

Jesus Gives You Rest When You're Stressed
John 16:33

Good morning, everyone! We're starting a new series today called "Jesus Gives". In this series, we're going to look at what Jesus Christ gives to us as additional blessings aside from the fact that he has already given us the ultimate blessing of salvation. And there are so many additional blessings. In this series, we're going to look at just a few of them.

The first one I thought of sharing with you is the blessing of peace. In John 16:33, Jesus says to his disciples, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Because of this pandemic, everyone of us is looking for peace. It seems everyone is anxious, worried, apprehensive, scared, troubled, and stressed. I don't know about you but I'm kind of scared going out of the house. Last week, when we did our Easter Service in our backyard, I was just hoping and praying that I and my family don't get the coronavirus that might be floating in the air. Some say it's now airborne and so it can travel more than 6 feet. Especially it was windy last week. I was scared not only for my notes that might get blown by the wind but also by the coronavirus. Thank God we're still doing fine after a week.

But there are those who are not. Like Chris Cuomo's wife. You know Chris Cuomo, right? He is the CNN news anchor who is reporting from his basement because he is infected. This is his third week now, I believe. So, last Sunday, being Easter Sunday, and he comes from a Catholic family, he and his family went out of their house to their front yard to celebrate the event. Three days after, on Wednesday, he reported that his wife got infected as well.

That's how vicious this virus is. So, we cannot take it lightly.

In fact, some of us are becoming paranoid that if we feel something in our bodies, like a headache, or an itchy throat, or a persistent cough, we wonder whether we got the virus.

So, we need peace. We need rest in the middle of this crisis. That's why I've entitled this message, "Jesus Gives You Rest When You're Stressed".

In this message, I'd like to share with you five principles we need to apply in our lives as we battle stress in our lives. Every person on earth experiences stress one way or the other. When the baby cries it is because of stress because the baby is either hungry or needs changing. And an adult person expresses stress in various ways. It could be by shouting, by being silent, by eating, by not eating, by shopping, and by shopping some more. You know who you are.

Now, maybe you're stressed not just because of the virus but because of your health, your job, your marriage, your children, your relationships, your temptations, your bad habits, your hang-ups, your ministry, or whatever. This message is for you.

So, let me share with you these five principles. And as we go through these, you'll realize that there is victory against stress in the end. The first principle is 1. Peace is possible.

Jesus said to his disciples, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace". What are these things that Jesus told his disciples? Well, let me give you a little background. The events in this chapter occurs just before Jesus was arrested to be tried and crucified. The chapter begins with Jesus telling his disciples what they could expect when he leaves them. He said that they would be mistreated and persecuted and even killed because they were his followers. Verse 6 says that Jesus observed they were filled with sorrow. Sorrow because Jesus was leaving them and maybe because also of the fact that they were going to be mistreated. Be that as it may, that was pretty unsettling.

You know, being left by your leader and then being mistreated after that. I would be restless. But Jesus tried to allay their fears by letting them know that he was going to send the Holy Spirit who would act on his behalf. The Holy Spirit would be there to give them comfort as well.

Did that help? Nope. Because we see in verses 17-18 that the disciples became agitated when Jesus repeated in verse 16 that he would be leaving them soon.

“At this, some of his disciples said to one another, ‘What does he mean by saying, “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,” and “Because I am going to the Father”?’ They kept asking, ‘What does he mean by “a little while”?’ We don’t understand what he is saying.”

They were confused. They were bewildered by the statement of Jesus. They became restless even more. Of course, Jesus was talking about his coming crucifixion and resurrection and ascent to heaven. We know that on hindsight, but the disciples didn’t know that. So, Jesus went on to explain what he meant. That he was going back to heaven to be with his Father and so on and so forth. The disciples somehow got it as we see in verse 29. But Jesus tells them another reality in verse 32. They will be so restless and scared and stressed out that they will all be scattered, leaving Jesus.

What we see here is what many people normally experience in their lives. Trials, confusion, depression, giving up, not having peace at all. Jesus knows all these. Jesus knows what you’re going through and what you’ll go through. But he’s telling you, you can have peace in the midst of all your troubles and perplexing situation. After all he is the Prince of Peace as the Bible tells us in Isaiah 9:6.

Some people don’t believe it’s possible. That’s why they give up. We hear stories of people who have given up on life. They waste their lives away.

