

We all know those moments we get caught in. Those moments where you're just mindlessly scrolling through your Facebook page or your Twitter feed, not really reading anything or taking anything in, you're just scrolling for scrolling's sake, and then something catches your eye and it makes you stop. It makes you stop and usually there's that strange little full body tingle moment because you've stopped right when you need to, at the thing that resonates, that makes sense, that hits you right square in your chest.

I feel like this has happened to me a lot lately, these odd little Holy Spirit social media moments, but one in particular stuck out this week. I was doing my usual, casual scroll through Twitter and I was caught by a picture of a tiny little stick figure guy holding this massive, gigantic rock on his back. The text printed inside the rock said this: "The cold of winter, plus a lack of sunlight, plus lockdown, plus the uncertain future, plus the whole of the last year generally, plus the unrelenting news cycle, plus that email you've been putting off, plus the lack of human contact, plus some other stuff you can't quite put your finger on..." And the tiny, lil stick figure guy who can barely sustain the weight of this rock says this, "...can't work out why I'm so tired lately." Any other week, I might have just kind of looked at it and been like, yup, accurate, another week in the world that is Covid, but this week, I had to pause and give kudos to the Holy Spirit for stopping

my scroll, because it has been one of those weeks where everyone I talk to just seems...tired. And not just tired. Like bone-weary exhausted. Like if I have to do one more thing, I'm just going to curl up right here in the middle of the floor and sleep exhausted.

It made me think of this webseries I used to watch on YouTube, where one of the characters, after a string of just perpetually awful days, where her entire world feels like its been on the brink of collapse, slumps into a chair in tears and says, "I am so tired. Tired on like a cellular level." I don't think I ever quite knew the meaning, the *depth* of that line until this last year, until we all experienced the reality of living through a pandemic and a myriad of other chaotic moments that that little cartoon rock named. On some level, whether conscious or unconscious, whether obvious or subtle, where small or large, we are all tired. Tired on a cellular level...and that level of tired is exhausting. We're tired from being so tired all the time. Even the recognition of that feeling can be overwhelming and suddenly you're overwhelmed by how overwhelmed you feel and it's a vicious cycle. A vicious cycle that is momentarily stopped in its tracks by our lessons this morning, which with the power of the Holy Spirit, sweep into this world like a breath of fresh air that says, let me pick up this rock for you, stand up,

stretch your shoulders, and maybe go take a nap. Let me hold this for a second while you rest.

Much like us, the Israelites know what it's like to feel like their entire world has been halted, put on pause, like they have no idea what's going to come next. They've been in exile for far too long and they've begun to feel that rock settle on their shoulders like its permanent. They're weighed down under their own reality, we're far away from home, we don't know when or if we get to go back, we've lost loved ones, our faith is gone, we're trapped here, the days are long, we don't know how to do this, God did this to us, maybe God has finally just up and abandoned us, maybe we're on our own, maybe God just doesn't care anymore. They would have been asking themselves too why they feel so tired all the time, only to recognize that for years, they've been living under the weight of exile and what they've felt is catastrophic distance from God. They're exhausted because their world has not stopped spinning out of control for longer than they can even count anymore, and so finally they just kind of throw up their hands and say it's over. God's gone. We're on our own. We'll be this tired forever.

I don't know if we can even fully begin to plumb the depths of that feeling. These are people whose entire existence, their entire being and way of life has always been defined by their relationship with God, even when

they aren't really living into it a ton. These are people that are intimately tied to a sense of place, of land, of a land God had promised them. And now...here they sit. They couldn't be further from their home, the land God said was theirs forever. They're away from the Temple, the place that has defined how and where they worship. They're in some foreign land surrounded by enemies, and they, God's people feel like God just doesn't care anymore, like they're unimportant to God now. God's chosen people now feel like God's forgotten people and they're done...

