

**ME:** This past Monday was the one year anniversary of my dad's death.

And in this past year, my family has really stepped up to surround my mom with love and care.

One of us is with her for dinner every night,

others help with groceries, appointments and household chores.

She is so grateful for all this, but my mom has discovered that in wanting to help her, each of her children have their own way of doing things.

For example, some can be pretty controlling---straightening my mom's desk, throwing things out, organizing cabinets, cleaning out the fridge.

My mom lovingly refers to one sibling as "the boss".

Now, my mom is very patient, takes it all in stride, but lets me know that it can be hard being around someone who wants to be in control.

**WE:** Raise your hand if you love to be in control of some area of your life.

And no, you can't raise the hand of the person sitting beside you even if they drive you crazy.

There's a very unflattering term when it's taken to an extreme.

We call that person *a control freak*.

But every single person---myself included---battles with control in some area of life.

It may be in the workplace where the behavior of your co-workers or boss drives you crazy.

Control!

It may be at home.....everything has to be in its place. Control!

It might be with your spouse or your kids---needing to control their behavior, their schedules, their appearance.

Sometimes it shows up in little ways, like who gets control of the TV remote.

And we can make fun of it.

But the need to control may reveal a deep spiritual problem.

Because taken to an extreme, the need to control everything and everyone is really, like playing God.

**SCREEN: I Choose main screen**

This is week two of our message series titled, I Choose.

Each week we're looking at a fundamental choice

we need to make so we can truly serve God and others.

Last week we were told to choose *purpose over popularity*.

Today's fundamental choice is surrender over control.

*Surrender over control.*

**GOD:** Scripture says: *trust in the Lord with all our heart; submit to him totally.*

For a control freak, or for any of us, this is a really hard thing to do.

Today we met some individuals who faced this choice and show us how.

In our first reading we met the prophet Isaiah.

We heard how God called him to be his spokesman.

Isaiah was with a crowd of people at the temple in Jerusalem, when he experienced a life changing vision.

He saw God seated on a throne with angels all around.

Jewish belief was that no one could see the face of God and live, so Isaiah cried out, *"I am doomed, I am unworthy to see this."*

Then in his vision, an angel placed a burning ember on his tongue and said, *"now you're worthy."*

Finally in his vision Isaiah said:

**SCREEN:** Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,

***"Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?"***

***"Here I am," I said; "send me!"***

And Isaiah's life as a great prophet began.

His life would forever be marked by that vision.

This was his life before...then came the call in the Temple....then his life after.

That makes it sound easy, it wasn't.

Isaiah had to choose, *'will I continue with my life plan or God's plan for me?'*

Choosing God's plan required surrender over control.

St. Paul lived 700 years after Isaiah, but his call was no less dramatic or life changing.

Paul was a Pharisee, charged with rounding up the followers of Jesus.

Then he had a vision of Jesus and everything changed.

But again, Paul had to choose,

*"do I accept God's plan for my life or keep with my own?"*

Paul let go of his plan, let go of his need to be in control and surrendered to God.

Paul spread the Gospel to the Gentiles.

It's because of Paul that you and I are here now.

In the Gospel today, some fishermen were washing their nets by the side of the lake.

They'd spent all night fishing and caught nothing.

Jesus came along and said, *"let's go out again!"*

Now let's be clear, Jesus was not a fisherman.

He was a carpenter's son.

We don't know if he ever fished until that day.

So I can imagine the reaction of these men who fished for a living when a rabbi showed up and told them how to do their job.

It was probably something like,

*"Jesus, we got this under control...we know what we're doing..."*

*we're the fishermen, you're the teacher. You do your job, we'll do ours!"*

Simon Peter, the leader, finally said, *Okay.*

And they ended up with the greatest catch of fish they ever had, and it scared them.

Here's how the story ended, Jesus said:

**SCREEN:** Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."

**When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.**

They became Jesus' Apostles by literally dropping their nets and joining Jesus.

But to do that, they had to choose *surrender over control*.

**YOU:** What in your life are you struggling to control?

Your family, your future, your health, your finances?

As I said in the introduction, everyone struggles to control someone or something.

And the harder you struggle, the more frustrated and unhappy you become.

It might make everyone around you miserable and keep you from truly serving God and others.

So right now, just for a minute, think of what in your life you are struggling to control.

Just take a moment. (pause)

Got it in mind?

Now I want to lead you through 3 questions to help you choose surrender over control.

**SCREEN:** *1 is it worth my concern?*

Question #1, with that thing you are struggling to control, is it worth your concern?

Like a lot of people you can be consumed, obsessed even,

with trying to control something that, at the end of day, might not be worth your concern.

Pick your battles carefully with the people you love.

Be wise.

You have to have a tolerance for things being different than the way you'd do them or want them to be.

Fail to do this at your own peril.

Because when you choose control over other more important things...

like intimacy with those you love, harmony in your relationships,

happiness in the household...you'll end up driving others away.

I've seen this in my own family, with one of my siblings.

The family is now separated and the spouse and kids said,

*We could never do anything right...nothing was ever good enough, everything was a battle for control.*

So ask yourself, at the end of the day, is it worth your concern?

**SCREEN:** *2 is it mine to control?*

Question #2 with that thing you are battling to control,

is it yours to control?

This one can be a little harder to figure out.

It might be yours to control and might not.

When it comes to other adults--whatever their relationship to you---

whatever they're doing might not be yours to control.

You can suggest, you can discuss, you can recommend, you can pray...

but then you might need to surrender control.

Both for your own spiritual peace of mind and for the good of the other person.

Because as a disciple, ultimately, who is in control?

Which leads to question #3:

### **SCREEN: 3 is it for God alone?**

This is where the surrender part really comes in.

Letting go of the need to control means you stop playing God in the lives of others.

You need to surrender to God, leave it to the Lord, and turn to prayer.

Don't make prayer a last resort after you've tried everything else and given up,

make it your first resort and a regular resort.

All true prayer is an act of surrender;

it's *"thy will be done, not my will Lord.*

So here's one last question for you when it comes to choosing surrender over control:

what's holding you back from giving God complete control of your life?

Could it be fear or pride holding you back?

Maybe you're afraid that if you give God control,

he might ask you to do something you don't want to do.

Like step into a ministry, serve those in need through mission, join a small group.

Or with God in control of your life, he might ask you to

stop doing something you like doing---

a bad habit, a sinful behavior or an unhealthy way of relating to others.

You may think you have life all figured out and that everything is working just fine.

God may beg to differ.

### **SCREEN: blank red background**

Two weeks from today, which is the final week of this series,

you will be invited to approach the sanctuary at the end of Mass to offer

a prayer of commitment (or recommitment) to Christ.

Here's the takeaway for this series, (hold up), which you can find at the exits.

On it you will find that prayer.

Look it over, begin praying it now.

Because if you are praying now about something you are struggling to control;

praying with all your might and still have no peace, no calm, no joy,

your prayer needs to be 'surrender'.

You can't heal the sick.

You probably can't change your spouse, your kids, or your friends.

You and I can't control the weather, the government, or the Church.

What we need to do first and always is give it to God in prayer,  
who will then reveal to us how to act and what to do.

**WE:** Today and this week, remember the lesson of Isaiah, St. Paul and  
Peter and the Apostles.

Hear Christ calling you to drop your nets, let go of your desire for control,  
to surrender to God and to follow His way, every day. Amen. +