They become alcoholics, become involved in a life of crime, turn to gambling and other vices, or even commit suicide. There's no peace inside of them. Perhaps because of wrong choices in life or committing a sin, being filled with guilt and all that. Peace is far-fetched for them. Maybe they have it for a moment but most of the time it's not there.

Ernest Hemingway was a famous writer. He won the Nobel Prize and the Pulitzer Prize for writing. He was successful. However, he took his own life by shooting himself on the head with a shotgun. Why did he do that? Because he suffered from physical and mental deterioration in the years and months leading up to his death. Clearly, peace eluded this great writer.

Note Jesus tells his disciples, "so that in me you may have peace". Some versions of the Bible say "you may have peace" and some say "you might have peace". But I'm not going to talk about may or might. Because the original Greek does not have that word. It just says "you have peace". And the word "have" in this passage in Greek means to hold, to possess, to cling to, to adhere to. Therefore, the peace that Jesus Christ gives is something that a Christian possesses. It can never be taken away. It is something that will stick with you like a glue. When you are in Jesus and Jesus is in you, peace is real. You have it in your possession. Always. That's his promise.

This peace is a supernatural kind of peace. It is a kind of peace that even when the winds are blowing hard, enables you to stand firm. It is the kind of peace that helps you withstand the pain and sorrow of misfortunes, failures, tragedies, diseases, and even death. This is the kind of peace that many persecuted Christians in the past and even now experience during times of torture and physical suffering under their cruel oppressors. Someone said, "Peace is not the absence of trouble but the presence of God in the midst of trouble".

Paul, who himself was persecuted many times, wrote to the Philippians, “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:6-7)

Do you want peace in your life? Yes, Jesus says it’s possible.

2. There will always be stress.

Let’s not kid ourselves. As long as you are living, you will experience stress. There is tiny stress, there is huge stress. What is stress for me, may not be stress for you and vice versa. Anyone who tells you that you can live a stress-free life, is either living in fantasy or is denying reality. I think they mean the same. Anyway, the only stress-free people are those who are dead.

Truth is, we need some stress in our lives. That’s why psychologists recognize there is good stress and there is bad stress. Jane Weaver, a health editor says, “We may talk about cutting the stress from our lives, but we need those precious, powerful fight-or-flight hormones our bodies produce when we’re about to be hit by a car or when confronted with an unexpected, needed-it-yesterday deadline at work. When the brain perceives physical or psychological stress, it starts pumping the chemicals cortisol, epinephrine (adrenaline) and norepinephrine into the body. Instantly, the heart beats faster, blood pressure increases, senses sharpen, a rise in blood glucose invigorates us and we’re ready to rock. Or leap away from the car.”

And psychiatrist Dr. Lynne Tan of Montefiore Medical Center in New York City asserts, “Stress is a burst of energy. It’s our body telling us what we need to do.”

You know why you’re able to get things done? Because of stress. You know why I’m able to prepare sermons? Because of stress. And God’s inspiration, of course.

So, stress is good for you. We should not complain about stress then. Let's go to point #3.

Just kidding.

Stress is good up to a point. Because when you get too much of it — when the flood of hormones bombards your body longer than 24 hours, doctors say — and all kinds of bad things start to happen. Long-term, chronic emotional stress that lasts weeks or months is blamed for high blood pressure, heart disease, exhaustion and depression.

That's the kind of stress we're talking about here. Jesus recognizes that stress or stresses are part of our lives. That's why he says, "In this world you will have trouble." He states a fact of life. He doesn't deny the fact that we will always experience troubles.

So, peace is possible even though there will always be stress.

3. Jesus did not promise a stress-free life.

That's the third reality regarding our battle with stress. Let's go back to the statement of Jesus, "In this world you will have trouble." He didn't say, "you might have trouble" or "if you have trouble". He said, "you WILL have trouble". It's for sure. It will come, whether you like it or not. As I said, Jesus is stating a fact of life. Troubles come to each and every person. If you're not in it now, I bet you you'll be in it sooner or later.

What kinds of troubles are there?

There is trouble in the world. Like the pandemic. This is worldwide. You and I are affected. Large populations in the world are affected. There are wars in the world, too. Although they have taken a back seat because of the pandemic. We haven't heard much about terrorist attacks or bombings or fightings in the world today. I guess even terrorists are afraid of the coronavirus.

