

SERMON FOLLOWED BY SERVICE

Advent 1 - 2021 - De-Stress from Calendar Distress

Mt 11:28 and Ps 46:10

What's the first thing that comes to mind? You're late. You need to be getting out of the house, but you can't find your wallet or the grocery list. Instead, what you find is your "to-do" list - your "to-do list for the week, your "to-do" list for the weekend. It seems that nothing is getting marked off. Instead, the lists of things you have to do and people you have to see, those lists are just getting longer and longer. But you don't have time to think about that. You're late; you need to get going; but you can't find anything you're looking for. That's when your favorite someone comes in and asks: "Did you look where you put it last?" You look a look that you shouldn't be looking. And your favorite someone says: "Relax."

What's the first thing that comes to mind? Is it reaching in and ripping out the tongue of your favorite someone? Or is it: "Relax?! I can't relax! I have to!"

"I have to" Sometimes - especially in December - we can get stuck on "I have to." Even if somebody offers to help, even if somebody offers a way out, we can get so stuck on those words "I have to." "I have to - because it's my job." "I have to - because I'm the only one who can do it right."

Or is it - "I have to - because I'm the only one who can do it my way"?

"I have to - because I can't say 'no.'" "I have to - because I have to make up for the way I looked and growled at you." "I have to - so I don't make them angry." "I have to - so that they love me." "I have to - so I can feel special and important." (*Even if it means feeling like a special and important victim, doormat?*) "I have to." "I have to" isn't always a good reason, is it?

Sometimes "I have to" is a lie.

What "I have to" lies are you hearing from yourself?

How will you silence those lies?

What Truth will you speak over those lies?

Whom do you have to help you?

Sometimes our December distress isn't "I have to," but "you have to." Your boss, your teacher, your mom, your dad, your husband, your wife, the in-laws, your guilty conscience - in December it can be like they all gang up behind your back, and one-at-a-time and all-together, they let loose: "You have to." Or it may be your family, friends, neighbors; they don't say a word, but you see what they're doing - shopping, crafting, lighting up the neighborhood, hosting in, partying out; and a voice from deep inside you commands: "You have to. You have to do the same."

What might be some reasons they have so much more time and money for their holiday stuff? What will happen to all their holiday stuff? What will come of your Holy Day life?

“You have to.” Sometimes, maybe we do have to, because it’s the right thing to do. And sometimes we don’t have to, because it’s the wrong thing to do. And sometimes, it’s in between. Somebody’s “you have to” may be a fine thing, even a good thing to do, but it doesn’t fit you or your life. It doesn’t fit the time you have; it doesn’t fit the energy you have; it doesn’t fit what you want to do. It can be alright to say “No, no thank you, not now, another time.” Just because someone says: “You have to” doesn’t mean that you always have to, does it?

And then there’s God - God telling us, calling us, inviting us. Did you notice a problem there? I put God down the list after me telling me what to do, and the world telling me what to do. Putting God down the list is a double-trouble problem. First, in whose mind is it a good idea to put God off? Did I hear you say: “Satan”?

*Does that mean that we have to do every God-thing that God presents to us?
(Consider Mary and Martha)*

Second, putting God off down the list is double-trouble because when we put God off down the list, we’re not in a good place to hear what Jesus has to say. What Jesus loves to say isn’t “you have to do more, do more, do more.” No, what Jesus loves to say is: “Come to me ... and I will give you rest.” What Jesus loves to say is: “Repent, relax; I’ve got this, and I’ve got you.”

What are some of the different ways God says: “Repent and relax. I’ve got this, and I’ve got you”?

That fits so well with Advent lessons we’ll hear this month. From Isaiah - “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.” Don’t you love to hear that? It’s not up to us to make things right; it’s not up to us to keep things right. Jesus will make things right; Jesus will keep things right.

*What does it mean that Jesus works to make/keep things right **for** you,*

*and that Jesus works to make/keep things right **through** you?*

How do those truths work together?

How do you balance those two truths?

And Micah - "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel "He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD ... and he will be their peace." In a world of people bossing and bullying, in a world demanding your time, Jesus steps in as Ruler and Shepherd - and he will be our peace.

And then with a smile, maybe with a deep breath and a sigh, we sing "Silent Night! Holy Night! All is calm" Not just calm for "the virgin mother and child," but peace and calm for us, even if just for a moment. Why? How?

What Advent/Christmas songs help you to de-stress with Jesus?

How does Jesus give peace and rest? He doesn't just say: "Relax." He doesn't just say: "Peace." He doesn't just say: "Don't do more than you can handle." No, Jesus doesn't just "say." Instead, Jesus did and Jesus does. From heaven, Jesus stepped in for us, God for us. Think what that gets to mean - You know how exhausting, how frustrating it is to have voices always demanding more, demanding better, voices in you and around you that are never satisfied. And you know the blow-back, how people make you pay when you don't do what they want the way they want. With Jesus, you can know that God's voice isn't among those voices. With Jesus, there is no blow-back, no making-you-pay. As far as God is concerned, Jesus stepped in and took the blow-back, paid the price for you - that's what the cross is about. As far as God is concerned, Jesus stepped in and loved God first and best; he loved your neighbor as himself; he knew when to jump in and help; he knew when to step back to rest and to pray; he made time and cared for the crowds; he made time and cared for that one hurting heart in the crowd, that hurting heart no one else had time for. Jesus stepped in and he lived that life for you. Now, as far as God is concerned, all God's demands for a right life, all God's expectations for you are met in Jesus, his life for you.

