

“Bad Day Blues”
James 1:2 – 4; Lamentations 3:22 – 23;
Psalm 37:1 – 7; John 16:33



Okay so this morning I thought I would just kick off with a few video clips of people who are having... a really bad day. Let's have a look.

Can anyone relate?

One job I had while working over summer was as a store detective. (A store detective is where you pretend to shop but you're actually watching people to see if they're shoplifting).

And so one day I was in a midsized supermarket where the aisles were fairly narrow with my trolley, going through the beer and wine section when my trolley happened to knock over a bottle of wine, which in turn knocked over another bottle, which in turn knocked over another, and they all fell to the ground and smashed, creating a large, glass filled grapey mess.

The assistant manager – who knew why I was there – as he was cleaning the floor, gave me a look... I will never forget.

I was so embarrassed. I felt about this small... and still had two hours to go.

It was bad day.

There is a story of a young minister who was asked to perform a funeral service with a twist.

The twist was that the widow had asked the minister to scatter the ashes of her late husband from a plane.

And sure of himself the young minister said "Yes".

The minister recalls:

"The pilot assumed I knew what I was doing. And I was certain I, too, knew what I was doing. So up we went and at about 5,000 feet, the pilot held the cockpit door open and I took the top off what looked like a 2-litre ice-cream container and poured the ashes out the door.

In turn the slipstream poured the ashes right back in the door, filling the cockpit with the final dust of Harry, the deceased husband, and covering the widow, the pilot and me.

We flew back to the field in silence.

The widow was nice, calm and cool about the whole thing. 'This will be funny someday,' she said as she drove off in her car with Harry's ashes beside her in a bag from a small vacuum-cleaner used in the plane."

As we heard in the readings James chapter 1 says:

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

James talks about trials, testing times, of *many* kinds.

We recognise those really tough times that are traumatic and have to do with health, your own or someone close to you.

Or could be a relational. It may be around money. It could be around employment. It could be school.

It's the *really* hard stuff. It's traumatic stuff.

Yet many kinds of trials includes things that happen at a lower level.

It's a bad day, and that bad day can become a bad week, and a bad week can become bad month.

It can create a depressing spiral. And

That might be you; you might be having a bad day or a bad week or even a bad month.

What do you do with that?

We do you do so that your faith is encouraged not discouraged?

Tell the person next to you.

What's the collective wisdom here?

Are you a stuff happens! Water of a ducks back?

Or are you a you have a rant to someone about it?

Or are you a bottler?

I think whatever is happening, I often go to Lamentations 3:22 – 23:

“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;

his mercies never come to an end;

they are *new* every morning;

great is your faithfulness.”

We know and love the God of the new day, the greatest new day being the day of Jesus' resurrection and the new day can also be ours too.

So I want to share with you a prayer for the end of day written by John Williamson. It's a prayer at the end of the day:

*Lord,
it is night.*

*The night is for stillness.
Let us be still in the presence of God.*

*It is night after a long day.
What has been done has been done;
what has not been done has not been done;
let it be.*

*The night is dark.
Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives
rest in you.*

The night is quiet.

*Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,
all dear to us,
and all who have no peace.*

*The night heralds the dawn.
Let us look expectantly to a new day,
new joys,
new possibilities.*

*In your name we pray.
Amen.*

(If you would like this prayer I've made some copies available in the foyer).

So here's the next part this morning about when it's not so much a 'what' but 'who'?

Let me read again Psalm 37:

“Do not fret because of evil doers;
or be envious of those who do wrong;
2 for like the grass they will soon wither,
like green plants they will soon die away.
3 Trust in the Lord and do good;
dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.
4 Take delight in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

5 Commit your way to the Lord;
trust in him and he will do this:
6 He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn,
your vindication like the noonday sun.

7 Be still before the Lord
and wait patiently for him;
do not fret when people succeed in their ways,
when they carry out their wicked schemes.”

In this passage in verse one, we read the words “Do not fret because of evil doers...”

Now, the Hebrew word for “evil doers” is not about someone being a serial killer.

It is not about someone who does terrible, unspeakable things to other people.

The word “evil doers” actually means “**spoiler**”; *it’s someone who is spoiling your life.*

It is someone who is afflicting you; someone who is making your life a misery.

King David, who wrote this Psalm, had a spoiler for a large part of his life by the name of King Saul. Saul didn’t just want to spoil David’s life – he wanted to end it.

There were two students who were about to end their graduate studies and to do so that had to go to another university for a semester.

As happens, they ended up sharing a room.

One was a young man of average intelligence and a young Christian.

The other was a brilliant student and a thorough going Marxist by the name of Mark.

