we have to go out and do job interviews and get meaningful work for our lives, Jesus knows how we feel. When we date a man or a woman and get engaged and married and have families and deal with our relatives, Jesus knows how we feel. When the money is short and we do our budgeting and try to battle all the financial problems that come our way, Jesus knows how we feel. Not that Jesus did all those things Himself that I mentioned, but Jesus was the great Substitute Man, the Second Adam, the Replacer of the human race. He was made like us in every way and experienced everyday life as human beings face it. God knows how we feel when we live.

Now the question naturally comes to mind, why is life so difficult? Why is life such a challenge? Why is it so hard? That takes us to the second aspect of our sermon theme: **God knows how we feel when we suffer.**

Why is life so hard, why do people suffer? The first answer to that question is sin. The Bible clearly states that the cause of all misery and heartache and problems and suffering in this life is because Adam and Eve, our first parents, brought sin into this world. John Milton begins his famous epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, with these biblical words: "Of man's first disobedience and the fruit of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste brought death into our world and all its woe." Adam and Eve opened Pandora's box by their sin. Because of that, God cursed the whole universe. And when God says, "Damn!" you'd better get out of the way. Things happen! The apostle Paul says, "The whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth up to the present time." Sickness, disease, pain, heartache, natural disasters, floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, storms, human misery -- these are all evidence of God damning His creation because our first parents brought sin into the world.

But to say that people suffer because of sin, while it's true, doesn't go far enough. That's only half of the story, the law side of the story. The Bible tells us there's another side to the story, another way to explain suffering in the world, a gospel side or good-news reason for suffering, and that we find in verse 10 in our text: "In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God...should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering." Jesus became a human being with all the suffering of a sinful human race laid upon Him so that, as our text says, "he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people."

Jesus of Nazareth suffered. He suffered in all areas of life. He suffered all the guilt of our sins. He suffered all of the consequences of sin. He suffered as the Substitute God-Man in place of the human race. He suffered every single thing that mankind would have to go through because of his rebellion against God. In Jesus Christ all sin has been dealt with once and for all time. As our text says, "He made atonement for the sins of the people." Jesus embodies dealing with the

human experience. He is our Brother-God, and He has dealt with life and its suffering for us once and for all.

This is a tremendous source of comfort for us Christians. As our text says: "Because Jesus himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." When we experience life's problems -- whether these are problems of our own sinful making or whether these are problems foisted upon us by someone else's sinful making -- it doesn't matter. We have a God who can say to us and have it be totally true: "I know how you feel. And I can help you."

When we're battling cancer, when we're facing a job loss, when we're raising difficult children, when our husband or wife deserts us for another person, when we have to live with the consequences of our own sinful stupidity, when we have to deal with the results of an alcohol or drug problem, when we have to live with a sexual mistake we make or a loose tongue we displayed, when the unpleasantness of life hits us because this world is such a miserable cesspool of sin -- remember this: Jesus is able to help us! He suffered, and He conquered through His suffering. That suffering paid for all our sins. The guilt is gone! We are forgiven! And God will help me plow through all the results of sin that are afflicting me right now. God knows how we feel when we suffer.

Of course, the ultimate consequence we must face is death itself, and there, too, we have a God who knows how we feel. Because He died! Our text says: "Jesus shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death -- that is, the devil -- and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." God knows how we feel when we die.

The devil is the dealer in death. He led Adam and Eve into death in the first place in the Garden of Eden. God had told them: "On the day you eat of the forbidden fruit, you shall surely die." Adam and Eve ate, and now they were afraid of God, afraid of separation from Him, afraid of death. And well they should have been, for God means business when He says: "The wages of sin is death." The fear of death is in our hearts by nature because of our sin. The person who says, "I'm not afraid to die -- unless he's referring to Jesus' conquest of death -- that person who says that is fooling himself. He's denying the power of his sinful nature. All people, whether they know it or not, are by nature afraid to die because that's a result of sin brought into this world. Christians, too, because they still have a sinful nature, are often afraid of death.

But the difference for us Christians is that we don't **need** to be. Our text says that Christ has freed us from that fear by His own death on the cross. Jesus faced death itself for the whole human race. Jesus breathed his last on the cross of Calvary. Jesus shouted out, "It is finished!" and then said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Then He died! His heart stopped beating, and His body went stone cold and He died. He experienced death for the whole world. The true God, the immortal God, the God who created the universe and upholds it by His almighty power -- this God died in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth.

God knows how we feel when we must face death. When we consider our own mortality, when we see the years slip away from us, when we see the grave approaching, when we know that it's just a matter of a few short years and our days will be over -- God knows how we feel. He faced

it Himself, and He strengthens us to face our own death. Likewise, He helps us face the death of our loved ones. He gives us the strength to bear up under that experience. He reminds us of Jesus' words: "I am the resurrection and the life." He calls to mind the words of Paul: "Christ has conquered death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." He reminds us that the death of a believer is just the gateway to eternal life in heaven. God knows how we feel when we die.

It's good for us to feel with other people in their life's situation. It's good for us to empathize with someone else in their pain. But we must remember that we mere human beings can only do that partially and imperfectly. Not so with God! Our God empathizes with us completely and perfectly. In all areas of life and in all situations of death, our Jesus faced them for us and gives us the strength to face them with Him. Through Jesus, our God says to us, "I know how you feel."

Amen.