

Copyright July 11, 2021. Geist Christian Church. All Rights Reserved.

Title: The Gospel According to Pixel: Inside Out-Truths That Transform

Preaching: Danny Gulden, Lead Pastor, Promise Road Campus

Text: [Ecclesiastes 3:1-8](#)

E-mail: [Danny Gulden](#)

[Watch the Service](#)

[Inside Out Clip First Day of School](#)



We are beginning a new series today called The Gospel According to Pixar. Pixar studios is a film company that has made some amazing, animated films that dive into some of the deep truths of life that are relevant for all ages and stages of life. They illustrate deep truths about faith and how we live as people of faith. Over the next four

weeks, we will be looking at four Pixar films and what they have to say to us.

Pixar began in 1979 as the Graphics Group before becoming Pixar Studios in 1986 and then being purchased by the Walt Disney Company in 2006. To date the studio has produced 24 feature-length films that have earned approximately \$14 billion at the worldwide box office. The films have earned 23 Academy Awards and 11 Grammy awards. You may know the first feature length film the studio made, Toy Story in 1995.

Inside Out was released in 2015 enters the mind of Riley, an 11-year-old whose family has just moved from Minnesota to San Francisco. The film personifies her five dominant emotions: Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear, and Disgust. The five characters in Riley's head, led by Joy, man a control panel that guides her through life, forming memories, the strongest of which form islands of personality that define Riley (silliness, hockey, friendship, and family). The heart of the film and what we saw illustrated on the first day of school is the world outside Riley's head and what is going on inside Riley's head as she tries to make sense of the world around her.

I think where the film strikes a chord for people of faith is that it illustrates the truth that our emotions are a gift from God. That emotional and mental health are important to God. The full spectrum of emotion is part of God's design for each person.

We've met Riley and long before Riley there lived someone named Qoheleth, who wrestled with some of the same questions Riley is wrestling with on her move to San Francisco. Many of his ponderings became the biblical book that we know as Ecclesiastes. It's the story of someone who roughly 2500 years ago, before Jesus, set out to figure out the meaning of life.

Here is what we know about Qoheleth, which means "the teacher." He was a sage in Palestine, writing in the 5th century BCE, during the Persian period. Perhaps he was well off, perhaps not. The time in which Qoheleth taught was a time of rapid, economic, political, and social change, a multitude of opportunities, but unpredictable risks as well.

A changing economy brought people the chance to borrow, invest, and advance but also exposed them to risks such as loans, mortgages, and foreclosures. He taught people with means who had to work for those means, people who were engrossed and at times overwhelmed with their daily routines.

In a way, even with the opportunity, there was much to be worried about and little to be certain about

Here is part of what he writes, probably the most familiar piece of scripture from Ecclesiastes:

*" There's a season for everything
and a time for every matter under the heavens:
2 a time for giving birth and a time for dying,
a time for planting and a time for uprooting what was planted,
3 a time for killing and a time for healing,
a time for tearing down and a time for building up,
4 a time for crying and a time for laughing,
a time for mourning and a time for dancing,
5 a time for throwing stones and a time for gathering stones,
a time for embracing and a time for avoiding embraces,
6 a time for searching and a time for losing,
a time for keeping and a time for throwing away,
7 a time for tearing and a time for repairing,
a time for keeping silent and a time for speaking,
8 a time for loving and a time for hating,
a time for war and a time for peace."*

(Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 CEB)

Twenty-eight items in a series of 14 different scenes that show the gamut of human activities, all having a particular season in life. We may read and hear this as a summary of the human experience, of what it means to be alive. These are the truths of life; they make up the memories we hold.

Inside Out takes what Qoheleth wrote long ago and makes them the islands of memories.

As 11-year-old Riley starts at her new school, she is holding it all together. Even though she is having a difficult time with the move, missing her friends, missing her old house, missing hockey, and even missing the way her family used to be. Anyone who has been through any period of change in their life knows that change, even positive change, is difficult. As an emotion, Joy feels like she holds the most value. She is one that guides the ship and feels as though she should be the dominant emotion. So, in the clip, when Riley recalls a memory of playing hockey with her family in Minnesota, sadness inserts herself into memory, things go off the rails.

Joy is a central emotion or component in the life of faith. Paul would write to the church at Philippi to rejoice in the Lord always. Of the range of emotions in the film

- Joy
- Anger
- Sadness
- Disgust
- Fear

I think we would each say that joy is our preferred emotion. But emotional health does not only include joy. In fact, when we feel like we must be joyful all the time, that's not emotionally healthy. The pressure to not experience the range of emotions can have consequences when it comes to emotional and mental health. Emotions are a gift from God and when we don't feel what we are feeling, we are not fully using that gift. It's also okay not to be okay

"Anything that's human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary." — *Fred Rogers*

I resonate some with Riley's story in that my family moved from the only home I'd lived in to a new one the summer of my 8th grade year. New school, new area, new soccer team, the struggle to make new friends. Even though we only moved about 15 miles, it felt like 1500 miles. Looking back, it felt like my world was ending. It also felt like I was supposed to be happy about it. Joy was supposed to be my dominant emotion, but it wasn't. I also felt like I couldn't be honest with myself or with my parents or with anyone else about how I was feeling. I also thought I was doing the right thing by pretending all was okay rather than being honest about and leaning into the emotions of fear, anger, sadness, and at times disgust about the move.

Thinking about the setting of the book of Ecclesiastes, there was much to be worried about and little to be certain about.

Many years later, Jesus would come into a time and a place where there was much to be worried about and little to be certain about and Jesus was asked a question- on his last week on earth none the less- What commandment is the most important?

"Jesus replied, 'The most important one is Israel, listen! Our God is the one Lord and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your being, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, You will love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Mark 12:29-31 CEB)

What I hear in this text, what I especially hear on this day is all your heart and all your being and with all your mind. All... all of you, in all moments. All has been created by God. God loves our whole self.

In life, all our emotions are important. It takes balance to be emotionally healthy. All ultimately works for good.

What if we rejoiced in the things God rejoices in?
What if we are angered by the things that make God angry?
What if what breaks God's heart breaks our hearts as well?

At the end of the movie, the five emotions, most especially joy and sadness, have learned how they work together, how they need one another. Riley is making new memories and as the emotions look out on these new memories, each picking out their favorite, Joy says, "I think they are all beautiful."

In life, we value in the things God values.
We discover true life in the God of love who offers each of us true life.
Our emotions are a beautiful gift
A gift that enables us to experience life to the fullest

Let us Pray.