

MOTHER'S DAY—May 11, 2008

CRUSH! Matthew 11:28-30

1. What you've heard this morning is three women sharing **very** transparently from their lives about **stuff**. Mistakes. Feelings about God—His closeness, and sometimes His distance. About their struggle with the weight of expectations in a world that expects a **lot!**

-Most of the people in North America—especially women, I believe—feel the **weight** of life. The **weight** of expectations and responsibilities. In a world that's obsessed with **weight loss**—most of the attention seems to be on body weight—not the load the really crushes us—and sometimes kills us.

-I suppose these expectations come from lots of places—the media, our family, friends—ourselves. It doesn't matter where they come from—just what we do with them. Unless we have a way of sorting them out—rejecting some and keeping others—they just keep stacking up. And sometimes our relationship with Jesus just becomes one more expectation we feel guilty about.

-As I've watched our culture and it's effect on me—and maybe on you—I see three categories of expectations. See if you agree.

- a. The first is—**produce!** How well—and how much you can produce is a **big** deal in our world. Because of our obsession with this in North America—we are cranking out human **doings** by the shipload. Do more! Do it in less time—with less money!
- b. The second category of expectations is—**prove yourself!** “Go ahead. Impress me with who you are--how smart you are, how good you are, how *with it* you are, how green you are, how cool you are, how talented you are, how gutsy you are...”
-How do you prove yourself? Where's the bar? Well, it's usually other people—comparing yourself with them.
- c. The third category of expectations we have for ourselves is—**be perfect**. I think this is particularly harsh for women, to be honest. Look beautiful, smell nice, stay fit, hold it together, get it **all** done, work fulltime, eat—and make—nutritious meals—and impress your friends.

2. Here's the question—at least as I see it: What does **Jesus** expect--really? I mean, does He just load more on top of what we already have? Does He make us into super-beings so we can actually manage the load better than others without getting crushed by it? Does He send angels to carry the load for us while we skip and dance?

-Jesus **did** have some very specific words for people stuck under the weight of an unbearable burden—and I'd like to pass them on to you. Would you like to hear them?

Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30 NLT)

- a. Jesus was speaking to people who lived daily under the crush of life—in some cases, a grueling life. No space, no money, and no privileges—all lived under the cruel oppression of a foreign government. On top of that was a religious system that even the religious professionals couldn't live up to.

-Now, their culture was different—but they felt the crush, too. And Jesus' words were, very simply, **Come!** If you're loaded down, tired, lost hope that you can go the distance—feeling crushed under the burden of life—I offer you...**rest.**

-How many of you could do with a little **rest?** How many of you **know** someone who thinks they're super-woman or super-man—but **you** know **they** could use some rest? How many of you have **way** too little to do—and you'd like to take on someone else's burden, too?

- b. Jesus asks, "**Are you burdened?**" So, are you? You've got financial pressures that have you biting your nails. You've got relational stuff that's keeping your stomach filled with acid. You're trying to make life work for your kids—and it's not working. You find yourself saying things like, "**I've only got one nerve left—and now you're getting on it!**"

-If so, Jesus invites you. Me. Right now. He says, "**All** who are weary and carry heavy burdens." Who would that leave out? No one. Come—I will give you rest. Peace. It's like Jesus takes it on as His responsibility, like a **Good Shepherd** to give us the rest our souls and our bodies crave. Rest. Freedom from fear, anxiety—we don't have to stagger under the load one more minute.

3. Here's the question. I think there are a lot of people who go to Jesus with their burdens—fried; exhausted. Near the breaking point. In desperation, they wail out to God, "Would you please just **HELP** me?!" And there's a sense of calm, sometimes. A sense that God really does care—and He eases the anxiety and stress.

-But if we were to be honest, we sometimes find ourselves in exactly the same place a month later. Or a week later. Or an **hour** later! Why? Why just a temporary gift? I mean, didn't Jesus promise to give us rest? That we could just dump our burdens on Him and go free? Not have to carry the load anymore? Well, if you look at it closely—that's not what He says.

- a. See, you have to read the next few verses. He says, "**Take my yoke upon you. Let Me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls.**" (Matthew 11:29 NLT)

-In Jesus' day, **taking a yoke** was technical language for following a Rabbi. When you followed a Rabbi, you were like a little copycat. You followed every move. The goal was to learn how to do life from that teacher. Jesus says, **Let ME teach you!**

- b. I have a question. **Where did you learn to do life?** You know how they ask you at the airport, "Did you pack this suitcase yourself?" Who loaded your

pack? Who told you that you have to do all the stuff you're doing? If you could unpack the burden you carry, where did you get all the stuff that's driving you?