I said: "As far as God is concerned." We still hear other voices demanding. We still feel blowback when we don't do enough, right enough. But with Jesus, the God who created you and put you here in this world, in this time and place - he says: "Repent and relax. With Jesus, you're right by me." With Jesus, the God who provides jobs and paychecks, food and drink, house and home - with Jesus, your Father in heaven says: "Repent and relax. With Jesus, I've got this, and I've got you." With Jesus, the God who holds back Satan, the God who makes all things work for our good - he says: "Repent and

relax; I've got this, and I've got you." With Jesus, the Judge who is Lord of Life and Death, who Judge who holds the key to heaven - he says: "Repent and relax. Look around - none of their grouchy growling, none of your grouchy growling, none of their frenzied frenzy, none of your frenzied frenzy - none of that matters. With what I have coming for you, none that matters. So repent and relax - I've got you right with me, forever."

Thoughts that didn't make the cut:

1. Frenzied and frantic - does that sound like your December? What makes it worse is this - this is supposed to be a time of peace! So not only do I let myself get frazzled, frenzied, and frantic, but I feel guilty for feeling frazzled, frenzied, and frantic. And sometimes, it doesn't take much to turn frazzled, frenzied, frantic, and *guilty* into frazzled, frenzied, frantic and *angry*. And if you say "relax," chances are I'll go through feeling frenzied, guilty, stupid before I get to relaxed.

What helpful hints do you have for your family and friends so that you can help each other through those times?

2. We don't have to do everything ...
our neighbors do our family does guilt tells us to do
We don't even have to do everything love tells us to do
We don't have to do every good thing and good idea that comes our way.

But we do get to _____.

3. When you step back from doing ...
What is the difference between rusting and recharging?

Do you find yourself recharging to live the life of the world?

Or recharging to live the life of Jesus?

How can you tell the difference?

DE-STRESS FROM DECEMBER DISTRESS

**DISTRESSED WITH CALENDAR STRESS?
DE-STRESS WITH PEACE IN JESUS!**

HYMN

"Hark the Glad Sound! The Savior Comes"

Hymn 313

M: O Lord, open my lips.

C: **And my mouth shall declare your praise.**

M: Hasten to save me, O God.

C: **O Lord, come quickly to help me.**

M: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

M: Lord God, you have brought us safely to this hour of evening prayer. We thank you for providing all that we need for body and life. Bless us who have gathered in your name. Forgive our sins. Speak to our hearts. Dispel our sorrows with the comfort of your Word, and receive our hymns of thanks and praise, through Jesus Christ, our living Savior, who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

HYMN

"Let My Prayer Rise Before You"



C: Let my prayer rise be - fore you as in - cense, the lift - ing



up of my hands as the eve - ning sac - ri - fice. O Lord, I



call to you; come to me quick - ly; hear my voice when I
cry to you. Let my prayer rise be - fore you as in - cense,
the lift - ing up of my hands as the eve - ning sac - ri - fice.

PRAYER

M: Let our prayers be acceptable in your sight. Come and help us in time of need that way we may sing your praise in holy joy now and forever, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C: Amen.

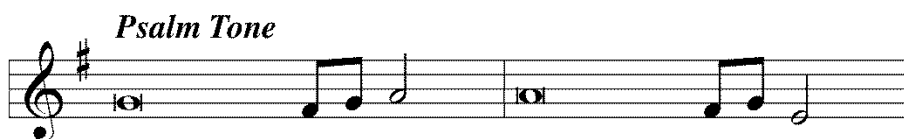
PSALM 40 (CWS)

Refrain



O Lord, my God, man-y are the won-ders you have done.

Psalm Tone



I waited patiently for the LORD;
he turned to me and heard my cry.

Do not withhold your mercy from me, O LORD;
may your love and your truth always protect me.

For troubles without number surround me;
my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see.

They are more than the hairs of my head,
and my heart fails within me.

Be pleased, O LORD, to save me;
O LORD, come quickly to help me.

Refrain

I waited patiently for the LORD;
he turned to me and heard my cry.

He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD.

Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust,
who does not look to the proud,
to those who turn aside to false gods.

Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders you have done.
The things you planned for us no one can recount to you;

were I to speak and tell of them,
they would be too many to declare.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,**

**as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Refrain

PSALM PRAYER

M: Lord Jesus, when the difficulties of life become more than we can bear and we find ourselves sinking into despair, put our feet back on the rock of your righteousness. You obeyed your Father's will on our behalf. When Satan would lead us to despair, give us confidence to cry, "My Savior lived and died for me!" In his name we pray.

