

The Emotions of the Moment

by Carl McMurray

In Matthew 26 events are leading up to the most glorious statement of love in the history of mankind. It is not surprising that the gamut of emotions are seen here. What might be surprising to some are the lessons to be learned from them. Four extremes clamor for our attention.

First is the calm, peaceful, confident demeanor of Jesus. In verse 63 He is silent while in verse 64 He is thoughtful and agreeing. Is He feeling any strong emotion? No doubt. But do not forget He is fortified with prayer and sure in His mission. Either would be strengthening to the soul, but together they are powerful anchors to runaway feelings.

Second, we see the high priest in verse 65. This one who is running this whole proceeding on the guise of holiness, that is, an attack on blasphemy, defies the law himself in tearing his robes (Leviticus 21:10). He's engaging in theatrics to whip up the emotion needed to convince men to do wrong. Consciously or unconsciously he understands that logic and justice are over run by emotion.

Thirdly, we see Peter in verse 74. In an effort to distance himself from the Lord, Peter begins to curse and swear, Those present had not believed his first two calmer responses so what better way could there be to prove he did not belong to the Lord. Profane language has a message all its own that most can hear beyond the words themselves.

Lastly, we visit Peter again, in verse 75, at Jesus' look and the cock crowing. Peter remembers, understands, and went out and "wept bitterly." These terms are defined as "loud and violent crying." What emotion is seen here brought on by shame and wrongdoing.

Is there a place for emotion in our spirituality? Absolutely. Those that want to strike it out speak foolishness. Peace and calmness are powerful emotions that speak from our heart. So are the feelings of shame and embarrassment that "should" be connected with our sin. When should our emotions be reigned in, however? How about when they bring us to theatrics in trying to make points and present truth instead of using reason and God's word. How about when they are appealed to in defense of activities that should not be defended?

There is a right and proper place for emotions to be poured out. Joy, love, concern, peace, awe, and more all have their place. So does weeping, grief, anger, indignation, humiliation, and shame. The proper place for these things is behind the truth of the moment, not hiding it. Will anyone shout "Amen?"