

Faith and Fury

Luke 19:28-40

When Mel Robbins book , “The Let Them Theory.” was published it immediately hit the #1 New York Times Bestseller List and remained on the list for 14 weeks straight the book helps people and organizations alike battle depression and stress and begin acting with intention and empowerment.

It begins by asking, “What do you do when you feel stressed, when someone shuts you out, when people act in unfavorable ways, when life seems impossible? How would you answer that question?

Most of us would likely become frustrated, depressed, we feel trapped and out of control, and we react in ways that sometimes can push us deeper into hopelessness, guilt, sorrow, and despair. In the last few weeks many of us have felt our stress levels rising as the stock market plummets and prices rise. When this happens, our ability to react with intention goes out the window, and we simply “stress out!” Many of us today live in a state of constant “fight or flight,” reacting to a culture that frustrates us, relationships that we don’t understand, or circumstances that feel out of our control.

We human beings have a deep-seated desire to control our environment, our relationships, and the actions of people around us and this causes us a great deal of anxiety and stress, because we cannot control anything or what anyone else does. We can only control the ways that we react to it! Although this may seem like a simple and obvious statement, every one of us struggles with this at one time or another, some more often than others. It’s part of our human condition.

So, how do we react differently when we become provoked? When someone ruffles our tailfeathers? Robbins says, “We Let them.” And then, we “let ourselves” act with integrity and intention. We must release ourselves from the desire to change their actions or who they are, and instead, we must decide intentionally on how we would like to respond.

We no longer simply react, which depletes our power and causes us stress and anxiety, but we intentionally act, which fuels our empowerment and calms us, mind, body, and spirit. We cannot control others. But we can control the way that we react to others.

Today is Palm Sunday. It’s the day in which Jesus instructs his disciples to untie a colt and bring it to him, after which he will ride straight into Jerusalem to face a final encounter that he knows will result in his death. He does this calmly, intentionally, powerfully, and provocatively.

He does not carry weapons. He does not cause an uprising. He does not react to the demands for him and his disciples to desist. He has planned this entry, this journey, this mission, and he fully intends to complete it. To do so, he must put aside his fear and his impulse to control those around him, and he must simply act out his mission the way he knows is true to who he is. True to who God is.

In the last weeks of his journey, it’s clear that Jesus knows he cannot save most of the religious elite in Jerusalem. He knows he cannot help them see what they do not wish to see. In fact, when he tells his own disciples to go out to preach, he tells them as well: go and tell the good news to everyone. Some will receive you. Some won’t. For those that won’t, simply kick the dust from your feet, and carry on.

You cannot change those who do not wish to change. But you will change many! Your mission is about something so much bigger than you! Focus not on people's negative responses but on your positive intention. Focus not on that which will hinder you but on God who will enable you.

If any oppose you, "let them." If any follow you, receive them. If any persecute you, let them. You cannot do anything about it. But know that God has your back. And your message will fall upon many, and many lives will be changed.

Jesus' ride into Jerusalem is a provocative act. It's an act he has carefully planned and thought out. With dignity, he will ride into the "snake pit" and will face his accusers, allow them to arrest him, allow them to interrogate him, and even allow them to crucify him. But in the end, he will win. For his empowerment lies in his faith—in God, and in God's mission.

Jesus' faith in God and his mission of salvation will keep his head cool and his feet moving forward in the most impossible and stressful situations imaginable. We can barely fathom how anxiety-inducing those last days must have been! We know they were hard on him—for in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus will sweat blood—the ultimate physical form of bodily stress. And yet, he will continue to act not reactively, but with intention, grace, forgiveness, and a faith that assures him that in three days' time, he will rise. God will win! And He will live!

Sometimes we can forget that Jesus was not just the incarnate God, but he was also fully human. He felt what we feel. He had the same bodily make up that we have. He knew what it felt like to experience extreme stress, to feel out of control, to question and doubt, even to despair. And yet he persevered.

What allowed him to persevere amid that level of turmoil? Faith. Strong faith. Deep faith. Faith that he had secured within himself with the help of God during those 40 days of his preparation and which had sustained him through a tumultuous ministry, and now the extremity of the trials to come.

He would need to keep his eyes on the mission, not take things personally, let others be who they were determined to be, and have confidence in who he was and what God would accomplish through him.

In the process, he taught his disciples...and us today....a valuable set of lessons for our own lives as well:

If people oppose you, if people insult you, if people frustrate you, if people insist on taking a different path and won't heed your warnings, you need to let them.

Once you let others follow their path, you are free to follow yours. Get on with the business of enriching your life and your path, and act with intention and integrity. Let your call be your guide and God's wisdom be your grounding.

The more you stop trying to exert power over others, the more you will empower yourself to grow, stretch, and be at peace, and the more clearly you will hear God's voice ensuring your path.

What may feel impossible for you, will never be impossible for God. Put your faith in God—there you will find your ultimate peace.

We all know the ending to this story—the rising of Jesus from the tomb and the empowerment of Jesus' disciples through the movement of the Holy Spirit. They would go on to change the world one soul at a

time with a faith so solid that nothing could break them. But they would need to first navigate through days of darkness. Days of fear, uncertainty, doubt, and confusion.

We too often in our lives face days of darkness –times of confusion when we don't know where to turn. That's when we need to turn to Christ–and not just “let them” but “let Christ.” For when we do, we will feel that peace that only Christ can give, the strength that only Christ can impart, that courage that only Christ can muster, and that deep faith that only Christ can infuse within us–and we will get through it, not reactively, but intentionally.