C: **Amen.**

LESSON

Luke 2:25-32

This Advent season our three Wednesday lessons will be the three songs from the Gospel of Luke.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you now dismiss your servant in peace.
For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all people,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel."

HYMN

"I Stand beside Your Manger Here"

Hymn 334

SERMON

Psalm 46:10

"Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."

Matthew 11:28

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you
rest."

"Song of Mary"



My soul pro-claims the great-ness of the Lord; my spir-it re-joic-es in God my Sav-ior.



for he has looked with fa - vor on his low - ly ser - vant



From this day all gen - er - a - tions will call me bless - ed.



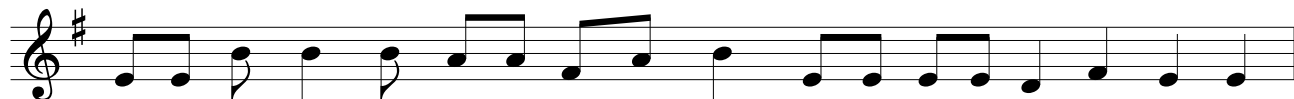
The Al - mighty has done great things for me, and ho - ly is his name.



He has mer - cy on those who fear him in ev - 'ry gen - er - a - tion



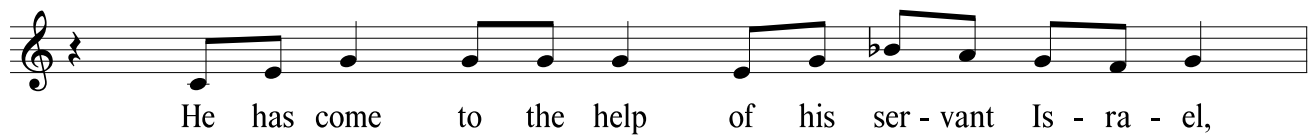
He has shown the strength of his arm he has scat-tered the proud in their con-keit.



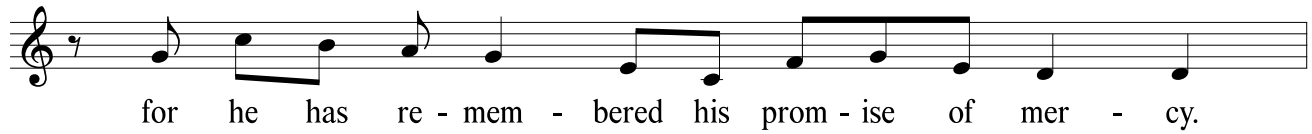
He has cast down the might-y from their thrones and has lift-ed up the low - ly.



He has filled the hun-gry with good things, and the rich he has sent a-way emp-ty.



He has come to the help of his ser - vant Is - ra - el,



for he has re - mem - bered his prom - ise of mer - cy.



the prom-ise made to our fa - thers, to A-bra-ham and to his chil-dren for-ev-er. A-men.

PRAYER

M: In the closing hours of this day, hear us as we pray, O Lord:

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: For the well-being of people everywhere, for the growth of your church in all the world, and for the strengthening of all who serve and worship here, we pray, O Lord:

C: **Christ, have mercy.**

M: For one another, young and old, for your blessings that come with every stage of life, and for joy in doing your will, we pray, O Lord:

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: For our public servants who work day and night to bring protection, justice, learning, and health to this and every place, we pray to you, O Lord:

C: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

M: For favorable weather and bountiful harvests, for clothing and food, for health of body, mind, and spirit, and for deliverance from all sin and every form of evil, we pray to you, O Lord:

C: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

M: For the faithful who have gone before us, who have shared with us your good news, whose souls are now at rest in your heavenly kingdom, we give you thanks, O Lord:

C: **Thanks be to God.**

M: In thanksgiving for your many and varied gifts to us, we now commend ourselves to your care. Be our shield and strength, O Lord.

C: **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

M: Lord God, all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works come from you. Give to us, your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey your commandments. Defend us also from the fear of our enemies that we may live in peace and quietness, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

BLESSING

M: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

"Now the Light Has Gone Away"

Hymn 784

OFFERING

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Join Us For Wednesday Advent Worship!

De-Stress from December Distress

Wednesday, December 8, at 3:30 and 6:30:

Distressed with Money Stress?

De-Stress with True Treasure in Jesus!

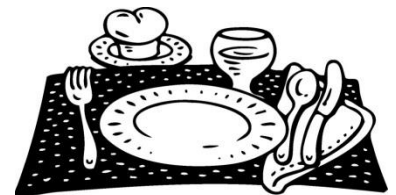
- Advent Supper at 4:30 pm - Hosted by Kris Murphy

Wednesday, December 15, at 3:30 and 6:30:

Distressed with Family Stress?

De-Stress with Jesus as Your Brother!

- Advent Supper at 4:30 pm - Hosted by St. John Youth Group



Advent
SUPPER