So every night – *every night* - Mark, this brilliant Marxist, would have a go this young Christian and argue with him

He would explain how the Christian’s assumptions were ungrounded and that he was perpetrating an oppressive system and point out how valid his own Marxist ideology was.

And every night he would win the argument.

There was real fear among the young Christian man’s friends that he would be argued out of his Christian faith.

He was a spoiler.

Have you got someone like that in your life this year, there’s been someone, an individual who’s spoiled it for you?

As a result it’s like their influence has coloured everything else for you.

Tell the person next to you – no don’t do that! 😊

I mean you have a bad day, and you can move on – God is the God of new day. But this is someone who is constantly in your life and making your life a misery.

It could be an in-law.

It could be an in-law who meddles in your affairs and manipulates.

It's more common than we probably realise.
In surveys I think in-laws were ranked 3rd on the list of stressors for marriages.

Sadly it could be a marriage partner.
Statistically over the course of a marriage there are three key points.
The first is at the 2 year mark where one partner says to the other, I've made a huge mistake, and goes off.
The second is the 10 year mark and one of the partners begins to spoil the marriage.
The third is the 25 year mark.

It could be a neighbour – but you can't move and they're not moving either.

It could be a sporting situation, even a team-mate.

I read an autobiography of one of our greatest All Blacks coaches and he said when he took over the role he soon discovered that all was not well.

Many of the current players did not want to be there. It was the pinnacle and yet many players preferred to play for their province. What he soon discovered was there was not one but two players in particular who were spoilers – they were spoiling it for the others.

Is it a child?

Is it a teacher?

Is it another student at your school?

It could be a work colleague.

It's going to a workplace and there's someone there who is spoiling your job.

You know what it's like; as you head off to work, you get a gnawing feeling in your stomach.

When you arrive you walk in the door but inwardly it's like wading through cement.

Is it your boss?

Research has shown that people don't leave their jobs because they are bad jobs but because they have bad bosses.

What do you do though if you can't leave, and you're stuck with a boss who's spoiling your job.

Now the Psalmist writes, "Do not envy these people" and that doesn't make sense.

You know, someone has a bad boss or partner or teammate and so on, and quite rightly says "Why would you want to be envious of someone who's a spoiler?"

Well if we're honest, we can look at people who are spoilers and we think, "Look at them – they can do whatever they like... I wish I could. They get away with blue murder... I wish I could."

But as those who follow Christ we don't want to be like that, so what do we do?

Well, if we can't envy them, then what else do we do?

Verse 1 says, "Do not fret".

For us 'fret' is about becoming anxious.

In the Hebrew it's this idea of to grow warm, to blaze up, to *get angry*.

So you have neighbour or a work colleague or team mate, and they are a spoiler, and you can't envy so you go to anger.

If you're a Presbyterian, you're a bottler.

In other traditions you're a spewer.

So you become this person who holds this anger inside of you, causing you to glow warm, seething away inside of you.

Or you become this person who is constantly erupting.

You see the great danger is that when anger takes hold, then *this anger* begins to colour *everything* else.

And if we kindle this anger towards a spoiler then that makes that person greater than they really are.

It also hinders your ability to forgive, not just the spoiler but other people in your world.

So is there a way forward if there is someone in your life who is a spoiler.

You can't go the way of envy and you can't go the way of anger.

We need a change of direction and affections.

Jesus said:

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace.
In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the
world."¹

Jesus knows what it means to have troubles, he had many spoilers in his life.
He also knows what it means to overcome them all.
So have someone who knows what it's like.

Then what do we read in this Psalm?

"Trust in the Lord...

Take delight in the Lord...

Commit your way to the Lord...

Be still before the Lord..."

What these verses are saying, is if you have someone who is spoiling your life,
spoiling your month or year, do not let them define you –
let the Lord Jesus Christ absolutely define who you are.

Let your approval, acceptance and love – your core identity – who you really
are – be found in Jesus, especially in the face of spoilers.

The Good News is you have *all* the approval and acceptance and love in Jesus.
Saturate yourself in the gospel.

Let the direction of your life and the affections of your heart be shaped by Him.

¹ John 16:33

So what happened to the two young men, the average Christian and Mark the brilliant Marxist?

Well, this brilliant young Marxist became a follower of Jesus.

A Christian lecturer said to him, "How did this happen??? I was worried that you would both end up as Marxists after a couple of months."

Mark said:

"Every night we would argue and every night I would win the argument. But he always ended our discussions with the same words, "Mark, you overpowered me with your arguments me once again, but you didn't convince me that you're right. You can't convince me that you're right. And you can't because I *know* Jesus is real. I feel Him in my life! I sense His presence every day! I have a personal relationship with him that is absolutely real."