

**STRESSED OR BLESSED?**  
**Pentecost Sunday –May 19, 2013 –Isaiah 40: 28-31**  
**The Church of the Covenant**

I think lots of time Christians view Pentecost as something that happened a long time ago that really doesn't have much to do with their life today. It is the beginning of the church that happened two thousand years ago. It is something that is a little strange, the Holy Spirit coming down with the rush of a mighty wind and tongues of fire. But in terms of its significance for daily living or in terms of its practical help to get us through the tough stress of the modern world, we really just see it as a rather quaint story of a long, long time ago that really doesn't apply much to today.

Actually, it speaks right to the heart of one of the largest issues of today –the incredible stress individuals face in their daily life. Life is faster today; life is complex; we try to multi-task and do too many things; hyper-activity is the watchword of the day; even our children need complex calendars in their smart phones to keep track of their overly busy schedule; parents become transportation devices and jitney services shuttling their children from one class, to another practice, to a rehearsal, to a lesson, to one sporting event to another. The stress of modern life is killing us and robbing us of life itself. We are teaching our children this is the way to live, when it is not. There is no happiness or joy in all our activity; there is only stress.

When we live our lives in the power of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit given to every Christian who asks for it, we are blessed. But when we live our lives in our own power, through our own isolated abilities, time and gifts we are stressed. If you want to know whether or not the power and the presence of God is fully active within you just ask yourself the question –“**Am I stressed or am I blessed?**” And you'll know in whose power you are living your daily life. This is a sermon for people who are stressed. And this is a sermon for people who want to be blessed...

I have chosen a Bible text from the Old Testament from Isaiah 40 to illustrate what I'm talking about today. But I have to tell you that I think this Old Testament scripture lies in the background of the events of that first Pentecost...and maybe your own personal Pentecost today. It says, “*But they who wait for the Lord will renew their strength...*” (Isaiah 40: 31) and that's what we're talking about today. We're speaking about renewing our strength for daily living. We're talking about leaning on God to get us through. We're talking about having a spiritual breakthrough today, of moving from stress-fulness to blessedness today. Anybody interested in learning that spiritual secret today???????

Isaiah 40 begins with looking toward God –the absence of stress and the presence of blessed always does. “*Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God...He does not faint or grow weary...*” (Isaiah 40: 28) If we're looking for power for daily living then begin the search by looking to the all-powerful God. He created the heavens and the earth; He is all-powerful. Why would we look anywhere else for a new jolt to live our lives in a better, less stress-filled, more alive way? First, look to the Lord.

Isaiah 40 then notes that this all-powerful God gives this power to us. Blessedness and power for daily living comes from HIM. “*He gives power to the faint*”, as it says, “*and to him who has not might he increases strength.*” (v. 29) When we are weak then HE is strong, says the Apostle. When we have a need, He supplies our daily bread. When we lack strength or wisdom to face the things we face in our life then “*HE is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification and redemption.*” (1 Corinthians 1: 30) Everything we need, HE has. And everything HE

has, He will give, if we but ask. First, look to the Lord; second, understand that only HE has the power that we need.

Isaiah 40 then notes, *“Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted.”* (v. 30) It gets so bad that even young people get burned out and turned off and stressed out. I always remember the young high school woman who was in competitive gymnastics and she practiced hours every day and she went to all kinds of training sessions and competitions. She was 16 years old, and at a time when she should have been the most care-free in all her life, she was stressed out to the max. She was so good she could have made the Olympic team one day. Finally, one day she came home and told her parents that she would never do gymnastics again. She was burned out, depressed; she had nothing more to give. I call it being so burned out we become a “crispy critter”; we have no energy whatsoever for anything; we have so done everything in our own power and ability and we have tried to do so much for so long, even “youths shall faint and be weary”, even young men and women will “fall exhausted”. It happens to ministers; it happened to me. Being a “crispy critter” and those of you who have been there like me, a burned out hull of your former self, know what I am talking about. (As a parenthesis, we are being very busy as a church right now and we are contemplating trying to do a lot more mission for our community and world. We will know whether or not we are doing this in our own power or in the power of God depending upon whether we get stressed out with one another, burn out our best people or not, and actually accomplish what we honestly believe God is calling us to do or not –will we be able to be blessed in the middle of this? Or will we be stressed? Will we get burned out or consumed by a holy fire? Will we do this in our own power or in the power of Almighty God? There is a difference, beloved; there is a difference.)

Then, Isaiah 40 notes, *“But they who wait for the Lord...”* (v. 31) “Waiting for the Lord” is not just marking time; it is not a passive waiting, but an active waiting. It is coming together and praying. It is actively trusting in our heart that God will come and bless us with the Spirit. It is asking and seeking and knocking, actively, continuously, praying without ceasing. By the way, when the Bible says *“ASK and you will receive; SEEK and you will find; KNOCK and the door will be opened to you”*, we often ask and seek and knock for the wrong things. Lord, give me a new job; God help me to do what I want to do; Lord, help me to get what I think I need. No. This is about asking and seeking and knocking where the Spirit is concerned. This is about asking for the Holy Spirit to be unlocked in your life. This is about seeking to be in the place where the Spirit is at work. This is about knocking and asking and seeking for a spiritual renewing of our faith and life, for power for daily living. Sometimes we ask for the wrong things. Ask for the Spirit and God will not give you a stone. Ask for the Spirit to come alive within and God will not give you a serpent. What would have happened if those first disciples on that first Pentecost had not “waited in an upper room”? What if they had not started with prayer? What if they had tried to start the church in their own power? What if they had tried to do on their own and apart from God what only God can do? Trust me, they would have been stressed, not blessed. Trust me, they would have failed miserably. And if they had not waited upon the Lord, you may also trust me, we as the church, would not be here today. First, look to the Lord; second, understand that only HE has the power we need; third, actively wait upon the Lord and ask for strength we need.

Isaiah 40 then concludes: *“But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”* (Isaiah 40: 31) Maybe the paraphrase is this –when we wait and actively pray and ask for the Spirit, the Lord will come in His power and lift us up, and we will be so encouraged and so enlivened that everything that felt so burdensome now will feel like we are flying, and we won’t become crispy critters, but we will be renewed and do things for the Lord way above anything we could ever hope or imagine. First, look to

the Lord; second, understand that only HE has the power we need; third, ask for the strength we need; fourth, wait for the power to come.

We know what it is to be stressed, I am not sure we know what it is to be blessed. Stressed is that heart thumping anxiety that is never on time; that always has more to do; that never rests or has a moment of peace; that lives its life in relation to a calendar, a watch and a cellphone. Stress is your cellphone beeping at you and reminding you that you are late for the next thing on your "to do list". Blessed, on the other hand, is peace in the midst of the storms of life, being led by God in what to do next, placing HIM and church as the first priority of our life not just one more thing on our "to do list". Blessed is letting God's power do it; showing up where God is already at work and cooperating with HIM, giving your time and your calendar to God and letting HIM decide what are the priorities in the day. *"Seek first the Kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you."* Today –**Are you stressed or are you blessed?**

This work of the Spirit in our life is not a scary thing, nor a weird thing. Every Christian when you say, "I believe in Jesus", receives not only Christ but also the Holy Spirit. There is no justification without sanctification, no saving without spiritual blessing as well; the two always go hand in hand. All of us present today have this spiritual secret to the blessed life within already. It is as if the Holy Spirit is planted as a seed within the believer's heart, waiting to come alive, waiting to be asked to become more active, waiting to be invited to more fully take charge of our lives, and our church, and our community and world. As a Christian, the power for daily living already dwells within us. The secret to our blessedness and stress relief, is a seed waiting for us to call and wait upon the Lord. Whether we will do the things necessary for our community in the name of Jesus or wind up a bunch of crispy critters rests with what we do next.

Just like those first disciples at Pentecost, "ask and we will receive", "seek and we will find", "knock and a spiritual door will be opened unto us." When we spiritually wait upon the Lord, the promise is we'll renew our strength, and we'll mount up with wings like eagles, and we'll be able to run the race God has set before us and not grow weary; we'll be able to walk in the way of life everlasting and do great things for God and not faint. That's God's promise in Pentecost.

Beloved, today...ask yourself the question...**are you stressed...or are you blessed?** And what are you going to do about it?????? Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA  
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*