Into this space of sorrow, exhaustion, and despair God's words seep through, and they're a little incredulous, but they're also exactly what the Israelites need to hear. God is basically like, have you *forgotten* everything you know about me? Have you forgotten *who I am*? I am *your* God, who never gets tired, who never let's go, who never grows faint or weak. I'm not gone. I'm right here. I'm right here to do this one thing: to give you strength. I see how exhausted you are. I see how weary you are. I see how hard the world is. I see how weak you feel. Wait...and hope...in me and your strength will be renewed, because you don't have to be strong alone. You have each other and you have me. Eventually, this time of exhaustion will pass, eventually this time of waiting will pass, and you will not grow faint or weary again, but will be restored, strengthened, hopeful once more.

It's not all lost. It's here. It just might take you a hot second to find it. To people in exile this word would have been like a cool drink of water when they have been parched for hours. That little reminder, that little nudge that God was still there, hoping with and for them. It's essentially a deep breath moment for them, take a deep breath and know with God, they've got this.

Maybe this week, maybe today, maybe the last eleven months have left you feeling like the Israelites, like that little cartoon stick guy trying so hard to keep this rock balanced on your shoulders. Maybe you have felt abandoned, lost, forgotten. Maybe you have felt like you can't take one more step, let alone run one because you are weary down to your core. Maybe you are exhausted and can't pinpoint why. Maybe you have decided you are tired on a cellular level, and you are desperately searching for God, wondering where God is in the midst of a world that feels like it just keeps spinning out of control, with too much uncertainty and too little stability.

To you, the weary, the exhausted, the uncertain, the searching, the done, the word of God comes. You might be tired...God never gets tired. You might be weary, God will not let you be weary forever. You might be uncertain, God understands. You might be searching, God is right there next to you, helping you search, guiding your steps, and assuring you with little Holy Spirit nudges along the way that God is there the whole time. It's ok if

you feel like the Israelites, if you want to give vent to your doubts and your exhaustion, but do that with that assurance, the hope, the promise that God has not abandoned you, has not abandoned us, has not abandoned this creation which God lovingly cultivated with Creator hands. God's got this. God's got you. That never stops. Even when we feel like it has, it never stops. That's the message of the gospel, that's the message of being God's people, that's the message of being God's beloved, God never stops. God never stops loving us, fighting for us, strengthening us, guiding us. You might feel like stopping. You might feel like taking a nap. That's ok. God won't stop while you rest, and God will not tire while you nap. We're allowed to give ourselves a break from the exhaustion because we trust that while we rest, God keeps working and God keeps looking out for us.

Let's face it...even Jesus got tired. Even Jesus needed to call a time out every once in awhile to reset, to breathe, to just catch a break so that he didn't break down and crumble under the weight and weariness of the world and his calling within it. Mark is very intentional in pointing out that Jesus had to get out of the house sometimes, to be by himself, to pray, to restore, to refresh, to just get away from people and spend some time with God. And he did that because he knew that while he paused God would keep working, and in that pause God will help him restore his strength for the road ahead.

Y'all if even Jesus needed a break, you can take one too. The world we live in is heavy, the lives we're leading are heavy, even when that rock is very subtle and we sometimes forget it's there. It's ok to stop. It's ok to take a break. It's ok to give in to the tired, because God just keeps on keeping on while we do. Just like God did for the Israelites. Just like God did for Jesus.

It is no small thing what and who we're called to be in this God's world, which is a wild place to live, so if you need a break, take it. If you need to throw your hands in the air and ask God why God has forgotten you, throw those fists up. If you need a nap, take a nap. If you need to cry, cry and lament and let God have it. If you need to take a deep breath, take one, take three, take ten! In all the things that we do, one thing remains ardently, stubbornly true. God doesn't get tired. God doesn't stop working for our good and the good of this world. God doesn't stop caring. God doesn't stop speaking strength and hope into the world. God's got this. God's got us. We can do this, even when we think we can't anymore. We can, because God strengthens the weary and brings hope to the hopeless. God gives rest for the exhausted and peace to the uncertain. The exile didn't last forever. This will not last forever. I have a note on my desk that says, "Every storm runs out of rain." This storm will cease, and in the meantime we can put the rock down for a few minutes, God is strong enough to hold it. **AMEN!!!**