

Under Pressure

I. Announce:

- A. No Children at Risk Mtg today...but Kel has asked for the planning committee if you can jot down your **thoughts & evaluations** that would be very helpful.
- B. JM2 - TY to all helpers. Great Conf. Collaboration. Networking. *“Everyone, Everywhere, can do something.”*
- C. Starting the Book of Esther *Intro* on Wed night!
 1. It shows Gods **Sovereignty & His care** for His people.
 2. The book of Esther testifies clearly to the **“invisible hand of Providence!”**
 3. Also, come hear how the nursery rhyme **“twinkle, twinkle little star”** - the Movie **“300”** - & the movie **“A star is born”** all tie into Esther!

II. Intro:

- A. Last week we talked about not being able to put new wine into old wine skins.
 1. Well, the **new wine** Jesus sought to bring them **did just that**.
 2. We witness this morn the **1st rips** in their **old, stale, brittle, wine skins** of their religion
- B. Strap on your *1st century sandals* we're going to take a walk with Jesus this morning to **4 different locations**:
 1. **We are heading for the synagogue...but** on the way there we must pass through a **Field of Grain**.
 2. **Next**, we'll make it to the **Synagogue** for **Shabbat morning service**.
 3. **After this** we'll take a walk down to **the Lake**.
 4. **Then later** retire up to **the Mountains** for some much needed **R&R!**
- C. **Outline**: [1] **Jesus' Common Sense** [2] **Jesus' Courage** [3] **Jesus' Compassion** [4] **Jesus' Call**.
- D. **Did you know** that odds against bowling a **perfect 300** in the game are about **225,000 to one!**
 1. One bowler appropriately **collapsed** when he qualified to join that brotherhood of 300.
 2. **Yet** another bowler just couldn't bring himself to **play the final ball** of an otherwise perfect game. **Instead** he silently packed his shoes and ball and walked out - and never again set foot inside a bowling alley!
 - a) **How do you handle pressure?**
- E. Here is an instruction on how to react to **hungry pythons**, as given to **Peace Corpsmen** serving in Brazil - **“Remember not to run away, the python can run faster. The thing to do is to lie flat**

on the ground on your back with your feet together, arms at your side, head well down. The python will then try to push its head under you, experimenting at every possible point. Keep calm (that was underscored). “You must let him swallow your foot. It is quite painless and it will take a long time. If you lose your head and struggle, he will quickly whip his coils around you. If you keep calm and still, he will go on swallowing. Wait patiently until he has swallowed up to about your knee. **Then** carefully take out your **knife** and insert it into the distended side of his mouth and with a **quick rip slit him up.**” [I don’t know I could handle that pressure] :)

- F. The pressure in Jesus’ life came from **2 main sources**...The Religious establishment **and** His popularity w/people! [see **crush(9) & pressed(10)** to fall upon]
1. **Are you** experiencing **crushing pressure** in your life **today?** **How do you** deal w/ pressure? **How should you?** **How did Jesus** deal with His?
- G. Jesus fully understands 21st century mankind **&** all our **built up pressures!**
1. Paul said, **We are hard pressed** on every side, **but not crushed** (2 Cor.4:8a) - it carries the idea of “**pressure**”.
 2. **Pressed but not squished!** - They were under pressure like grapes being squeezed by a winepress.
 3. Let’s watch how **Jesus** handles Himself in the **pressure cooker** situations, **&** what specific steps He takes when the pressure rises!

III. JESUS’ COMMON SENSE! (2:23-28)

- A. The issue **wasn’t** eating **someone’s else’s grain**. - Deut.23:25 **When you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain.** – The issue was **what day** they did it!
1. **All work** was forbidden on this day.
 2. **“Work”** was classified under **39** different headings.
 - a) **Four** of these headings were “Reaping, Threshing, Winnowing, & Preparing a meal.” [explain: pluck, rub, blow, eat]
 - (1) They technically broke **all 4** of these!
- B. This story is taken from **1 Sam.21:1-6**. **And, Ex.25:23-30** gives the details of this bread.
1. 12 loaves were placed on this golden table in front of the Holy of Holies.
 - a) Table= 3’(L) x 1 ½’ (w) x 1 ½’ (h)
 2. This was a type of **offering to the Lord**, **then** as it was replaced weekly, **only** the **priests** were allowed to eat it.
- C. **The point?** - **Persons** are far more important than **rituals**. The best way to use **sacred things** is to use them to **help men!**
1. Read “**The 4th Wise Man**” legend. (from Barclay)

