

October 3, 2021

Texts: Job 1:1, 2:1-10; Philippians 4:12-20

Title: "Holding On"

High above a small village in the French Alps towers a famous mountain named Mont Blanc. Mont Blanc has forever been a major challenge to mountain climbers. Nearby is an even more difficult and dangerous crag, called in English, "Fool's Needle." It stands 11,487 ft. high. Only the most experienced climbers would even attempt it.

Sometime back a young student was trapped for three days on the north face of Fool's Needle. He was dangling from a narrow ledge when rescue workers found him. His hands were frozen, and later, from a hospital bed, he told about the harrowing ordeal. "I repeated over and over to myself," he said, "I must hold on, I must hold on at any price." There are times in our life's journey when many of us will whisper those desperate words, "I must hold on. I must hold on."

One such man from the Old Testament certainly knew what it was to hold on. His name was Job. No one in this room has suffered quite like Job, but a few of us may have come close. It may be a problem with our health or with someone we love, or a problem in our workplace. If that describes your life, only you know. Whatever that problem may be, it can feel like there's a battle going on, and you're not sure that you can endure.

What's the secret to holding on—when you're down to your last shred of hope, when there's no longer enough rope to make a knot to hold on to? Where do you find help at such times? I have some simple steps that I am convinced will help.

One of them is **learn to live one day at a time**. Jesus was giving us one of the great lessons of life when he said, "...don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

James Gilkey had a great way to describe how we view the challenges and problems that worry us. He said that most of us view our lives as if we are standing in the middle of a circle, and problems, challenges, fears, burdens are surrounding us and pushing in on us. Can anybody relate to that description?

He said that it's more accurate to picture our life as an hourglass. There is a large bowl at the top and a large bowl at the bottom. They are connected by a thin tube that only allows one grain of sand to flow through at a time.

No matter how busy, how burdened, how hectic our lives seem, we need to focus only on the challenge that is present in that moment. Not on the previous challenge nor the next one either. One challenge at a time, one task at a time, one job at a time. Focus on mastering this present moment, and you'll find yourself better equipped to face the stresses of the day.

On one level, Job's problems were much more severe than any that you or I are likely to face. On the other hand, we complicate our lives by adding dread about tomorrow to today's concerns. Let go of tomorrow and enjoy living this one moment.

Secondly, **remember that you are loved**. The feeling of being loved is the most critical factor in our ability to function in life. When we don't feel loved, we find it much harder to cope with the stress.

In October 2019 Staff Sgt. Philip Gray was deployed to Afghanistan. Staff Sgt. Gray knew he would be gone from home for close to a year, and he was concerned for his 7-year-old daughter, Rosie. His absence would be hard on her.

So before he left, he sat down and wrote 270 notes for his daughter, with instructions for his wife to put in her lunchbox each day. The notes were simple words of encouragement—telling her that she was Supergirl, telling her that she was smart, telling her to run fast in P.E. class. But to little Rosie, every single note added up to one big message: no matter how far away her father seemed to be, his heart was there with her. He wanted to be sure she knew he loved her. Staff Sgt. Philip Gray returned home in August 2020—just three days before Rosie’s eighth birthday, so he could tell her he loved her in person.

The greatest need that we have is to love and to be loved. In the absence of that love, we become stunted emotionally and psychologically. Many of us have an innate sense of dread about life. There is One who loves us so much that He gave His own Son in our behalf. Live one day at a time. Recognize that you are loved and **learn how to let go.**

It’s a paradox. *The best way to hold on is to let go* as has been said. Many who are working the 12 steps live by the phrase, “Let go and let God.” We need to know how to release our worries, our fears, our guilt, our anger, our resentment. There are times when we need to simply let go. Sometimes we say to God, “Why me?” Job didn’t really find an answer to that question except to keep holding on to his faith in God and in the end he would see that, indeed, his Redeemer lives.

If you read through the Bible, or through the pages of human history, you discover that God works through strengths and weaknesses, through wins and losses, through victories and heartbreaks. If we could control the future, we would eliminate all frustrations and heartbreaks. But then we'd also miss out on opportunities for growth, for faith, for compassion, for overcoming. We would miss out on the grace of God! It's in holding on, enduring, not giving up on God, that we see His power and His love most clearly. And we learn that we can trust Him no matter what even when we cannot see Him.

Job didn't have the advantage that you and I have. He didn't have the life or the teachings of Jesus to look to which give you and I power for living. And yet Job knew and trusted God. Live one day at a time. Remember that there's someone who loves you and upon whom you can cast your burden. And let go and let God. Amen.