

Victory of the Lamb – August 19, 2018 – Rest for the Stressed – Psalm 1

Expectations: The Monkey on Your Back – Pastor Bill Limmer

This past Tuesday in Genoa, Italy a bridge collapsed killing numerous people. The finger pointing game has already begun. Just over 11 years ago, at 6:05 pm on August 1, 2007, the I-35W bridge in Minneapolis collapsed into the Mississippi River, killing 13 and injuring 145. The cause of the collapse was determined to be that a number of plates which were to provide structural integrity to the bridge failed under the stress of the weight.

How heavy is the weight of stress in your life? Let me ask a few questions: In the last month, how often have you felt that you were not able to control things in your life? In the last month, how often have you not felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems? In the last month, how often have you felt that things were not going your way? In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them? For some of you, you are like a pancake. For others, there was a problem with the questions. The problem is that you can't remember back 1 month. And I am going to submit to you that at least one of the reasons why you can't remember back one month is because of stress. I will let you determine if I am correct or not.

You may not know but the bible is full of people leading stressful lives. Sarah felt the stress of not being able to become pregnant. Moses felt the stress of leading people who were often outright rebelling vs God. David had a target on his chest not only from the King he served, but the enemy nation, and not only that but from his own son. David's head was on a swivel. Esther was in a tough spot. She was Queen, but she had to put her life at risk to save her people. Daniel was taken from his country and not for a Mediterranean cruise. He was physically removed. Then among other things he was thrown into a lion's den. Lazarus felt the economic stress of not having money to buy food. Peter felt the stress of standing up for the one he loved and he also felt the stress of letting down the one he loved. The disciples felt the stress of shattered dreams. One true story after another.

In fact, the very first people were under stress. They disobeyed God and did what was wrong. So they hid. And we are still hiding today. When we are physically present it is tempting to hide emotionally but when we aren't physically present we can be more emotionally vulnerable. We still hide today because our expectation is that if people really knew about me and what goes on in my head, or what I did in the past, there is no way they would accept me let alone be true friends.

Life in a sin filled world is a life full of stress. Stress is ever pursuing and pressuring us in our lives. Stress is like having a monkey on our back wherever we go. **(picture of monkey on a back)** What is stressing you out right now? It is in our homes, work, school, traffic, church, our own head. There is stress in summer, fall, winter and spring. One of the primary causes of stress is expectations real ones and simply perceived ones. What expectations do you have of yourself in your present stage of life? Students what are your expectations when it comes to grades? What are your parents and teachers expectations of your grades? Have you ever had a teacher or professor who acts like their class is the only one you are taking? What about relational expectations? Are you meeting those "norms?" Those just out of school have tons of heavy expectations. Expectations of a job, relocation, relationships, the weight of debt. Moms what expectations do you have of yourself? What do your kids expect, your husband if you have one, your neighbors? The stress of perfection is crushing many of you. Dad how is that whole provisional motif working out for you. You have a good job or would you like a better one. Is your family getting

everything they want including a real relationship with you? Pride is a very heavy façade of stress. Some of us are stressed because we go to church and we have problems and we are like what's with that? We feel that because we are Christians we should have it altogether and then feel guilty when we don't. It's ok to not be ok!

We have stress because we have high expectations of ourselves. We get stressed because we are not being the person that we want to because we are trying to hard to be the person that we want to be. There is always something to do. And we feel like if we say "no" we will be letting others down. Some of us are feel stress when we take time to do fun things because we think there is something more important, more valuable to do. Some of us are co-dependent on stress and we wear stress like an iron man medal. We actually feel guilty if we aren't busy. In a weird twisted sinful kind of way, we have two competing idols in our lives, comfort and stress.

Do you ever watch any of those HGTV shows when they are remodeling? They are constantly telling us they are running out of time. You know the stress of time as soon as you alarm goes off because it is now telling you, you are on the clock. We live like God messed up when he made only a 24-hour day. Some of us are spread paper thin. It is like this: With school starting there are notebooks on sale. When you look at notebook paper it has the lines and the margins. We aren't supposed to write in the margins. A lot of us are living like copier paper instead of notebook paper, we have no margins. And it is causing a ton of stress.

C.S. Lewis said, "Human history is the long, terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy." And that cause stress. Without sin in the world there would be no stress. But because we live in a sinful world and we are sinful ourselves, there will be stress. So how do we deal with it? Here are some ways people try to handle stress that don't work: Self-medication with pills or alcohol. We over eat and binge eat. There is nothing quite like around an 8:30/9:00 feeding frenzy on chips, maybe chips and cheese, cookies, popcorn, ice cream, and cereal. Or at least so I am told. We "handle" stress by working more. Some of us actually become workaholics. We cope with stress by spending, whether it is retail therapy at the mall, or ordering online, or climbing into a bigger house, a newer car, purchasing the latest tech, we accumulate. Seriously look into your closet and say, "that was a good purchase." All these methods of handling stress lead to life collapse.

When it comes to stress, you need the bridge of Jesus Christ. Jesus knows all about stress. Jesus is the stress reliever. Jesus took the stress, the weight of all of our sin, our shame, our guilt on to himself on the cross and he suffered and died for it. You don't get points for suffering and dying in stress. In fact, it is ridiculous to try to go that route. He paid for our sin, the thing that causes stress. He forgives us our sin. He lived the perfect life we could not and really gives us credit for it. He is our rest. Matthew 11:28 **Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.** Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven who sins are covered. It doesn't say blessed is he who can do a million and one things in a day and still have room for more. It doesn't say blessed is he who lives us up to the expectations of others and himself. It says blessed is he who sins are forgiven. God has plans for us, plans to give us hope and a future. He isn't motivated by hype, by adrenalin, by caffeine, by codependency but by love. The Law gives stress. Grace relieves stress. The Law demands perfection, the good news is Jesus gives you perfection. The gospel doesn't demand anything of you, but it gives you everything. Release the pressure off your shoulders and watch the monkey fall off. Jesus is our peace.

So where do we find Jesus? You are going to find Jesus in God's Word. We don't think we have time to be in God's Word. The truth is we don't have time not to be in God's Word. ,I say this with all compassion and humility, "Time isn't the issue, our hearts are the issue." Be in God's Word and you will be refreshed. Psalm 1:3 **He is a like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf doesn't wither. Whatever he does prospers.** The fourth of July parade was fun, was energizing, was hard work and it was HOT. On the way back to our cars some of us ran across a neighborhood lemonade stand. I want you to know lemonade never tasted so good nor was it ever as refreshing. Let Jesus take your sin and your stress, and you will be oh so refreshed. By the love and acceptance of your Creator and Savior.

When you are going through the storm of stress, there is a storm stiller. Jesus says to the storm be quiet be still. The seas went completely calm. Pray. Philippians 4:6,7 **Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

So your assignment for this week is to practice slowing down. Slowing down enough to read God's Word slowly so that you can be instructed by what he says, so you can confess anything you need to confess, so you can give thanks for anything it is asking you to give thanks for, so that you can see what you are to do next. Slow down enough to remember your baptism where the one with the greatest opinion and authority in the world says you are my child whom I love. If you haven't been baptized drop me a line and I can share baptism with you in person or the nuts and bolts of it via an email. Seek out the counsel of a Christian friend.

Prayer.

Lord we want to spend this moment seeking relief from all those expectations that cause us stress and find lasting refreshment in you.