



ROSE
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CHURCH

Mark 14:32-42

Jesus 101: An Introduction to the Depth of Jesus
Anxiety

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So, would it be all right if I start the message this morning with a question? ☺ Normally we'd do something like this with a show of hands in church for the answer. But, since I can't see you, this will mostly be for your own consideration, though for those of you watching on Facebook or Youtube, you can share your response in the comments below if you want. Here's the question: **How many of you are feeling, or have been feeling, some sense of stress, anxiety or worry in the last week or two?** Perhaps because of health concerns for yourself or a loved one, the death of a loved one, or because your kids are at home so much and you're having to "play teacher"...maybe you are having anxiety because of the postponement of things such as the baseball season and March Madness, and music concerts and so much else that entertains us.

Even without being able to see a show of hands, I'm going to guess that for most of us, the answer is, "Yes". If you're not feeling concerned, worried, anxious, or stressed out...I wonder if you have a pulse right now? I mean, I think everyone is, to some degree.

Whether you're feeling it now or not, we've all been there. Something, at some point in your life, has certainly caused sleepless nights, less patience with others, maybe a lack of hunger – or you eat more to comfort yourself...anxiety and worry can play out in a variety of ways.

So what do we do with anxiety and worry and stress? We know it's unhealthy. We know it's not really productive or helpful to fret over these things. But you can't just pretend the circumstances that cause the feelings aren't real, or that they'll just magically get better.

This morning we're looking at a time when Jesus was experiencing an enormous amount of stress and anxiety. This is part of the series we've been in since the start of the year called "Jesus 101: An introduction to the depth of Jesus." Today's passage, like all of them in this series, was planned last summer. And starting about 3 weeks ago up through Easter Sunday we are

taking a particularly deep dive into the last week of Jesus' life, which is so appropriate for this season we find ourselves in. That is exemplified by today's passage, as you'll see in a moment. Let's dive into Mark 14:32-42...

So Jesus is under incredible stress, duress, and anxiety. In Luke's account of the life of Jesus, he says that Jesus' sweat was like drops of blood. Leave to a doctor to record the medical details, right? This is a medical condition called Hematidrosis. Doctors are not completely sure of its cause, though stress and anxiety are thought to cause it.ⁱ

Regardless, Jesus is experiencing intense anxiety. He knows what is coming. He knows he's being betrayed by Judas. He knows the authorities will be coming for him soon, which they do by the end of the passage.

There are a couple things we can take away from this that relate to stress and anxiety, though the first thing I want to highlight is not directly related to that, though it is pertinent to where we find ourselves today. **The first point is that: sometimes living by faith and being engaged in ministry is not a thrill-a-minute ride.** Sometimes faith is very exciting. Sometimes ministry is very exciting. Sometimes being a part of a church is very exciting. We've had exciting things at church even in just the last year: Baptisms, new professions of faith in Jesus; a transformed and growing children's ministry; a large confirmation student class; changes to our church facilities and plans for more; new people who have become a part of the church; rejuvenated efforts to love the city around us, and more. Those, and other things, are exciting.

The disciples experienced a lot of excitement as well: They've seen Jesus calm a raging storm and big waves on the sea of Galilee, with just a word; they've seen people healed of miracles; they've witnessed Jesus teaching to some huge crowds – thousands of people who didn't have to worry about social distancing; he overturned the tables in the temple – that must have been a rather intense experience; Jesus went to a lot of dinner parties with interesting people to talk to; Peter, James, and John had the amazing experience of the transfiguration that I mentioned a moment ago when there was a fog that rolled in and a voice from heaven that called out. I mean talk

about exciting! That might be the pinnacle “spiritual mountain top experience”: Being with Jesus enshrouded with fog and our Heavenly Father’s voice calling out audibly!

And sometimes it’s easy to get caught up in those kinds of experiences and think that Christianity is all about the “spiritual high” of some great experience, whether that’s Sunday worship with a screen and colored lights, a retreat, a summer camp, a mission trip, or some other experiential thing. And when those experiences happen, they’re something to appreciate and celebrate and be grateful for.

The reality is, however, that following Jesus is not usually nearly so flashy. God is with us in the valleys of life, and he invites us to be with people in those times as well. Joining together in worship right now, even though it’s far from normal, is a great illustration. We’re living this valley experience in this very moment. Sometimes, in the midst of grief and anxiety, people just need someone to be with them. It’s not flashy. It’s oftentimes not all that exciting. In fact, it can be very draining and tiring. Just being with people, as Jesus asks these disciples to do here, can be tiring. The disciples couldn’t even stay awake in the moment. That’s how tired they are – though it was late at night, so that’s certainly a factor for them! But just staying awake and being with people is a ministry in and of itself. And it’s not an energetic, thrilling thing usually.

The last two things I want to highlight here is what Jesus does with his own stress and anxiety. **First, He reaches out to others in the midst of His stress.** Here Jesus just wants them to come along and be with him while he prays. He asks all 12 of them to remain the garden nearby, but then he takes these three with him while he prays. He doesn’t ask them to counsel him, he doesn’t ask them to even pray with him. He asks them to keep watch. It’s a gift to him, in the midst of his anxiety, to just keep an eye on things. He knows there are people coming for him shortly, and he wants these three to just be there with him and do this simple task.