2. Again, The best way to use **sacred things** is to use them to **help men!**

D. Note the **pressure** Jesus was facing having...the **religious leaders** *birddogging* his every move.

IV. JESUS' COURAGE! (3:1-6)

A. Other writings let us know he was not born with this, but some illness had taken the strength from him.

1. We have a few fragments from "*The Gospel according to Hebrews*" (an Apocryphal N.T. book) [which were never deemed cannon, but were quoted from the early church fathers] *It said that this man was a stone mason & that he sought Jesus to heal him, for his livelihood was in his hands & he was ashamed to beg.*

B. The law of the day was that you **couldn't** give medical attention **on the Sabbath** unless their life was in danger! [He obviously wasn't]

C. He asks him to **step forward**, or *arise into the midst* (3).

1. Maybe to try to awaken, one last time, **sympathy** for this man.

2. And probably to make sure **everyone could see** what was about to take place!

D. Their rigidity to **keep the law** actually led them to **abuse it far worse** then they even think Jesus did! (Their rigidity led to **hate & murder!**)

1. Jesus was able to **look behind the law** to see how they were **intended** for our benefit

2. Their religion was **loving ritual**; Jesus religion was **loving God & loving man**.

3. Jesus was **people-centered**; the Pharisees were **law-centered!**

4. The Pharisees made a **huge mistake** that many still make today, this idea that you actually can **domesticate real faith** into **humanly attainable standards**. (a 1000 x's NO!)

E. Again note the **pressure** Jesus was facing having...*"the religious leaders plotting to kill Him."*

1. Let's see how **the common people** are responding to Him?

V. JESUS' COMPASSION! (3:7-12)

A. (7) Jesus never withdrew out of **fear!** - Nor ran from His **problems!** - Nor was he afraid to **face the music!**

1. Simply...His time was **not yet come!!!** [There was still much He had to **say & do!**]

B. (9) **There is a job for everyone**, even if only holding a little boat for Him!

1. Oh the pleasure of simply being the **door keeper** in the house of the Lord; or **loosing Jesus' sandals**; or here just **holding His little get-away boat?**

C. Again note the **pressure** Jesus was facing having to have...*"the motor running & the doors open, for a quick get away!"*

VI. JESUS' CALL! (3:13-19)

- A. **Well**, let's now look at “**3 pressure release valves**” Jesus pulls to release the steam from the **pressure cooker** of life!
- Again be asking yourself...**How do I deal with pressure? - How should I? - How did Jesus deal with His?**
- B. **3 ways to pounce Pressure: Get Alone; Get Praying; Get Help.**
- C. **Get Alone** (13)
- D. He got away by **Himself!** (Does it say that?)
- Lk.6:12 **Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself.**
- E. Interesting, the **Son of Man** came to *save man*, **but** at times needed to *get away from man!* :)
- F. **Yep**, **step one is to get off the treadmill of life & sit!**
- These times are essential to our **whole-being** & our **well-being**.
 - As Vance Havner you to say, “If we don't follow Christ's example to **come apart**, we may indeed, just **come apart!**”
 - Allow Him to become **irresistible** again to you!
 - Allow **silence** into your **cluttered-loud-world!** – Go park in the park; sit in a church sanctuary; find a hiking path up on the Plateau; get up early before the family; stay awake when everyone else is a sleep. **Find/make your silence.**
 - Every day** we need at least a **few minutes**, **as well as extended times** on a regular basis. [**So, Get Alone!**]
- G. **Get Praying** (Lk.6:12)
- H. **Prayer drives us to Himself!** – Prayer doesn't pull God toward my will, but helps me to align w/ His will!
- I. **Sir George Adam Smith** tells how he and **his guide** were climbing the **Weisshorn** in the **Swiss Alps**. It was stormy and they were making their climb on the sheltered side of the peak. When they reached the summit, they were filled with the exhilaration. Sir George forgot about the fierce winds, leaped up and was nearly blown over the edge to the glacier below! The guide grabbed hold of him and exclaimed: “**On your knees, sir! You are safe here only on your knees!**”
- J. [**So, Get Alone & Get Praying**]
- K. **Get Help** (14-19)
- L. Jesus wasn't afraid to **share His responsibilities!**
- Like** Moses father-in-law Jethro's advice given in **Exodus 18.**

