

The Surrender Paradox

While it might be fun to be off from school and play video games for a little while instead of doing homework, there is no question to anyone that times are crazy right now. Even while we are almost all separated into our own little quarantine zones, if you ask anyone how they are doing, you'll get the same response, "Just trying to make it through this crazy time." And there's really no other word for it. It's crazy. It seems completely unprecedented and we don't really know how to respond. I've had my own share of crazy lately as well. Aside from the widespread panic over the coronavirus that has brought on the hoarding and shady dealing of toilet paper and hand sanitizer like their the greatest treasure on planet earth (personally I wouldn't mind using my hand... I'M KIDDING! GEEZ) and the attitude of "every man for himself", God dealt me a card I never would've expected. Just last week I was in shock as a doctor walked into the doctor's office and said the words "you probably have cancer". I had no idea how to react. It was confirmed the next day that I did in fact have cancer and just the day after that, I was put into surgery to have the tumor removed, not knowing if that would be the end of it or not. How has everything come to this? Amid all of this, from the sudden world obsession with toilet paper to being diagnosed with cancer, I firmly believe that God has been teaching me one thing: it's all out of my control.

We all desire control. We all desire to be able to take hold of our lives and be able to know and determine the outcomes. We want to know that tomorrow we will be safe to go to school and that we will get into the college we want and get the job that we want and that we will always be healthy, wealthy and wise. And when things like this happen, our lack of control has a tendency to spiral us into panic and fear. But maybe, just maybe, all of this happens for a reason. Maybe God wants to remind us, during this time, who is actually in control. Maybe, all that is happening to our culture and our society, and even in our own lives, is that we are being shown that we never really were in control, no matter how much we longed to hold onto that illusion.

While control seems safe and it seems like it is exactly the place where we would like to be, God wants us to let go of it to let him take over. He wants us to give it over to him and trust and believe that we will be okay when we do. Jesus modeled this for us even to his very last moments on the cross. The gospel of Luke tells us in Luke 23:46 that some of Jesus' very last words were "Father, into your hands, I commit my Spirit." What does that look like to you? To me it looks like the reality that the greatest moment of victory that the world has ever seen was not a moment of holding onto control and power for dear life but was a moment of complete and total surrender to God. This is what Christianity is all about. This is what life with God is all about. This is what faith is all about. It has never once been about controlling God or taking control over our lives so we might feel safe and secure knowing that our lives are held in our hands, knowing that our lives are held in our own health, in our own money, in our own power, in our own ability to wield authority over others. That's exhausting. That leaves no room to give life and love to others in the way that Jesus has called us to. As David Benner writes, "Energy invested in maintaining safety and comfort always depletes energy available for love of others." The Christian faith should never be about preserving our own control and comfort, it should be about a relationship and letting go so that we might have the energy and joy to be able to give love to others, even in the midst of losing our own control.

One of my favorite authors and pastors is a guy named Jon Tyson who is an Australian immigrant that pastors a church in New York City. This is a powerful quote from a book of his titled

“The Burden is Light” in which he says, “Christianity is not primarily a plan of protection against the brokenness of the world but a relationship with Christ in the midst of it.” Wow.

Particularly in this time of confusion and pandemic, we are reminded that our world is broken. Our world is in desperate need of the love of Christ that we are able to offer. Our world is out of our control and there is no plan that we can put into place that is going to defend us from the brokenness of this world. But what we can do in this time is surrender. We can surrender our control over to God to say that even when these things happened that don't make sense to us, God is in control and there is nothing that can take that truth away. Giving up control and surrendering everything over to God, is the great paradox of Christianity. Our security is found in giving up control, not holding onto it. How amazing is that? God controls fear, God controls sickness and health, God controls eternity. Stop trying to take it out of his hands and trust him, for he is good. Practice surrender in this time and see where God takes you! I bet it's wonderful and I bet it's full of love.

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