

Peace in Jesus

John 16:23-33

We live in a time when peace appears to be in short supply. Wars and rumors of wars fill the news. Storms and weather alerts pop up all the time. Every day brings a new reason to be worried about the economy, the job market, inflation. We live in a time when restlessness and anxiousness and spitefulness and even downright hatred are blasted across our screens on a daily basis. Some of you are feeling the pressure of being in the sandwich generation, caring for children at home and for aging parents who need your help. Others of you are under pressure at work to hit sales projections or project deadlines. It seems no matter where we are in life, we're all under pressure.

People recognize that there is something wrong. Jonathan Haidt's book *The Anxious Generation* has gained importance for the way that it connects the high anxiety of people today, especially younger people, to the use of smartphones and social media. But the book traces the problem back even earlier, to the loss of community that began in the 1960's. Without community, it's easier to be anxious. It's harder to be at peace.

Of course, many are quick to offer remedies with cures like "self-care" and "do what makes you happy" and any number of therapeutic fixes. "There is nothing wrong with you. You need to put yourself first to solve your problems and anxiousness in this life." But how is that working? Is that bringing you peace? Is the answer to the problems of this world just to turn in on ourselves more and more? Are we to seek comfort and refuge ourselves or things of our own making? That would be to make ourselves the gods of our lives. For a god is anything or anyone in which we seek refuge.

The answer for us is not "Look inside yourself to find your inner peace." It is not "Try harder." It is not "Grin and bear it. It has to get better eventually." Instead, we look to Jesus. He doesn't promise we won't have trouble or tribulation in our lives. To the contrary, he promises we will have tribulation. But because of him, we also have peace.

As Jesus talks with his disciples in the upper room on Maundy Thursday, the night he was betrayed, they're all under pressure. Jesus knows what's coming. He tells them they will have trouble in the world, tribulation in the world. The Greek word there that is translated in our translation this morning as "tribulation" is "thlipsis," which also can mean "pressure," being pressed hard, pressure being brought to bear against someone. Jesus knows the intense pressure the disciples will be under in the coming days, as he heads to the cross. Jesus knew that trouble was coming, but it was trouble he was ready for. It was trouble he was born to face. It was trouble he was born to bear and to overcome.

When Jesus finishes this last discourse to his disciples, they'll go to the Garden of Gethsemane. His disciples will collapse under the pressure and be unable to keep watch with him. They'll abandon Jesus when he's arrested. Jesus will be beaten and bloodied, mocked mercilessly. He'll be tried and crucified. On the cross, he'll be crushed under the pressure of all the sin the world has ever known and will ever know. Jesus didn't just tell his disciples that the world was full of trials and tribulations and troubles, pressure and problems. No, Jesus told them that they had peace. They had peace because Jesus had overcome the world.

After Jesus bore the pressure of all of the sin of the world on the cross, he went and found those disciples who had been crushed under the pressure. Peter had bowed to the peer pressure of being found out, and denied Jesus three times. The rest of the disciples gave in to the pressure and fled. Thomas gave in to the pressure of logic and refused to believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

But Jesus found them all, forgave them all, and restored them all. He forgave Peter for denying, Thomas for doubting, and the rest for running away. He gave them his peace and gave them the Holy Spirit, and sent them back out into the pressure of the world. And they would face a lot of trouble. They'd appear before the same group that had condemned Jesus and be put under pressure to stop teaching in that name. That was "thlipsis," tribulation. They were arrested multiple times, beaten and bloodied. The apostle James was killed for the faith, the first of the apostles to be martyred, and over the next thirty or so years after Jesus' death and resurrection, ten of the twelve disciples would die martyr's deaths. John would live on in exile as an old man. Judas would be crushed under the pressure of what he'd done in betraying Jesus. All this was "thlipsis," tribulation, extreme pressure, exercised by the world, against Christians. And really, it's been no different ever since.

If we were left to face the troubles of the world alone, we'd be crushed under the pressure. Thanks be to God, we're not! Jesus bore the pressure of the sin of the world on the cross, and was crushed by it, killed by it. But he didn't stay dead. Because of that, neither will we.

We'll go through times when we feel crushed under pressure. The pressure of struggling to do the right thing when it would be so easy to cheat on that exam or plagiarize that paper. The pressure of doing the right thing when it would

be easy to cheat on your taxes or steal that movie online. The pressure of remaining faithful to your spouse in a world that thinks you can just do what feels good. The pressure of raising kids well instead of abandoning responsibility. The pressure of conflict among friends.

There's pressure when you're a Christian when it's not always popular to be one. There's pressure to let sports schedules push God to the sidelines. There's pressure to conform to a world that tells you just to do what makes you feel good. There's pressure to not follow God's plan for marriage. There's pressure to cheat and get ahead in classes. There's pressure to join in on making fun of someone instead of risking being made fun of yourself.

Instead of focusing on the pressure, look to the One who has been right there all along. If Jesus is with you, then you can place your confidence in Him and Him alone. If you know that Jesus is holding on to you, then you know that nothing in this world is greater than Him. You are not alone. His promises remain true for you today.

We don't face troubles and tribulations, problems and pressure in the world alone. We face them with the help of God. With the help of Jesus, who is our friend and Savior who bore the weight of the world for us. With the help of the Holy Spirit, who continues to guide us and comfort us, to bring us peace and make us holy. In Christ we do have peace no matter what troubles the world throws at us, no matter where we go. As Jesus said, "Take heart; I have overcome the world."

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