-For example--if you're a Mom, and this is Mother's Day—there seems to be a whole *list* of expectations. About your home. Around food. Around your kids—and how many activities they're in—who gets them there—who gets them home.

-Who told you how to act, how to feel, how to please God, what to do, how to do life, how you need to look, where you need to live, what you need to drive, where you need to work—and how much work you need to do?

- c. What would you *learn* from Jesus by hanging with Him? Sitting at His feet before you get up and **DO**? Let me give you a sampler plate.

*Any of you women worry? Mel Gibson in *What Women Want* said, "Women worry about **everything!** Well, Jesus said, "Don't worry about tomorrow. Stay focused on **one** day. Do **that** day!" He wasn't telling us to **not** plan ahead or buy groceries for a week. I think He was trying to tell us that worry is totally unproductive—and drains your energy tank.

*Something else. He said, "A person's life isn't measured by how much money and stuff they accumulate." If you focus on accumulation—it's a dead end street. You'll **never** have enough to end your worry or impress your neighbors!

*He told us to unload emotional and spiritual baggage. When you follow Him—and learn from Him--He teaches us how to forgive and be forgiven so we don't have to drag garbage bags full of grudges after us. He teaches us to love and be kind and generous—so we leave a trail of blessed people behind us. He teaches us how to be honest so we don't have to worry about who we told the last lie to.

*Maybe best of all—He teaches us how the Father loves us with unflinching, unflinching love. Love we can't escape from. Love that is constant in failure. Healing love. Cleansing love.

-And that's exactly what Jesus says: **Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.** Some teachers in life aren't what you would call humble. Some are arrogant and demanding. You need to know that **Jesus isn't like that.** And some aren't gentle. They're like Simon Cowell—or Judge Judy. Your heart and your dreams might get stomped on. Not Jesus. He's **safe** to be with, learn from and walk with.

- d. You know what you need to do with the crushing load you're carrying? Repent. Let me explain. The word **repent** literally means to change your mind about what you're doing and how you're living. When you **repent** of a heavy burden that's crushing you—you re-examine the pack on your back. Your mind is **renewed** about what you'll carry and what you won't carry, what matters and what doesn't. And when your mind is renewed, your life will be transformed.

4. One more thing. Jesus won't saddle you down and load you up like a pack animal. He won't give you a life that is 3 sizes too small and tell you to suck it up and tuck it in. His words:

**For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light.
(Matthew 11:30 NLT)**

-To make it as simple as possible—Jesus' teaching fits perfectly. You and I were made—**not** to be jammed into some system, some way of life created by our culture—but to follow Jesus. To find rest in Him. Not only does it fit life as it was meant to be lived—it's the life He gives us power to live. His power **in** us creates incredible inner strength—even when we feel weak.

-You could look at it like this. How hard would it be to shatter—crush this clay pot? Not hard, right? What if was filled with cement? You couldn't crush it. Paul, in talking about the tough experiences of life says:

We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves. We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. (2 Corinthians 4:7-9 NLT)

5. Sometimes the biggest burden we carry isn't related to our culture or to any expectations. It's attached to our failures and mistakes. They haunt us. A painful memory drifts by in the flow of our thinking, and we groan and think, "If only I **hadn't...**" A missed opportunity floats by; we feel a stab of regret and think, "Wow, if only I **had...**" Anyone ever experienced that?

-I've got **great** news. We come to God as we are—He accepts us **just** as we are—and He brings good even out of our bad decisions. We can't do that—but because He's **God?** All things are possible—especially grace, second chances, forgiveness—and patience. If you're carrying any regret and shame—or trying to make up for past mistakes, prove yourself—**let it go!** And do it daily!

-Blaise was telling me about a speaker she heard at a recent conference; Nancy Ortberg. Nancy made it clear that she has successfully resisted journaling most of her life! When her daughter went away to university—guess what she got her? A **journal!** But it was a different kind of journal. Nancy described it as a **Mistake Journal**. She told her daughter, "At the end of every day—take out your journal—and list **all the mistakes** you made that day. Underneath them all, write:

***The world is still spinning!**

***God loves ME!**

***Tomorrow is a NEW day!**

6. Are you weary? Are you carrying a heavy burden today? Do you have this load of expectations you're just...**tired** of? Guilt? Regret? Are you tired of trying to be the perfect child, the perfect woman—or man, the perfect employee, the perfect Mom—or Dad? Jesus words to you—right now, right here—are...**Come! Come to me...and I will give you rest...and you WILL find rest for your souls!**