

1. I'm going to pick back up this morning talking about something that we touched on a couple of weeks ago.
2. We called it the land between. Those desert times in our lives where God purposely allows us to go through difficulty and trial for the purpose of building our trust and faith in him.
3. We learned two weeks ago that **God invites us to have a meltdown on him.**
4. He invites us to bear our soul in a raw emotional way. We saw how Moses cried out to God and asked God to take his life.
5. We saw how Elijah, after defeating the 450 prophets of Baal and then being threatened by Jezebel sat down under a broom tree and asked to die.
6. We saw how Jeremiah after being arrested and beaten for preaching God's word cursed the day of his birth and wished he had never been born.
7. In all of those cases God did not scold these great men of God, instead he loved them, and he openly accepted their meltdown.
8. We said that we don't have to stay away from God in times of difficulty and hardship. God invites us to come to him and cry out to him and bear our every raw emotion to him.
9. It is God's joy to hear our painful cry because it is through that painful cry that he offers to unburden us from our difficulty and our trial. It is through our painful cries that God knows we trust him and put our faith in him.
10. This morning, I want us to look at two more people, who experienced painful trial and how they dealt with it.
11. I find it kind of ironic that I prepared this message long before I knew what kind of emotional week, I was going to have this past week.
12. I am convinced that not only does God have a sense of humor, but he always knows what we need and when to get it to us.
13. Let's begin by looking at the prayer of Jesus just before he was betrayed and crucified.

**TEXT:** **Luke 22:41-45** He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, **42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."** **43** An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. **44** And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. **45** When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow.

**TITLE: Rollercoaster Ride!****INTRO:**

1. I don't know if this happens to anybody else but have you ever looked back at a time in your life where you did something stupid or foolish. I don't mean from last week or last month, I mean from years ago and in hindsight you wondered what was I thinking.
2. As the Holy Spirit began to stir in me this message about dealing with hardships and difficulties and how God wants us to relate to him I was taken back to a foolish message I preached to a group of teenagers about 30 years ago.
3. I still remember the title. Get off the rollercoaster. I spent 40 minutes telling them that God never intended for our lives to be a spiritual rollercoaster, up one minute and down the next.
4. I went on and on about how God could provide a security for us and an emotional stability that would allow us to get off that spiritual rollercoaster.
5. I used the illustration of a real rollercoaster that made you sick and how it was unspiritual to be so up and down all the time.
6. And as I have progressed in my walk with God and I have advanced in my knowledge of the word of God I must tell you, that young man who spoke to those teenagers didn't have a clue what he was talking about.
7. I thought I did, but I have to tell you my misguided theology has not panned out all that well in the real world.
8. I have learned that spiritually speaking, we do go through times where we feel like we are on a rollercoaster.
9. We go through times where it feels like the bottom just dropped out of everything and then we go through times where the emotional high takes our breath away and then we go through times where we feel upside down and disoriented and we don't know where we are.
10. After 53 years of life, I am convinced that the rollercoaster effect is a part of how we relate to God spiritually. We can't avoid it. We can't get away from it. We just have to deal with it.
11. I come to that conclusion not only because of my own experience, but because of the experiences of great men and women of the bible.
12. Remember a couple of weeks ago in Jeremiah chapter 20 that in verse 13 Jeremiah was singing praises to the Lord and giving glory to God and in the very next verse he was cursing the day of his birth.

13. Jeremiah was in pain, he was embarrassed, he felt dejected and like a failure and the best way I can describe this vast array of emotions is that for all practical purposes Jeremiah was on an emotional rollercoaster ride.
14. I hope it doesn't surprise us that Jesus experienced this same type of spiritual rollercoaster.
15. He was facing death. He was facing one of the cruelest kinds of punishments mankind has ever thought up, and as he mentally processed what was about to happen to him he experienced a rollercoaster of emotions.
16. Luke 22:42 describes torn emotions. In the first part of the verse, he prays father if you are willing take this cup from me. Understand something. Jesus knew the very reason he had come to earth was to bear the weight of sin of all mankind and he knew that the only way to atone for that sin was death.
17. This had been the plan all along. But in his anguish, he is saying Father, let's re-think this. Hold on a minute God.
18. But yet at the very end of this exact same verse he is saying "yet not my will but your will be done." This was a prayer of cooperation.
19. Sensing his struggle, verse 43 lets us know that God sent an angel from heaven to strengthen him. God knew that his son was being so torn that he wasn't going to make it through this moment without some backup.
20. But understand however, the purpose of the strengthening was so that he could go on and endure the tremendous pain that was coming. So, in verse 43 he is strengthened but in the very next verse this rollercoaster takes a nosedive.
21. Luke 22:44 And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.
22. The condition of sweat turning to blood is called hematidrosis and as you can imagine it is brought on usually by severely high amounts of stress.
23. I believe it's important that we identify Jesus' struggle and his rollercoaster ride because without a doubt Satan will try and manipulate us into believing that somehow we are a disappointment to God just because we go through some severe ups and downs.
24. In fact, I believe he will use our rollercoaster ups and downs in an attempt to cut us off from God because if he can get us cut off from God then we are cut off from the very care and concern and healing that God wants to give us.
25. But we need to know that we can come to God even when it feels as though we are just hanging on for dear life.

