

-Rev. Dan Welch Midweek in Lent 2 3-16-22 Text- Matthew 26:30-35  
Week 2: The Mount of Olives-

“Pressure pushing down on me. Pressing down on you.” These are the words from a catchy song sung by David Bowie and the band Queen. The song is called “Under Pressure.” And at the end, as the music gradually fades away, we hear the words: “This is ourselves under pressure. Under pressure. Pressure.”

You know the feeling. Maybe at work it’s sitting through long, stressful meetings. Or in school it’s spending a semester carrying a heavy class load. Perhaps your pressure right now is fighting the headwinds of a financial downturn, big-time inflation. Or it may be when you spend the night after night at the bedside of a sick child or a dying parent. Perhaps you’re fighting to keep your family together or your business from going under.

Whenever it feels like we’re under oceans of pressure, the temptation is to lash out. To go on the offensive with angry outbursts, rash accusations, a hateful retaliation of ugly words. Sometimes, we just want to let others have it—and deal with the consequences later.

What do we do when the temperature is up, our defenses are down, and we feel like we’re about to crack under the pressure of it all? How can we keep our heads even when everyone else is losing theirs? Walk to the Mt. of Olives. What? That’s right. Walk to the Mt. of Olives.

We’re in a series called Places of the Passion. Today we walk with Jesus to the Mt. of Olives. At the Mt. of Olives, Jesus teaches us to sing. He teaches us to sing because singing is a whole lot better than sobbing, sighing, feeling sorry for myself, then lashing out!

Sing because of **God’s power**. “Singing a hymn, they went out to the Mt. of Olives.” (Matthew 26:30) Imagine that! In the middle of an extremely tense situation when the pressure is so very high, Jesus sings Psalms 113–118—the Egyptian Hallel. Hallel means “praise!” These psalms praise God for His power that delivered Israel from Egyptian slavery.

Here are some verses that Jesus and His disciples sang. Psalm 113:7, “He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap.”

Psalm 115:3, “Our God is in the heavens; He does everything He pleases.” Psalm 116:8, “The Lord has delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.” Psalm 118:22–24, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. The Lord has done this and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” When your world looks like the darkness of the Mt. of Olives—sing because of God’s power!

Christ is about to be betrayed by a kiss. Then there will be deniers and slappers and beaters and spitters and whippers and mockers. And there will be nailers. So, what does Jesus do? He sings! Jesus sings because of God’s power. Psalm 118:17—one of the psalms in the Egyptian Hallel—“I shall live and recount the deeds of the Lord!”

Here is where events from a little known chapter of the Bible are most instructive. In 2 Chronicles 20, King Jehoshaphat gains a great victory for Judah over the Ammonites, Edomites and Moabites. How does he do it? 2 Chronicles 20:21 tells us, “Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, singing: ‘Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his steadfast love endures forever!’” Sing because of God’s power—God’s power brings victory!

Here Psalm 149:6 comes up huge: “The praises of God are in their mouths like a double-edged sword in their hands.” When the praises of God are in our mouths, they—like double-edged swords—silence our sobbing, sighing and feeling sorry for ourselves. When biblical truth is set to music, it becomes memorable, teachable and transformational! When the heat is on and the stress is up, sing—sing hymns and songs. Sing because of God’s power!

Sing because of God’s promise. “Then Jesus said to them, ‘You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.’” (Matthew 26:31–32) Immanent disaster is right around the corner—but there is also Galilee! Galilee! Galilee is where Christ begins His ministry. Galilee is where Christ continues His ministry! When will that be? After his resurrection!

Matthew 28:10 states, “Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.’” When everything looks dark and bleak and you’re feel like you’re going to finally crack under pressure—sing because of God’s promise! Why do that? Because the end is not the end. I’ll say that again. The end is not the end. With Jesus Christ, the end is never the end! There is death but there is also resurrection! There is Golgotha but there is also Galilee!

That VISA bill is not the end. That diagnosis is not the end. That impossible situation is not the end. That depression stalking and mocking you is not the end. Christ always brings a new beginning—always! Sing! Sing because of God’s promise! Galilee!

Sing because of God’s pardon. “Peter answered him, ‘Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.’” (Matthew 26:33) Peter will not only fall away, he will deny Jesus three times. And the third time Peter will do it with a curse!

On Easter morning, an angel tells the women, “Go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he said.” (Mark 16:7) Peter! Peter, who denied the Master three times! Peter, who caved in under pressure! Peter, the rock who broke into pieces—right when Jesus needed him most. Peter! “Go, tell his disciples and Peter!”

Sing because of God’s pardon for Peter. Sing because God’s pardon for parents. Sing because of God’s pardon for partners and peers and even pastors. Sing because of God’s pardon for all people! We cannot out-sin the grace of God! We cannot out-sin the grace of God! God’s grace? “Signed when our Redeemer died. Sealed when he was glorified!”

Growing up, a son’s job was to mow his family’s lawn. His family’s lawnmowers, though, weren’t very fancy—they were just a step above garage-sale junk. One day, he couldn’t start the mower. He kept pulling the chord and sweating! Pulling the chord and sweating!

His father appeared and said, “You’re not using all your strength.” “What?” The son blurted out. “You’re not using all your strength.” “What do you mean?” His dad said, “You haven’t asked me to help you.” Did I tell

you that this father played football in high school and in college? That this father was stronger than an ox?

Give your stress to your heavenly Father. Ask Him to help. You don't have to pull and sweat alone! That's what Jesus teaches at the Mt. of Olives. And that's why we sing!

When things go south in the waiting room, the living room, the boardroom, the classroom, the conference room, or the emergency room, don't give in to the pressure! Instead, "Sing to the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things!" Amen.