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SERMON TITLE: *Disabling Our Natural Inclinations*
SCRIPTURE: Psalm 106:13-31
DATE: January 17, 2021
View online service at www.fpcd.org/live-stream

Read also John 1:1-5, 10-13.

Have you ever had a friend who was willing to tell you the truth when you needed it? Psalm 106 has that goal. The goal is to admonish the reader to have faith and not give up on God. Have you given up on God? Can you relate to the struggles in the desert? What if you had been there? We would probably have gotten sick of Angel Food Manna too.

When we read it, we understand *it is our story*. We are the people of God.

Even though the Psalmist records negative acts, it also gives hope that God does not give up. God raised up leaders to help God's people right themselves. God speaks through leaders, circumstances, setbacks, victories, grumbling, anger, and persistence to help God's errant people.

The Bible tells the truth. Psalm 106 tells the truth about us.

The Bible says, "No one is righteous-- not even one" (Romans 3:10). That's bad news. It sounds pretty discouraging. If you keep reading the passage in Romans, it gets worse! But a thread in Psalm 106 offers encouragement.

As the saying goes, *always look for the silver lining*. For example, we are still here with faith in God and it is now 2600 years later.

All of this may not be the best way to start a sermon! It is like getting on the bathroom scale first thing in the morning after the holidays. Who wants to do that? But we must face the truth about ourselves. It's human nature to act like we are independent and the captain of our souls but the truth is, we are entirely dependent on God because this is God's world.

Scripture, like bathroom scales, shows us our real selves. Scripture lets us see *we are oh so human, failing in faith just like our brother Adam and sister Eve*. As they say, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

Jesus enters into this very world some years later. It is his world: READ John 1:1-5

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

Truth told it is his world and we are dependent. Jesus, who created the world right alongside God, came. Even though the world was dark with human failure, Jesus has none of that darkness. Jesus is light. Jesus shines. This is a silver lining.

But John continues . . . READ John 1:10-13

He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn-- not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

Do you see the good news and the bad news? Our natural inclination is to **not see God** and even to **reject God**. Okay, here's the rest of the Romans statement:

"No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one" (Romans 3:11-12).

But don't let that discourage you. We are all in this together. Did you see the silver lining? The work of the Bible is to help us disable our natural inclinations. It begins OUTSIDE ourselves and ends with us INSIDE God's family.

Let's analyze Psalm 106 to see the problem and then we will turn to the solution God offers.

Once Israel reached the freedom God gained for them, many things went wrong. They got on a track that they could not seem to get off.

Did you notice? It was a "fallout of faith" when they reached the desert. The enemy was gone but the desert wasn't better. It was weird; it was foreign; it was unknown territory and the people were told to follow the Lord one step at a time.

Do you feel like *I accepted Jesus and now life seems like their desert. It's not better*.

So when life in the desert was rough, what did the people do:

- Vs. 13 - The people forgot what God had done. They wouldn't wait for his counsel!
- Vs. 14 - Their desires ran wild. They wanted better food than angel food cake.

The sin was impatience and self-indulgence. This tested God's patience.

Do you know an impatient or self-indulgent person? Don't you want to correct that bad habit?

God gave them the meat they desired, but being that it was hot and there were no refrigerators, you know exactly what happened. They got food poisoning. They called it a plague but you cannot leave meat unrefrigerated without problems.

There are natural consequences to our actions.

There are things we want that we must say no to. It is always better to trust and wait. God is leading them. God had chosen their leaders, Moses and Aaron, with purpose. Everything is under God's hand. God is that close. But what did the people do?

- Vs. 16 - The people were jealous of Moses and envious of Aaron. Some leaders incited a riot against them.

The sin was envy and ambition.

Verse 17 says "because of this" an earthquake came and fires broke out and the rebels were consumed.

There are consequences to our actions.

There's a way that God describes himself: "The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished."

God is a God who loves us but let's the consequences fall. This has not changed even to this day.

Well, you would think that people would learn but what was that verse? . . .

*"There is no one righteous, not even one;
there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.
All have turned away."*

What did the people do? So here we go:

- Vs. 19 - The people made a calf to worship, giving up the true God.
- Vs. 21 - They forgot God, their savior,
- Vs. 22 - They forgot God's awesome deeds at the Red Sea.

The sin was making a graven image for God.

God had had it. God declared he would destroy them all. Sin and its consequences affected ALL the people. But Moses intervened and God relented.

You would think it would get better. But God forgave and in a few months God wanted them to enter the Promised Land. (Wait a minute, you say. That's not the story I know. They were there 40 years—and most died in the desert. It was the next generation who went in.)

But the first plan was for THESE PEOPLE to go in. HOWEVER, what did the people do?

- Vs. 24 - The people refused to enter the pleasant land.
- Vs. 25 - They grumbled and refused to obey.

- Vs. 28 - They worshiped the idols and religious practices of pagans.

The sin was disobedience, lack of trust, and lack of courage to move forward.

The consequence was they lived their lives in the desert. Later consequences were that their descendants be exiled to distant lands.

Their immediate consequence was a plague.

But one man, Phinehas, had the courage to intervene, and the plague was stopped. We know nothing about Phinehas except this fact: Because of this he was regarded as a righteous man. He had courage. He was willing to take a lead and call people back to God..

What if we had the courage of Phinehas who cared enough to speak up. Would that not affect our families and communities in a positive way?

That was their reality. What is ours? We also struggle to be committed to God. The apple has not fallen far from the tree.

So how do we AVOID following this behavior? Let us understand the TRUTH. We need to follow, not reject Jesus. Jesus is the silver lining, right? Let's grab ahold of him because:

To all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn-- not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

That's the beginning. That's the salvation. Let's not forget it! Through Jesus,

we can see God;
we can overcome our natural inclinations;
we seek first His Kingdom, not our idols or ambitions;
we can move forward despite the fear.

Plagues tell us something. Loss and punishment have a purpose.

Recognizing the problems, weaknesses, our natural inclination to turn away from God is half the battle. That's why we hear about it in the Bible. But let's not crawl in a hole and give up. Let us grasp the silver thread of hope within so that the tree we do not fall far from is that of our true Father and His Son, who rebirths us.

AMEN