

Texts: Exodus 14:1-14; Philippians 4:4-7; 1 Peter 5:6-11

- How many of you have never struggled in your life? Please raise your hand? (I thought so.)
- The truth is that all of us struggle daily with many different things.
- But as Christians, we're different from the rest of the world, for in the midst of our struggles we have someone to depend on, we have someone to talk to, we have someone to go to.
- Can anyone tell me who or what that is? (God, Jesus, our Christian neighbors, church community, pastors etc.)
- Sometimes we tend to forget that, and we struggle all alone like the rest of the world, like there is no-one...
- But we know that's not the case, for as Christians we have a promise of our Lord Jesus Christ, who before he ascended to heaven said to his disciples: *"I will be with you ... ALWAYS, to the very end of the age."*

- And this very same Jesus sent his Holy Spirit upon his Church and continues to fulfill this promise as he carries us through our daily struggles.
- The problem is that sometimes we don't want to be carried; sometimes we don't want to listen...
- And there are different reasons for that...
- And yet God is still here, he is still present and faithful and he wants us to stay connected to him especially when we go through our daily struggles.
- And so in the next "couple" Contemporary Worship we'll journey together faithfully looking for God's Answers to our Daily Struggles.

- Today we're going to tackle with the help of God's Spirit our first topic, or our first struggle which is WORRY.
- **How many of you have never worried in your life?** Please raise your hand and look around you?
- Wow, I know this must be shocking for you but you are not alone. And that's the beginning. In that alone I believe we can find comfort, knowing that everyone struggles with worry.
- **Why should that comfort us?**
- Well if we know that others go through same or similar worries we do, we might be able to talk to them, ask for an advice, or even pray for or with them. Possibilities are endless, important thing is that we'll take action.
- Today we're going to look at some of the texts that deal with worry and we'll search for God's answer to our worries through them.

- The first story is about the Exodus of Hebrews from Egypt.
- We know they were enslaved by the Egyptians and they cried for help to God, (this is very important)!

- And God heard them; he saw their struggle and noticed their worries. And so he sent Moses.
- Moses wasn't the bravest man but he was a man of faith and he listened to what God had to say. And most of the time he followed God's lead.
- And it was through him that God delivered the Israelites. After ten plagues and a Passover meal the Israelites were set finally free.
- There was nothing to worry about -- they were free, God provided for them materially (they got all the gold from the Egyptians), they had the greatest leader of all Moses himself and they were going out **BOLDLY**. (we read that in verse 8)

- We're the Israelites in this story. We have been set free, by the Passover Lamb, when our Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins. We have been marked by his love and the sign of his cross forever. We have been blessed materially beyond our expectations, (we do live in the richest country in the world), and there have been many days in our lives where we **stepped out BOLDLY** to whatever was ahead of us. (Is this right?)
- But I'm not going to tell you any news when I'll say, that the sun doesn't shine on us every day. That sometimes there are clouds and rain drops and even big storms.
- The Israelites found that one out very quickly when the Pharaoh's army started to catch up with them.

- Again the Bible is brilliant in this way. We read in the 10th verse of the 14th Chapter that the Israelites **looked back... "They looked back."**
- Now why would they look back? They have been given a new life, a new beginning and a great leader, and yet they looked back. (pause)
- Sometimes looking back (whatever that back is) takes our focus away from the one who walks ahead of us, our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Sometimes looking back takes us to our old self, maybe to our days of slavery, maybe to days when we were hurting, when we didn't have clear goal and direction.
- And when we look back and this is what we see, we start to worry. We start questioning our faith: *"Are we doing the right thing? Are we going the direction? Or were we better off in the old place."* (pause)

- Let us not look back (my friends) for God has a great future for us, and as we put our trust in him we hear his words spoken to us: *"Do not be afraid, do not worry but stand firm and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today; It is going to be the Lord who will fight for you, and you have only to keep still."*
- I say Amen to these words!
- In fact why don't we do something right now. Our God tells us to stand firm, he says do not be afraid but stand firm for I will fight for you and I will deliver you.
- Let us all stand and close our eyes, I just want us to take a moment and stand firm in the presence of our God in his promise of deliverance.
- Think about things that you worry about and now give it to God. For through Christ he gives us his deliverance and he will accomplish it for us today. **(you may be seated)**

- Let's move to our second readings where the Apostle Peter calls us to **humble ourselves** before God and to **cast all our anxiety on him**, because he cares for us.
- I know that many of you are hurting, and suffering, and when we're undergoing anything difficult we do worry.
- But Peter says: *"Be steadfast in your faith and know that your brothers and sisters throughout the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering."*
- Again God tells us: *"You are not alone in your suffering, there are people going through the same worries and there are people who were able with the help of God to overcome them."*
- And Peter continues: *"After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen"*
- God himself through Christ Jesus will restore, support, strengthen and establish you.

- Now this promise gives us a reason to rejoice!
- And the Apostle Paul writes to the Church in Philippi and says: *"Rejoice, and do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."* (pause)
- We know that worry will be a part of our lives as long as we live. It is in our human nature. We know that suffering and hardships will be a part of our lives as long as we'll live. But at the same time we know the promise we were given, the promise we read in 1 Peter.
- We know that one day we will be restored in Christ Jesus.
- Until that day comes, we know what we're supposed to do: *"To humble ourselves before God, rejoice in his promise of new life and in everything by prayer with thanksgiving let our requests be made known to God."*

- This is what God calls us to do today. I'd like you to write on a small piece of paper your worry, or your request, whatever it is that is on your heart, and then please stand up and walk to the altar, it is time to give it to God.
- It is time to give your worry to God. It is time to let him support and strengthen you. It is time for his peace which surpasses all understanding to guard your heart and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- Amen