26. A perfect example of that is the life of David. We get a glimpse of David's ability to cry out to God in the book of Psalms.
27. We see the story of David's life and struggles through the books of first and second Samuel, but we see how he related to God through it all in Psalms.
28. David is called a man after God's own heart. I believe one of the greatest reasons why he is given that distinction is because of how he handled his own personal rollercoaster ride.
29. You may remember David is anointed King as a young man. He goes to work for the current king, King Saul but then Saul becomes highly jealous of him.
30. David goes through a period of about twelve years where he is stalked and hunted like an animal. He hides in caves, he acts like he is crazy, he runs from one place to another always looking over his shoulder.
31. Then finally Saul dies, but when David becomes king, he is plagued with even more problems. Probably the most painful of which was the nearly successful coup attempt by his own son Absalom.
32. Through the Psalms we see David pouring out his heart to God. And again, it resembles a rollercoaster ride. There is anguish and there is hope.
33. There is despair and then there is faith. But through all of it there is a trust in God.
34. Now David was what we would call one of those artistic types. He was a musician, and he was a singer, and he was a songwriter.
35. In fact, many of the psalms were actually the lyrics to songs, and it was through these songs that David expressed all of the emotions and the feelings and the frustrations that he was dealing with.
36. But let me tell you, David bared his soul in some pretty graphic ways. He exposed how he was feeling with some of the most honest, raw pictures you will ever see in the bible.
37. Take Psalm 69 for example. David could have said, "God, I'm really not doing so good, and I could really use some help."
38. But instead, he uses the illustration of drowning to express the panic and the desperation of his situation.

### **Have you ever felt like you were drowning?**

Psalm 69:1-2 Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. **2** I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me.

1. What vivid imagery. Lord the waters are up around my neck. I am out in the deep water.
2. My feet won't touch. Lord I'm struggling in this flood of deep waters and I'm just about to go under. Lord help me. I'm desperate. I'm not playing God.
3. This is life or death. God, I need you.
4. I am not a good swimmer. I never have been a good swimmer. In fact, I have what I would say is a pretty strong respect for water.
5. I remember as a boy during one hot summer we received a tremendous amount of rain for the summer.
6. There was a creek about a mile from my house and as a boy I would walk down to that creek, and I would wander around and I would explore and I would just be a boy.
7. Well, there was a deep hole in this creek and because of the rain it was deep enough to dive and swim in.
8. I remember my dad taking me down there one time and I was afraid to get in the water. He finally got tired of me not getting in, so he demanded that I get in and I still resisted.
9. My dad, not one to take no for an answer, waited until I wasn't looking, and he grabbed me, and he threw me in the deep water and he stood there and watched as I struggled for what seemed like an eternity.
10. Note to self, if we will just obey our heavenly father, life will be a lot less traumatic.
11. Finally, I dog paddled or I flailed or I did something that got me to the shore and I remember stepping up on the gravel bar with utter panic. I thought I was going to die.
12. I was in over my head.
13. What a powerful picture that David paints. We still use it today to describe the situations we find ourselves in at times.
14. We talk about drowning in debt, or being in over our heads. Many in this room have felt the feeling of being engulfed by grief or disappointment.
15. Later on, in the Psalm David cries out to God **Psalm 69:14 Rescue me from the mire, do not let me sink; deliver me from those who hate me, from the deep waters.**
16. David was at the lowest of the low, but in this incredibly low time what bursts out of him is trust for God. God you are my rescuer. God you are my deliverer. God, I know you will take care of me.
17. Friend, I don't know how God does it, but even in our lowest of times he reaches out to us. It may seem like just a glimmer of hope. It may seem like

just a sliver of hope, but if we will cling to that hope what we find is that our loving God is able to rescue and deliver us even when we are over our heads.

