



June 2024

Theme: Courage to Let Go

Scripture Passage: Isaiah 43:19

When my daughter was little she loved to go to the playground and climb as high as she could on a giant, pyramid-shaped climber. In her exuberance, she would go higher and higher, but then, all of a sudden, she would realize how high she was. Frozen with fear, she would shout, "Mom! Help!" In reality, she wasn't very high up and often, I could help her by holding her legs, but the problem was, she wouldn't let go with her hands. There I was, holding her by the legs, shouting, "Let go! I've got you!"

Letting go. It's a concept we struggle with long after our playground days. Letting go requires a willingness to trust, an openness to new possibilities, and the ability to be vulnerable.

When faced with difficult or challenging situations, sometimes people offer this platitude: "Let go and let God." This overly simplistic notion implies we have little agency when it comes to difficult times or stressful decisions. However, we are not called to be passive, and let the events of life steam-roll over us. God calls us to be co-creators and active participants in life. God's grace gives us the ability to pursue holiness and seek justice. We are not passive participants, but actively called to build God's beloved community, starting with the disposition of our own hearts and lives. God's grace, made available to us through Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is not a transaction of "say the right prayer, pass go." It's a relationship, where God is present and active in us and through us. As people of faith, letting go is active, not passive. It's a part of our faith journey as we live into being sanctified. Sanctification is a just fancy way of saying that God's grace works in us, transforming us into the likeness of Jesus Christ. And, in that process, there are a few things we can let go of:

We can let go of the shortcomings and sins of our past. Sin is not a popular concept. One definition of sin is anything that separates us from God or from one another; anything that keeps us from being the people God has created and called us to be. 1 John 1:9 says that "if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We confess, God forgives. What a gift! Sometimes however, we fail to forgive ourselves, and we carry around the weight of what we have done, or what we have not done. It hampers our ability to see ourselves as God sees us. If, we have confessed, if we have made amends to those we have harmed, we need to let it go. Psalm 103:12 says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us." (NRSVUE) Sadly, there are persons who don't feel worthy to be part of the Body of Christ because they continue to carry something that God has already forgiven. Confess, receive God's forgiveness. Make amends. Let it go.

We can let go of hurts, slights, and harm that have been done to us. We can offer forgiveness. True forgiveness is not an easy task. Forgiveness is a process that takes time. It involves working through and letting go of the pain, so that we can move forward with peace and resilience. Ephesians 4:31-32 says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you." Forgiveness is a deliberate act of letting go.

We can let go of the anxiety that plagues us. The pandemic and aftermath, as well as current national and world events have turned us into highly anxious people. The pandemic showed us how little control we really have. Younger generations in particular report high levels of anxiety, stress, sadness, and loneliness. Philippians 4:6 says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." I am not suggesting that dealing with anxiety is as simple as praying a prayer. Anxiety is a serious health issue. I am suggesting that a regular, centering, prayer life, paying attention to gratitude, reframing our situation, and authentically participating in a community of faith are healthy, life-giving ways we can deal with the anxieties we face. Being part of a church helps us understand we are not alone, and it gives us opportunities to be mutually supportive.

We can let go of the way things used to be. Congregations have said to me, "We just want to go back to the way things used to be." Many times, we put our time and energy into looking backward, trying to recapture what was, rather than looking forward to the new thing God is calling us to be. Someone once said, there's a reason why the rearview mirror is so small, and the windshield is so large. Letting go of the way things used to be, means celebrating what was but making room for something new. In *Fragments of Your Ancient Name*, Joyce Rupp writes, "Wherever you make your dwelling, necessary change is ready to follow." God dwells with us and is always calling us forward. The prophet Isaiah put it this way: "Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43:19)

God calls us to move forward in faith. We can be assured, when we're holding on to what is holding us back, God is saying, "Let go! I've got you!"

Prayer for the Month

Creating God, Help us to remember that you hold us in the palm of your hand. Help us to remember that you are closer to us than our next breath. Help us to know that you are always calling us to let go of all that hinders and harms us. Open our hearts to your prompting, your presence, your grace and mercy. May we trust that you are there to catch us when we let go. May we trust that you are the source of guidance and wisdom. Help us to put our trust in you, to let go of all that is keeping us from being the persons you have created and called us to be. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Prayer Queues or Breath Prayers for the Month

- **June 2** - Help me let go of my shortcomings and see myself through God's eyes.
- **June 9** - Help me cultivate a forgiving spirit. Help me forgive those who have harmed me. Help me seek forgiveness from those whom I have harmed.
- **June 16** - Help me find ways to let go of anxiety and be filled instead with peace and joy.
- **June 23** - Help me celebrate and let go of what was and be open to what's next.
- **June 30** - Help me look at what I'm holding onto and have the courage to let go of all that is not life-giving.

