

## A Word of Encouragement

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I don't know about you, but there are some weeks that just seem heavier than others. It may just be that it's winter in Ohio, but this week has brought a heaviness in my spirit that's been palpable. Please don't read anything into this, I'm not making some cryptic statement to cause your curiosity to increase and wonder "what's really going on with Lance?" I'm fine, my family is fine, no one is dying, no one has been diagnosed with something terrible, etc. It's just that there are seasons of life, and I think we all go through these, where the heaviness of this life becomes painfully obvious.



This shouldn't come as a surprise. Jesus tells us in John 16:33 "...In this world you will have trouble..." We live in a world that offers plenty of trouble. There are many in our body, or in my circle of influence or in your circle of influence who are dealing with life-and-death medical issues right now. There are folks who got the worst possible news or diagnosis this week and are navigating what that means for them and those that love them. There are others who are walking through long and painful journeys in the aging process, with daily reminders of our human fragility, brokenness and mortality. There are others navigating difficult circumstances in which there doesn't appear to be a good solution or an upside... just navigating better what appears to bad options and even worse options.

We live in a culture that causes many to fear, lose heart or maybe even lose hope. Beyond our culture, we live in a world that's filled with atrocities and injustice that is beyond our comprehension. Some of our first world trouble, as difficult as it might be, pales in comparison to what others across the world face right now.

Perhaps this is just a week where I've been more aware of the trouble in my own life and in the lives of those I know, love and share life with. The temptation in moments like this is for me to want to play the hero and be able to fix things that I cannot fix. It's during these times that I find that the enemy of my soul takes the opportunity to whisper words of hopelessness and despair.

Today I'm choosing not to believe Satan's lies. I'm also choosing not to believe my own sinful delusions. Today I'm choosing to remember the rest of John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Jesus spoke these words to His disciples in preparation for His journey to the cross. They were going to experience trouble in way that they could not imagine – even after Jesus spoke plainly about the cross and what was to come. Take heart, Jesus has overcome the world. Take heart, Jesus has broken the power of sin and death and destruction so that they will not have the final say. Take heart, do not fear, do not fall for the lies of the enemy and continue to turn to King Jesus.

This week I've been reminded of a couple of things that have been helpful to me, and I hope are helpful for you as you walk through the trials of your own life and faith journey.

1. Jesus has overcome the world. The war has been won. He's conquered the power and reign of sin, death and the evil one.
2. Jesus is King and I am not. Jesus is the hero and I am not. He is sovereign over this world and all its trouble. He is not surprised, caught off guard or wringing his hands in fear. I can trust him even in the midst of the most troubling and difficult circumstances.
3. Seek Jesus and ask Jesus to continue to bring His kingdom to reality on earth as it is Heaven!

Perhaps you've walked through a particularly heavy week as well. I want to encourage you to turn to our only hope, Jesus. He will not leave you or abandon you. He's with you in the midst of the most difficult and painful circumstances. Let's cling to Him and not lose hope!

Christ's Peace,

***Lance***