18. We find another expression of total despair in Psalm 55.

### **Have you ever felt like flying away?**

1. I'm imagining David walking along one day engrossed in the desperation of his situation. How bad was his situation?
2. David describes his feelings by using words like trouble, distress, suffering, anguish, terrors, fear, trembling and horror. David is not holding back.
3. And as he is walking along totally overwhelmed by his feelings perhaps, he spooks a dove that is resting in a thicket.
4. And as that dove flaps its wings in an attempt to escape what it perceives as danger, David's heart begins to long to be that dove.
5. Psalm 55:6-7 "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest—7 I would flee far away and stay in the desert; *Selah*
6. What David was saying was, oh how I wish I could just fly away and escape all of this. Oh, how I wish I could just run away from it all.
7. To me verse seven is so telling as to how low David was. He does not say oh how I wish I could fly away to some oasis or some wonderful, lush place where everything would be wonderful.
8. He wishes to fly away to the desert. Even a hot, dry, dusty desert would be better than what he is experiencing.
9. But somehow in the midst of this anguish God reaches down to him. God's love touches him.
10. And even though it probably wasn't much, David clings to that hope. He expresses that hope in verse 22.
11. Psalm 55:22 Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.
12. Can I tell you this morning, God is able to get to you even when all you feel like doing is getting away?
13. I am fairly certain that only a few people know this true story I am about to tell you. My wife can verify it is the truth.
14. I was about 24 or 25 and I was going through a time of severe anguish. We were dealing with some powerfully painful circumstances in ministry, in our personal lives and to be quite honest I thought I was about to lose my mind.
15. We lived next to a set of train tracks and like David I would wonder what it would be like to jump on that train when it came by one night and just escape and run away.

16. One Sunday morning I got up. I was scheduled to teach a Sunday School class and lead worship that day, but I have to tell you I was about as low as you can go.
17. I didn't tell anybody, I didn't tell my wife. I got dressed like I was going to church, and I got in the car, but when I got to the intersection to turn toward the church, instead of turning left I turned right and I headed toward the interstate.
18. In that moment all I knew was that I was going to hit the interstate and I was going drive. I didn't care where it took me. I didn't know where I was going. I was just going to run away.
19. I was distraught. But as I headed toward the interstate and was just about to turn onto the ramp I looked out of the corner of my eye to the right and there was someone who was very close to me.
20. They were 30 miles from home. They had no reason to be at that particular place at that particular time. In fact, they almost never came that way, but that day, at that moment there they were.
21. And I stopped and I told them what I was doing. And they ministered to me, and they helped me and after a little bit I snapped back to my senses somewhat.
22. To this day I believe it was a miracle of God. I am here to tell you that God doesn't shy away from us when we have hit rock bottom. I believe he is there for us.
23. But there is something powerful about being able to cry out in that time of desperation that unlocks God's power and God's provision.
24. Two things that I believe are extremely helpful in times of deep despair.

### **Turn to God.**

1. Don't turn away from God, turn to God. Run to him. I believe that David's example is proof that you don't have to know how to pray with eloquence.
2. You don't even have to be able to pull your thoughts together in a reasonable manner. Just cry out to him. Just turn to him.
3. Years ago, I heard a story. I have no way of verifying if it is the truth or not, but I felt lead to share it anyway.
4. I heard the story of a sailor in the navy. They were in the middle of a battle and the enemy was closing in.
5. It was told that there were enemy planes attempting to bomb the ship, there were enemy submarines that were aiming torpedoes toward the ship and this

sailor, who was a believer in Jesus, knew that they needed help, or they were all going to die.

6. The story was told that this sailor in a moment of despair simply called out “Lordy”. That was all he said.
7. Now I don’t know about you but to me that isn’t a very respectful way to address God, but in that moment that was all he could think to say. But when he said that word Lordy the battle began to change and eventually, they were out of harm’s way.
8. God isn’t picky. He responds to any sincere call for his help.
9. Turn to him. The second thing that is so helpful is when we...

### **Pray God’s word.**

1. I never cease to be amazed at how many times and how many days I have been dealing with circumstances in my mind or I have been struggling with certain emotions, and while I am reading my bible that day, I come across an example of someone who went through the exact same thing.
2. I have been blown away at the number of times that word that day was exactly what I needed.
3. My daily bible reading plan has me read a portion from the Psalms each and every day and there have been numerous times that David’s prayers were the exact prayer I needed to pray to get victory.
4. And God by his sovereign power brought them to that particular moment just to let me know, I know where you are.
5. Pray God’s word.

### Conclusion:

1. I have to tell you. I don’t like riding rollercoasters. I have ridden several in my life but for some reason I just can’t hardly do them anymore.
2. I don’t know if I’ve become a chicken or if it’s the fact that every time I get on one I think, whose going to provide for my family if this thing crashes.
3. I’ll never forget one time walking up to the entrance to a roller coaster and there was a family that was deciding if they were going to ride or not.
4. Everyone was excited except the littlest guy who was just barely taller than the height restriction.
5. He wasn’t sure if he wanted to ride or not, but the dad assured him. Don’t worry about it. You can ride right beside me. I will be with you the whole time.



6. That's what's so amazing about God. The ride may be rough, and the ride may be bumpy but we have the assurance that our heavenly father will always be there with us.
7. In the next few months, I am positive that there will be some roller coaster times for BFA as you navigate this transition.
8. I'm pretty sure my wife and I are going to experience several ups and downs as well.
9. But though I am leaving, God will never leave you. He is with you, and he will be with you.
10. Don't run away. Don't scatter. Run to God and cling to one another.
11. In the safety of family, God will see you through.
12. I want us to open up this time for special prayer. You need something from God. Maybe you just need assurance from God that everything is going to be ok.
13. We are family. We are the family of God. And I believe one of the greatest honors we have is the honor of being there for one another.