

The Third Sunday of Pentecost June 10, 2018

Our Savior's Way
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Mann

I have a question for you this morning: Is anyone here under stress? Do you know that the word “stress” comes from the Latin word “to be drawn tight?” Is there anybody here uptight about anything? 35 years ago the cover of Time Magazine announced “Cures for Stress.” The article inside said that stress was the number one health epidemic in the 1980’s. The article quoted University of Nebraska Cardiologist, Dr. Robert Eliot. Dr. Eliot provided two rules for coping with stress. Rule #1: Don’t sweat the small stuff. Rule #2: It’s all small stuff!

So, now, here we are 35 years later. We’ve come a long way since 1983. We’ve got computers. We’ve got FAX machines. We’ve got the internet and cell phones and ipads. Has your stress level gone down? Today 7 out of 10 people feel stressed on a typical work day. Somewhere between 70% and 90% of a visits to the doctor stem from stress. 34% of people say they have difficulty sleeping because they are too stressed out. Stress is now costing the American economy over \$150 billion dollars a year. And stress is the #1 cause of the two leading killers in America—heart disease and cancer.

Did you know that God invites us to take our stress and give it to him? Psalm 55:22 says, “Cast all your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you.” Take a look at this video clip.

Now, let's take the Scripture for today (page 1227). In 2 Corinthians 4:7 Paul says, "But we have this treasure in jars of clay." The treasure is Jesus. He is the one inside of us. Stress does not affect him. We are the jars of clay. We are weak and fragile compared to the almighty power of God. Here's what Paul has in mind—you could go to any market in Corinth and buy these small pottery lamps. They were cheap. They were fragile. But inside was something precious—oil that could provide light. Paul says, "You and I are like those lamps made out of clay—fragile, not worth much—but on the inside there's something precious—the light of Jesus himself."

Do you remember the story of Gideon in the Old Testament? Gideon was called by God to defend his people from their enemies, the Midianites. God told Gideon to gather his small army. God said, "Give each man a clay jar and a torch and a trumpet. Keep the light hidden inside the jar. Sneak up on your enemy at night. At the sound of the first trumpet smash the jars, let the light of the torches shine, blow the trumpets and shout—'For Gideon and for the Lord!'" Do you remember what happened? The enemy army panicked and fled. Israel was saved. As Christians we are like those clay jars. You have to empty yourself--let go of the stress, the worry and the anxiety in your life. Trust Jesus and let his light in. And, listen to this--like Gideon's clay jars, it is when we are broken that other people begin to see the light inside us. Read verses 8 and 9--"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed." If you want to know what a Christian is made of, don't watch them at church on Sunday morning or when everything is peachy-keen. Watch a Christian in the heat of battle. Watch him or her when they are under pressure. Watch us when we are broken.

"We are hard pressed," Paul says, "but not destroyed." Does anybody remember what happened in June, three years ago, in Charleston, South Carolina? On June 17, 2015, there was a mass shooting at a church Bible study. Nine people were killed, including the senior pastor. One of the victims, Sharonda Singleton, had a son Chris. Chris was in his second year playing

baseball at Charleston Southern University. In his brokenness after the loss of his mother, he let his faith shine. With his college coach and teammates standing beside him, Chris Singleton faced many reporters just hours after learning about his mother's murder. Here is what he said, "Love is stronger than hate. So, if we just love the way my mom loved, then the hate wouldn't be anywhere close to where the love is." And then he quoted John 3:16—"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son."

St. Paul wrote—"God's power is made perfect in our weakness." It's amazing! The almighty God of heaven and earth chose to take on our human form. Jesus Christ became a human being. He lived and died and rose again for you and me. He experienced our brokenness. He died a terrible death on a cross. He paid the price for our sinfulness. Why? Because Jesus loves us—he loves you. And his promise to you is this: "I am with you always, even to the very end of the world." Whatever you are facing, whatever you are going through—you are not alone. Jesus is with you. His light is within you. He will give you the strength you need for each day.

The Apostle Paul knew what God could do. In the city of Lystra Paul's enemies surrounded him. They came from all around the area. An angry mob picked up stones and began to throw them. When their hatred was spent they dragged Paul's apparently lifeless body outside the city wall and left him for dead. Miraculously God raised Paul up and preserved his life. Read what Paul says beginning in verse 16—"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal."

We know that God will not give us more than we can bear. Have you ever noticed the line painted on cargo ships? Do you know why it's there? Back in the 19th century the shipping industry had a problem. Cargo ships would get out into the middle of the ocean, a

storm would come up, the waves would start washing over the sides and the ship would sink. The ship and all the cargo would be lost. No one could figure out how to solve the problem. Finally a man named Samuel Plimsoll came up with a solution. He submitted a bill to Parliament insisting that a line be drawn around the outside hull of every ship. You could load all the cargo you wanted onto the ship, but when the water level hit the Plimsoll line you couldn't put any more cargo on the ship. If you did, and a storm came up, the ship would sink. All of us have Plimsoll line. You load on one more task, you put one more to-do on the list and you will start to sink. The clay jar will be broken. But when that happens the light, the treasure inside, will manifest itself. Jesus goes to work. And he promises we will never be alone and he will always give us the strength we need to do what needs to be done.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, we pray for all those who are suffering from stress and anxiety. Remind them of your promise to carry their burdens and keep them safe. As they trust you, give them peace in mind, body, soul and spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen.