

God of Mercy, through your Word and through these words, open us to the gracious rest you offer, in this time and in this place. Amen

How are you doing? How is your heart, your soul, your spirit, your mind? Have you consumed all the negative rhetoric and energy you can muster? I know I have. These past three months have provided us with a plethora of news stories that have the potential to unbalance the most stable of people.

We are quickly learning that a deadly pandemic can impact so much more than our physical health. It can bring up issues of abandonment, unworthiness, loneliness, to say nothing of financial instability for ourselves and for our families and friends.

Even decision making has become more complex, more life and death. How wide can we draw our circle of fellowship and still remain safe?

When is it important to wear a mask and do we really still have to?

When can I go to visit my family or have them come to visit me?

Decisions we never dreamed we would have to deal with, now make our lives more stressful than when we were simply told to hunker down and stay at home.

Add to all of this the protests, conversations and plethora of horrific stories highlighting injustices to people of colour and it's no wonder people are feeling stressed and anxious.

I was speaking with a funeral director a few weeks back and he told me that while official Covid-19 deaths have not really impacted his work, he has seen a definite increase in deaths by suicide. We don't hear about these, we don't track these as Covid related deaths, but we probably should.

So I have to ask, how are you doing? How is your heart, your soul, your spirit, your mind? Are you filled with stress, tension, and anxiety? Are you managing it through self-awareness, fresh air and exercise? Or are you even paying attention to it at all?

Yesterday, I attended the Wild Church service in Bertram Creek Park. When we were sent out on the land and invited to simply listen, I stopped and sat under a tree and let my mind go blank, empty, silent. And in that moment, I realized how full of noise our lives are. Our brains are constantly filtering through a bombardment of information - some good, but these days, mostly bad, and it is exhausting.

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."

Let these words wash over you. Take them in. Take them on.

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."...

What precious words of peace and comfort in these tumultuous, uncertain times.

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, ... and you will find rest for your souls. ..."

Imagine, letting go of all the stresses we are facing and simply resting in the arms of God. Allowing ourselves to be yoked to Jesus, to know that we are not carrying this load alone. This is the comfort and affirmation that Jesus offers us today.

When I was a new mom, I suspect now, that I was suffering from post-natal depression, but at the time all I knew was that something wasn't right. That became abundantly clear when I got angry with my spouse one day and threw a shoe at him from across the room!! Fortunately, I've never been known for my pitching skills, so I missed him and the shoe hit the wall instead!

The next day I drove down to the church and knelt at the communion rail asking for whatever this was, to be lifted from me. I asked that my burden be removed so that I might be able to carry on in my normal state of being.

I have to tell you upfront that I don't believe in an interventionist God who reaches down from a lofty throne and plays with our lives like pawns in a chess game. That said, this day, as I knelt in prayer, I remember feeling a literal weight being lifted from my shoulders.

I can't explain it and I'd never dare to try. But it certainly helps to remind me of the importance of stopping, seeking help through prayer, and trusting that help will come, maybe not in any immediate sense, certainly not in any way that we would expect or perhaps even prefer; but somehow, through the grace of God, our burdens will be lifted and we will be yoked with Christ to help us make it through to the next step on the journey.

We are living in unprecedented times. Our stress levels, our fears and our concerns, are all part and parcel of living in the midst of the tumult. So as we move into these months of summer, when the air is warm, the lake is sparkling and the beauty of creation reveals the glory of God, it is my prayer for you, that you will take time to be quiet before God; let the stress and anxiety leave your body, if only for a moment; and rest in this holy invitation:

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, ... and you will find rest for your souls. ..."

May it be so. Amen