2. Like Paul's to Timothy, And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

3. We also need other men & women to share the load.

M. [So, Get Alone & Get Praying & Get Help]

N. **2 questions are answered here:** *How Jesus would make His message permanent? & How He would make His message duplicatable?*

1. He chose men whose heart He could write His message on, & who would go out from his presence to carry it abroad!

O. By *worldly standards*...these men had **no** qualifications at all!

1. Not wealth, no special positions, no special education, not trained theologians, not high ranking churchmen, they were **12 ordinary men!**

2. 12 ordinary men that were **appointed**, actually He *made them* (lit.)

3. What they had going for them was: [1] they were **attracted to Jesus** & [2] they had **courage to show they were on His side!**

4. These guys had all sorts of faults...**but** they **loved Jesus** & they **weren't afraid to tell the world about Him**...**That sounds like the definition of a Christian!!!**

P. **We are called to 2 purposes:** [1] **to be with Him** & [2] **to be sent out by Him.**

1. **To be w/Him** – Have you found Him as the **Irresistible** Savior?

2. **To be sent out by Him** - You have to be **won** in order to **win** others!

Q. **We are equipped for 2 purposes:** [1] **to Preach** & [2] **to have Power!**

1. **Preach** – Jesus gave them something to say!

2. **Power** – because they kept company with Him, his power was in their lives!

R. **Illustration:** *There are 2 ways of handling pressure:*

One is illustrated by a **bathysphere**, the miniature submarine used to explore the ocean in places so deep that the water pressure would *crush* a conventional submarine like an aluminum can. Bathyspheres compensate with **plate steel several inches thick**, which keeps the water out but also makes them heavy and hard to maneuver. Inside they're cramped. When these craft descend to the ocean floor, however, they find they're not alone. When their lights are turned on and you look through the tiny, thick plate glass windows, what do you see? *Fish!*

These fish cope with extreme pressure in an entirely different way. They don't build thick skins: they remain supple and free. They **compensate** for the outside pressure through **equal and opposite pressure** inside themselves. **Christians**, likewise, don't have to be hard and thick

skinned - as long as they appropriate *God's power within* to equal the pressure *without*.¹

- S. Pressed out of measure and pressed to all length,
 Pressed so intently, it seems beyond strength,
 Pressed in the body, and pressed in the soul,
 Pressed in the mind till the dark surges roll,
 Pressure by foes, and a pressure by friends,
 Pressure on pressure till life nearly ends.
 Pressed into knowing no helper but God,
 Pressed into loving the staff and the rod,
 Pressed into liberty where nothing clings,
 Pressed into faith for impossible things,
 Pressed into living a life in the Lord,
 Pressed into living a Christ-life outpoured.

The Disciplines of Life, by V. Raymond Edman, (Minneapolis: World Wide Publ., 1948), p. 16.

4 pictures:

T. **Picture a Tea Bag**

- U. "People are like **teabags**; you never know how strong they are until they're put in hot water."
 1. When you place a **tea bag** in hot water, **it** doesn't change. **But** the hot water reveals what was **already in** the tea bag.

V. **Picture a Rose Petal**

1. We think of the scent given off when a **Rose Petal** is stepped on & crushed.

W. **Picture a lump of Coal**

1. We think of **Coal** being under tremendous **pressure** being formed into **Diamond**.
 And this is done in a very dark place.
 a) Most natural diamonds are formed at **high temperature** and **pressure** at depths of **87-120 miles** in the earth mantle.
 2. Every **pressure** that comes your way in your home life, in college, in your employment, will make you either **bitter or better!** [**The struggle is just part of the journey!**]

X. **Picture a water-saturated sponge.**

1. If we push down with our finger even slightly, water runs out onto the table. We immediately know what fills the interior pockets of the sponge.

¹ Jay Kesler in Campus Life. Leadership, Vol. 5, no. 2.