

# PLUM Pastoral Message

## April 2023

### Choose today what's best for you – is it more Control or Surrender to Christ?

For the last few weeks, and all of Lent this year, we are fasting and praying and walking with Jesus to the cross. Most of us are denying ourselves of things or activities that are important to us and are taking other activities and things that will change our lives for work and service to the kingdom. What are you “denying” yourself of this Lent? What are you putting off as your Lenten sacrifice? What are you taking up or what are you adding to your physical or spiritual lives for this season? Have you considered putting away “control” yet? Have you considered a total surrender of “your control of things”, “worries about life”, and ALL your cares to the CREATOR OF ALL THINGS? Will you share your burden and control with Jesus? Hear this invitation from Jesus:

***“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:29-30 (NIV)***

If you're living life of overloaded schedules, burn-out, stress and feeling burdened by activities, events and responsibilities, here's one reason why: You may be trying to control. We sometimes believe and think it all depends on you. We believe things like, “If it's to be, it's up to me. I've got to be there so that things won't go wrong. I've got to hold it all together. I know and understand what's best for this institution. I've got to make it all work.”

Brothers and sisters, you are not the general managers of the universe. The greater your need to control, the more stressed and burned-out you're going to be in life. Get rid of your stress by giving up your control.

Jesus wants us to share our “control of life” with him. Christ has a different plan for you: *“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”* (Matthew 11:29-30 NIV).

You say, “Wait a minute. Take something else on? That sounds like a burden. I don't need to take on more. I'm already carrying way too much!”

Let's take another look at what Jesus is saying in Matthew 11 when he tells you to take his yoke on yourself. If you didn't grow up on a farm, you may never have seen a yoke. A yoke is a single piece of wood that brings two farm animals

together, so they can share the burden of a load. A yoke is not a harness. When you put a harness on one animal, it has to pull the whole load. But with a yoke, you team up two or more animals, so the load is shared; it's lightened. A yoke makes life easier on the animal, not harder.

When Jesus tells you to take his yoke upon yourself, it's like he's saying, "I never meant for you to carry all your problems by yourself. Let me help you! Team up with me, partner with me, and I will help you carry the load."

If you feel stressed right now, it means you are not fully yoked to Jesus Christ. Stress is a warning sign. It tells you that you're trying to control things and carry too much on your own unnecessarily.

Every time you get disconnected from Jesus, the stress goes up in your life. You may be a follower of Jesus Christ, but if you're overloaded at this moment, you are not yoked up to him.

But every time you get reconnected and yoked up, Jesus helps you pull the load. And your stress goes down.

It's tempting to think that the antidote to stress is escape. But the problem is that stress is in your mind—so you take it with you wherever you go. You can be just as stressed lying on a white sandy beach as you are right in the middle of your problems at home.

Now, what if we give up some control, to accept the yoke of Jesus? When we do this, God will give us peace that surpasses all human understandings.

- What areas of your life have you been trying to control that are causing stress for you?
- In practical terms, what does it look like to give up control to Christ? Is it possible? Can you do it?

How can you reconnect with Jesus this Lent and in the upcoming Easter season so that he can help carry your loads of control, worries, burdens and cares?

Please consider yoking with Jesus today. I promise you that your life will never be the same again if you do. You will experience God's peace and comfort in your walk with Christ. You will find good health and calmness of life when you fully yoke with the Lord. Please try and see!

Pastor Alexander Y. Sumo on behalf of PLUM Pastoral Team.