Similarly, we also need community and support in the midst of stress. I’ve seen several people online who have shared the challenges they’re having

with kids being at home, anxiety, sleeplessness, and more. Others have brought some levity into the situation, such as the thing going around the internet about moms and dads homeschooling their kids: that one of the kids got suspended, another had to go to the principal's office, and the teacher got fired for drinking on the job. But I've seen others reach out for help and support, and people are responding.

We need to know that people are with us as we obey the "stay home" mandate and practice so-called "social distancing." By the way, it's my prediction that the word of the year for 2020 will be "social distancing." We need to know that people are with us when we lose a loved one. We need to know that people are with us when our marriage is struggling. We need to know that people are with us when our kids are making unhealthy choices. We need to know that people are with us when our lives are turned upside down. You and I were not created to be alone. In the Biblical account of Creation, God looks at Adam after he is first made, and says, "It's not good for man to be alone." So after version 1.0, God made some adjustments and came out with version 2.0 of the human race with Eve. Boom! No longer alone.

So right now, when we can't grab a group of people and have them meet with us in a garden, or at home, or in a church or in a Starbucks...Let's get together over the phone, or via FaceTime or Skype, or Zoom. Tomorrow, we're having our first Zoom church staff meeting with all of the ministry department leaders. I've seen text messaging groups begin so parents of elementary age kids can stay connected. I talked with one person in our church this week who told me their Bible Study group had their first ever "virtual meeting" via zoom.

Lastly, and this is most important because it's the primary reason Jesus goes out to the garden of Gethsemane, is that: **In the midst of our stress and anxiety we can turn to God in prayer.** If I were to add on to what Jesus does here, I would say we can turn to God in prayer, as well as in worship, or reading Scripture, or other spiritual disciplines. The point is that Jesus turns to His Heavenly Father. And he doesn't pray a whiney prayer, or a prayer of complaint. He is honest, he doesn't try to hide from God...but this is not a

selfish prayer. A friend of mine shared online something that he saw written on the back of someone's car in Salt Lake City. It read, "I can't believe our Heavenly Father sent an angel [covid-19] to send my missionary home early." That's a myopic, selfish, ungodly worldview that the Bible knows nothing about. Jesus did not pray a selfish prayer and ask the world to lay down its collective life for him; he laid down his life for the world. And so in this prayer he laid out his anxiety, and his honest request that His Heavenly Father might take this cup from Him, and then he says "But not my will, but your will be done."

And what Jesus really displays here is trust in his heavenly Father. When your trust of God is stronger than your fears and anxieties, your fears and anxieties will have a looser grip on you. I think to say that they will go away is probably too strong and inaccurate. I mean, Jesus was sweating blood here as he prayed. Talk about stressed out! But then look at his response at the end of this passage. He stands up and has a resolve to go meet the mob that's coming to get him. Maybe on the inside he still had anxieties...but after his time in prayer, he's able to get up and go face the challenge before him. He's not crippled by his anxiety, and he doesn't run from the challenge in front of him. He has complete trust in his heavenly father in the midst of what he finds himself in.

So as you find yourself in the midst of stress, worry, anxiety, and more – whether it's virus-related, or because of something else, or a combination of multiple things – seek community. Don't do this alone. Reach out to others for your own sake, but also for theirs. And most importantly, turn to God. Take your fears to your heavenly father. Read God's Word. Pray. Worship Him. Listen to spiritually uplifting music. Maybe here in Lent you committed to engaging in some spiritual discipline. Guess what: God has given you a lot of time to engage in that spiritual discipline, so use it! One of my own kids has read the New Testament in the last 10 days. Some of you have sent in devotionals for the website.

Let me close with one final true story that might encourage you in some way. Someone in the church sent this to me earlier this week: "In 1735 John and Charles Wesley were on their way to America as Anglican Missionaries. A

group of Moravian immigrants from Germany were also on the ship. A terrible storm developed at sea and they were in danger of being shipwrecked. The Moravians were in the midst of a worship service and praising God with much intensity. John Wesley [who had a fear of the sea] was terrified. Wesley recounts the event in his diary: “In the midst of the Psalm wherewith their service began, the sea broke over, split the main-sail in pieces, covered the ship and poured in between the decks, as if the great deep had already swallowed us up. A terrible screaming began among the English. The Germans calmly sung on. I asked one of them afterwards; ‘Were you not afraid?’ He answered, ‘I thank God, no.’ I asked: ‘But were not your women and children afraid?’ He replied mildly: ‘No, our women and children are not afraid to die.’” The storm was boisterous, but the Moravians kept praising God. Finally, the storm subsided.” The experience of witnessing the faith of these Moravian Christians ended up sending him on a journey to a deeper faith in God.ⁱⁱ

There are so many ways we can turn to God in the midst of our fears and anxieties. They will help deepen your faith...and as God gives you opportunities to be in community with people, they will help strengthen the faith of others as well. I encourage you to do that this week. Let’s pray before we close with a couple of worship songs...

ⁱ <https://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/hematidrosis-hematohidrosis#1>

ⁱⁱ Most of this story comes from the second of these two links (though it is also told in the first), with just the part about his fear of the sea coming from the first link.

<http://www.pietisten.org/iii/2/moravians.html>

<http://moravians.net/joomla/about-us/34-moravian-moments/92-moravian-moment-22>