Then, there are natural disasters like floodings, earthquakes, tornadoes. And then, economic troubles, too. This is becoming real nowadays. The whole world is affected by it, too.

Another kind of trouble is people. In one Peanuts cartoon, Lucy says to Charlie Brown, “I love mankind. It’s people I can’t stand.” Let’s face it. We run into trouble with some people. There are some people we like, some people we don’t like. On Facebook, as we scroll down the page and read the posts, we click like when we like the person. If we don’t, we bypass. Seriously, Jesus tells us not to discriminate against anyone. In fact, he tells us to love our enemies. If you love your friends only, what makes you different from unbelievers? Jesus says, **“If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?” (Matthew 5:46).**

And then, there’s personal trouble, too. This is the kind of trouble that is within us. Meaning, we act in ways that cause problems for us and maybe to others, too. We lie, we cheat, we disrespect others, we drink, we gamble, we have an affair, we think bad thoughts, we look at obscene materials, we insult others, we become impatient, and all other ungodly stuff. Why do we do these things? It is because of sin that is within us. The Bible says that we are all corrupt. There is nothing good in us. **Romans 3:12b says, “There is no one who does good, not even one.”**

With all these kinds of troubles in our lives, how can you live a stress-free life? It’s impossible. Until you realize that rest and peace is possible because Jesus said so. What do we need to do then?

4. Be encouraged.

That’s the fourth principle. And that’s what Jesus meant when he said, “Take heart”. Notice it’s not a suggestion by Jesus. It’s a command.

If Jesus is your Lord, if Jesus is your commanding officer, you need to take heed of his command. He commands it because he knows you can do it. When he saved you, he has empowered you to take on life's struggles and battles. In 2 Timothy 1:7, it says, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment."

The Bible is peppered, literally peppered with encouraging statements from God. He spoke through his prophets, through the disciples, and, of course, through Jesus himself who is the Word of God. God knows we need those shot-in-the-arm verses. He knows what we go through. He knows you more than anyone could ever know you, including yourself. And he loves you. He wants you to feel his loving presence in your life.

Let me then encourage you with some of these verses.

When you're afraid, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)

When you're sad, "weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning." Psalm 30:5

When you're anxious, "When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy." (Psalm 94:19)

When you feel unloved, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness." (Jer. 31:3)

When you are lacking, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:33)

There are so many, many words of encouragement from the Bible. All you have to do is read it every day and let God speak to you through its pages.

One final verse, when you are worrying, "Be still and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10. This is one of my favorite verses.

I'm a worrier by nature and so God gave this to me at a time in my life when I was literally filled with worry. And then he inspired me to write a song.

BE STILL

Folks, these are the principles to apply as you try to win the battle against stress. Peace is possible. There will always be stress. Jesus did not promise a stress-free life. Be encouraged. Finally,

5. Jesus has already declared victory.

Jesus says, **"I have overcome the world"**. Jesus said it with finality. He did not mince any words. Note he said this before his crucifixion and eventual resurrection. Because he knew that when Adam and Eve sinned, God had already provided a redeemer for mankind. In Genesis 3:15, with expressed certainty, God said to Satan, **"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."**

Jesus has fulfilled this prophecy about crushing the head of the old serpent Satan when he resurrected from the dead. His resurrection means that he has conquered sin and death forever. Which means that he can claim total victory against Satan who wanted him dead forever. In a sense, the devil succeeded in striking the heel of Jesus when Jesus was crucified and died on the cross, yet his victory was empty because Jesus defeated him when he rose from the dead.

Jesus said I have overcome the world. So, whatever troubles you have in this world, you can rest assured that Jesus will take care of them. You just turn over all these worries, heartaches, anxieties over to him and he will take care of them for you.

For someone who is looking for peace in this world, Jesus wants you to know that his victory is yours as well. You can have peace in the midst of whatever trouble you're in. Jesus can and will give you rest.

He says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28)

Years ago, I shared with you the story of Brian Welch, the lead guitarist of this famous new wave rock band called “Korn”. He became a Christian and left the band then came back and now is playing with the goal of leading others to Jesus.

I found out that there was another member of his band who became a Christian a few years before him. His name is Fieldy and this is his story....

If you don't have a personal relationship with Jesus, the time to start that is now. All you need to do is to confess your sins and ask forgiveness for your sins.