

Sermon

- R U OK? Day Thursday 10th September. This is an initiative that invites us to ask the question, 'R U OK?'
- R U OK? Is a question about one's mental health and wellbeing – are you doing okay at the moment?
- Underneath this question lies the invitation to consider, are you depressed, anxious, struggling with day-to-day activities?
- Are you able to get through the day without crying, hiding, or zoning out to feelings of worthlessness?
- Is there constant tiredness, withdrawing from regular activities, feeling anxious about things that are not usually that challenging; not sleeping well; sleeping too much; not eating properly...
- Some of these symptoms may or may not be the result of depression/anxiety, but if you notice them in yourself, or in someone else, it NEVER hurts to ask the question, R U OK?
- This question can be asked all year round, it can be asked of your spouse, friends, children, grandchildren, neighbours, and of yourself.
- If this question feels uncomfortable or awkward, because it's not the typical question you would ask, use this sermon as a Segway... "My Minister..."
- