

SUNDAY, June 9, 2024 “Who Gives Jesus His Power?”

I Samuel 8:4-11, 16-20 2 Corinthians 4:5-13 to 5:1 Mark 3:20-25

A song released as a single in October 1982, by British rock band Queen with Freddie Mercury and singer David Bowie, is entitled "Under Pressure". The lyrics of this iconic song state: *Pressure pushin' down on me Pressin' down on you, no man ask for*

*Under pressure that brings a building down*

*Splits a family in two, puts people on streets*

*It's the terror of knowing what this world is about*

*Watching some good friends screaming, "Let me out"*

*Pray tomorrow gets me higher, higher, higher*

*Pressure on people, people on streets*

*Turned away from it all like a blind man*

*Sat on the fence but it don't work*

*Keep comin' up with love but it's so slashed and torn*

*Why, why, why? Can't we give ourselves one more chance?*

*Why can't we give love that one more chance?*

*Cause love's such an old-fashioned word And love dares you to care for*

*The people on the edge of the night And love dares you to change our way of*

*Caring about ourselves This is our last dance This is our last dance This is ourselves*

*Under pressure Under pressure Pressure*

This song describes the pressure of everyday life with the pressure cooker mentality of our culture while at the same time we are trying to love and have fun. It was a song of the times yet here we are 42 years later and there seems to be more pressures all around us with limitations, homelessness and the time for fun being limited as demands increase. But the song asks the pertinent questions of "Why can't we give ourselves one more chance? And why can't we give love one more chance? Love—which is an old fashioned word and calls us to care for those facing dark times and but challenges us to care about ourselves, because we are all under pressure. Just reflect for a moment are you under pressure? From what or who?

Our reading from I Samuel focuses on Samuel now an older man serving as priest in Israel. His sons were made judges over Israel but did not follow in his ways. The elders of Israel went to Samuel and asked him to appoint a king to govern them. Samuel prayed to God who

said that the people had rejected him from being king over them. Samuel pointed out what having a king would mean for them. But they insisted. And eventually Saul is made king. But what pressure was Samuel under? He was torn to uphold God's laws as a priest, his children were judges but were not faithful to God and took bribes for justice, and the people wanted a king like other nations. Under pressure!

So what does Samuel do? He prays to God and he tells Samuel to tell them what having a king would mean at this time in their history. Samuel warns them of what would happen to the men and women who would work for the king not themselves. At some point they will realize their mistake in having a king and that he God will not answer them. But the people put pressure on Samuel because they said having a king would mean they would be prosperous. So God starts the process of finding a king with Samuel and of course during this time, pressure is mounting upon him to find the right person.

Under pressure? Just how does one do their job when facing these kinds of circumstances? Sometimes people make big mistakes by not thinking steps through in order to complete a task, sometimes there are moments of confusion, wonder, or disorientation; other times there are moments of sadness, crying which may then turn to anger and frustration. How one is to assist another in these moments is simply being present, listening and walking with the other person until informed decisions may be made.

Another approach is the 3-3-3 rule which is a mindfulness technique that is simple enough for all people. This involves naming three things they can see, identifying three sounds they can hear, and moving three different parts of their bodies. This also enables one's breathing to slow down.

And when one is a bit calmer, it is an opportunity to pray when one calms their heart and seeks God's assistance. Because Jesus knows what it is like to be put under pressure, misunderstood and even alone and lost we can pray and speak to Him. When we are put under pressure we may react in different ways, but when you take the time to breathe in and out, the body slows down its initial reactions, to thinking through logically what might happen. And praying enables this to happen. IF one is unsure of what to say, a statement of: *"Loving God, please grant me peace of mind and calm my troubled heart. My soul is like a turbulent sea. I can't seem to find my balance so I stumble and worry constantly. Give me the strength and clarity of mind to find my purpose and walk the path you've laid out for me. Amen."*

In our reading from Mark 3 Jesus and the disciples are facing many pressures as crowds keep coming and they are unable to eat properly. Jesus is physically drained and is accused of going out of his mind. The scribes also say that he has Beelzebub or Satanic demons. But

Jesus under pressure calls to them and speaks to them in parables. He asks very clearly how can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided he cannot stand but sees his end come.

They say nothing in response. So Jesus tells them that no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without tying up the strong man. But then he continues by saying that those who speak against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, because they said he has an unclean spirit. Jesus was under pressure. By whose authority did Jesus speak? He is called names, and are trying to figure him out. Jesus' answer to those putting him under pressure is to remind them of what he has done- and to remember that all he is and values comes from God. Jesus is not looking to be accepted by the crowd and won't change for them. He is bringing something new to all people—the gift of love.

Jesus goes on to teach the crowd more ideas—about the extent of his family; Mary and his brothers are nearby and want to speak to him. But he asks who are my mother and brothers? And then answers his own questions, “All who do the will of God are my brothers and sisters and mothers.” Nothing like being pressured by one's family and now extended family. But Jesus does not stop at this point. He continues to teach.

Under pressure—how do you handle it? Of course it makes a difference as to the circumstances and situations. Whether you are going through a high stressful experience where you have no experience, or whether the outside influences are trying to take hold of you. But no matter what the moment of feeling the pressure, one must breathe, assess the situation, if time assess again and exhale. For this is when one can experience the Spirit's movement in you. Then you may respond- verbally, without confrontation and without anxiety and even anger depending upon the situation.

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians reflects on God's grace. As God's grace extends to more and more people, we may increase our thanksgiving. As we live each day, we are being renewed from within to see and experience God- Father, Son and Spirit. By faith we also know that the pressures we are experiencing in this life are temporary, yes short term in the over all picture of life. Yet we also know that one day there will be no reason to feel pressured for we will enter our eternal life with God. But in the meantime, as we live our Earthly lives, we can find ways to strengthen our faith and renew our inner selves. There are sources for focusing on prayer and methods of finding and growing in our relationship with God, Jesus and the Spirit. But we must

be willing to take time to do so. To understand the pressures of life, so that we can take that old fashioned word- "love" and use it to care for others in need and for ourselves so that we are not under pressure.

But are we willing to sit, focus our minds on God or are we in need of just doing? This is what God calls us to think and reflect about as we discern once again where Jesus gets his power. How did Jesus know what to do and say when under pressure? We must remember that before he met the crowds, before he healed anyone, he spent hours in the presence of God in prayer. We are called to do the same so that we can face the matters of our every day life. The only difference for us is that Jesus showed us how, the Spirit is with us and God will still hear our prayers and hopes. This is what calls us to faith and the knowledge that we need not be under pressure but to just give it all to God!

Let us pray

Holy God as we come to you we feel pressures/ stress and we wonder what this life has in place for us. You showed us that sometimes we need to learn from our mistakes; sometimes what is needed is a reminder of who we are in you and we need to learn for ourselves how to release ourselves from these pressures in order to show and share love. Hear our prayers in this moment as we share our thoughts and reflections with you. SILENCE.. AMEN>