

Overwhelmed

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

This evening, I want to share with you about a story when I was in high school. I remember one weekend where me and a few friends went to the local amusement park called Valley Fair, which was about an hour from where I lived. It was the summer before Junior year, but my friend had recently got his driver's license, so my mom and dad told me I could go, as long as I checked in with them throughout the day. So, when we pulled in to the parking lot, I decided to leave my phone in the glove box, so that it wouldn't be at risk of getting wet on a water ride. Once we parked, out of excitement we all hopped out of the car, and ran into the park.

Well, once it got dark we decided to head back. When we got into the car, I pulled my phone out of the glove box, and as I looked at my phone I saw on my screen, 12 missed calls, and 2 text messages. One from my mom and one from my dad. I didn't even need to open them to see what they said. Immediately my chest started to tighten up, my stomach dropped like I was on a roller coaster, and I felt sick to my stomach. That next hour, driving home, was one of the most stressful moments of my high school life, as every thought imaginable was going through my head about what my punishment would be. Knowing about the conversation to come with my dad, stressed me out.

Stress is a familiar feeling for everyone sitting in here today. Looking back at this story, it is nothing compared to the stresses that I have faced or that you have faced. Everyone's stress

comes from a variety of different things. It might not be an impending sentencing from your dad at midnight. But instead, maybe, just maybe, it is realizing that it is almost March and you have only turned in one Sermon Summary. Or you involved in so many things, that your grades start to slip. Stress could be due to a tight financial situation. Or, there is family drama, that has caused stress and conflict. Or day in, and day out, you go to a job you feel stuck in, or one that you just don't like. Sometimes it can be a tough decision, one where you feel conflicted, and you are not sure what to do. Maybe, you made a mistake, and you know you need to own up to, and you find yourself uttering the words, "I'd rather die."

In an article I read recently, it says that having too much stress actually has physical consequences, increasing the chance of someone having a fatal heart condition. Needless to say, stress is not an enjoyable feeling. It is not healthy. It weighs us down, it wears on us, overwhelms us, and places our bodies in physical distress. To be overwhelmed, is a feeling that most of us have felt, the feeling that there is nothing we can do, the feeling that we just want to lock ourselves in our room... crawl in to bed... and give up.

There are many different theories and practices that people have come up with to manage stress. Many of you probably have your own ways of doing so. Some ways are healthier than others. A lot of people will suggest taking a walk outside, getting some fresh air, working out. Others will say take deep breathes, or meditate, do yoga. These aren't bad ways of trying to de-stress. But there are also other ways where we try to de-stress. Taking up unhealthy habits which can turn into addictions. Alcohol, abusing medications, or even stress eating. It is clear that stress takes its toll. It can cause people to mistreat others, even their loved ones,

often for no good reason. Where lashing out at someone becomes a way to de-stress. Stress causes us to look inward, when we become overwhelmed, we only think of ourselves.

To say that Christ was stressed as he walked to the Garden of Gethsemane, would be an understatement. As Christ is going out to the garden to pray, he leaves Peter, James, and John with these words, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." What Christ was experiencing, what he was going through, what he was taking on, is something that we will never be able to experience firsthand. It is nothing any of us would want to. Christ was so overwhelmed, because the sins of the world were bearing down on him. Knowing, that the very next day, he will take on the penalty of all our sin... Which is death. Even before Christ's physical suffering began, his soul was suffering. He was overwhelmed. Driven even, to the point of death, of this reality he was facing.

Jesus knows what must be done. He had been talking about it, and predicting his death many times in the years of his ministry, as well as at the last supper with his disciples. He knows what the next hours bring. Physical, emotional, and spiritual pain. The amount of overwhelming stress that he will endure, with the ultimate goal being death, and forsaken by his Father. Complete and total abandonment.

In this hour, as he is being handed over into the hands of sinners, as his soul is so overwhelmed, Christ does not seek any earthly vices to go and manage this stress. He doesn't seek comradery with his disciples, or quiet time, or anything that might distract him. But instead, Christ goes a stone's throw away from his disciples, and calls out to his father in prayer. In conflict, Christ does not look inward, towards himself, but to God. He seeks comfort, and

guidance from his heavenly Father. Praying and pleading in overwhelming sorrow and agony for possible relief.

We have all been there. Not in the garden, with the weight of the world on our shoulders, but we have all experienced some kind of overwhelming sorrow or agony before. Mourning the death of a loved one, or receiving bad news from the doctor, a struggling marriage, or hurting someone you love dearly. Falling back into a sin, that you had sworn to stop, over and over again, where you find yourself feeling helpless, not knowing what to do or say. The weight of guilt on your heart, that consumes you, that keeps you awake at night, that makes you feel sick to your stomach, or even brings you to tears. The feeling of being so overwhelmed, that simply taking a breath, or meditating, or going for a walk just doesn't quite do it. It doesn't give you any relief.

In these times, we look to Jesus, and even when he was overwhelmed in the garden, he turned to God in prayer. Jesus didn't just pray because he thought it was just something that he should do. No, he prayed, because he knew that God would hear. He put his faith in his heavenly Father, and believed that if God willed to do so, He would intercede. In the same way we also turn to God in prayer. We also pray because we know that God actually hears our prayers. That there is real power in it. They are not just empty words without meaning, but instead they are sincere, words spoken in faith. We know that from his Word, He hears us, and has the power to intercede.

In our day to day routines, we often forget to pray. We fail to acknowledge God for who he is, and what he has done for us. Sometimes we just need a simple reminder, to pray. Not to

only pray because the Vicar said so in his sermon, but because we know that God hears us. We know that we can trust Him, and His will for us. He may not always give us the answer we want, but we know that his love for us is so great he sent us Jesus.

During this Lenten season, as we continue to look at Jesus, in the Garden, at his overwhelming conflict, take time to pray to God. Putting your faith and trust in Him, and in His word, just as Christ did. In times of struggle and overwhelming stress, look to Christ in the garden, look at his love for you, and at the promises of God. That your sins are forgiven, paid for by the blood of Christ. As you go to pray, remember Your Redeemer's Conflict, that Christ's struggle, led him to death on the cross, and it was all for you.

Amen.