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# God Will Strengthen Your Heart

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March 22, 2020

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John 20:19-31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

When you or a loved one is subjected to violence, tragic events, fatal accidents, disrupted lives, broken promises, when violence occurs against your body or mind. When your heart is broken and you experience profound sadness, there are moments afterward that make life better if not but for a moment.

Moments that change your trajectory from a downward spiral to an upward swing. These moments allow you to cling to hope, justice, and the desire to see change happen. Change for the good, change that allows you to cling to a text such as all things work together for good to them that love the Lord and are called according to his purpose. Better yet, may the peace of God that passes all understanding keep your heart and mind...

That's it. Lord, keep my heart and my mind. From my Henri Noewin writings I found this, the source of all physical, emotional, intellectual, volitional, and moral energies come from the "heart."

From the heart arise unknowable impulses as well as conscious feelings, moods, and wishes. The heart, too, has its reasons and is the center of perception and understanding. Finally, the heart is the seat of

the will: it makes plans and comes to good decisions. Thus the heart is the central and unifying organ of our personal life.

Our heart determines our personality, and is, therefore, not only the place where God dwells but also the place to which Satan directs his fiercest attacks. It is this heart that is the place of prayer. The prayer of the heart is a prayer that directs itself to God from the center of the person and thus affects the whole of our humanness.

Also from the heart comes the decision to give up, lie down, the failure to thrive and thoughts of self harm. When one grows tired and weary they just stop.

As I was working on this moment I get a email notification that Nicole Jones sent me an email. I stopped to read it and it said, "Good morning everyone, I pray all is well with you and your family in these troubling times. We will all get through this together as we continue to pray. I am reaching out to make sure you're okay. Continuing to pray and let me know if you need anything. Peace and blessings, Nicole"

Just as I'm writing about there are moments in life that make life lovingly better at 645 in the morning I get a note that makes my life a little better. Knowing that someone's willing to break in on my melancholic pity party to bring me some joy, and actually brings me joy.

Look at the text in John. When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." They were locked in the house, they had self quarantined from the violence of the other day at Calvary. They were afraid, not knowing what tomorrow would bring and yet in that moment as the sun had set come a moment of profound joy. Jesus breaks in on their melancholic pity party.

1. It's Jesus 2. He was risen from the tomb. It was the one there soul was longing for and the words that he promised, were true. In the most tumultuous time of their life, he speaks the words of Peace be with you. (Oh, what I'd give to watch you all go on and on with the peace.) With those words and his appearance he changes the trajectory of their moment from one of profound grief and fear to authentic joy.

They know that life for them is changed, and without Jesus there is no buffer against the wiles of this demon who would destroy this new Way of the Cross. Jesus was consistent speaking against the norms of the religious world of his time. Fulfilled what the prophet Isaiah had foretold. The Spirit of the Lord

God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; this is what To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; After the-crucifixion the disciples went into hiding from the Sanhedrin they wanted to dissuade anyone who would preach that he rose from the dead.

The disciples also lived in fear because their helper was no longer with them he told them to send another helper but none of this made sense. When you live in the midst of a crisis none of the words of comfort make sense. Sometimes in the middle of the crisis there is nothing that can be done.

We can conclude the crisis must run its course. That's barring some miracle. The disciples were in deep trouble because they were the co-conspirators with Jesus who says he was the Son of man and the Son of God. Remember he says, no one comes to the Father but by me. He said I am the way and the truth and the life.

He said I am the bread that has come down from heaven. Once this became reality, the plot began to be formulated on how they could destroy him. You remember Mark 3:4 Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent.

5 He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. 6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

Here's my declaration for this moment, folks want to hear from you, they want to hear that you believe the word of God concerning the matters of the heart. They want to hear that you believe the word of God concerning peace. They want to hear that you believe you overcome evil with good.

They want to hear that you can have life and that more abundantly. Here is the moment when their hearts were strengthened. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. The psalmist says to wait on the Lord and be of good courage and He shall strengthen thine heart. By finally meeting up with Jesus their hearts are strengthened and their peace is increased. Jesus shows them his wounds, you will see the wounds of many, you will stand in the storms with folk, you will recognize that they have been cast down but not destroyed. It is the resurrection and the appearance that give us the victory.

Ignore the prognosticators who predict the worst, oh the worst will come, there is a time of peaking, but as they say joy flattens the curve. there is joy to come, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord and know that your labor is not in Vain. This period of waiting should be viewed as a time of Waiting on God.

Our example is the disciples as bad as it may have seemed were in flux, limbo and when he shows up, this stuff, all of it works together for good.

This thing called life does, get better. When the worse comes, all of heaven steps up to provide the help you need. Jesus said "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained. First you receive power, power to work through this confusion and difficulty. And then you receive the power to make make a difference in the lives of others. Oh yes, you have the power to hang on or let go. If you forgive, folks are forgiven, if you hang on they are retained.

The expectation is that you will forgive so that you are forgiven. The power is in forgiving, the power is in moving forward, the power is in loving, the power is in seeing the wounds of others, the power is in believing God is able, the power is in seeing the risen savior. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith-- being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire-- may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. And the church said, Amen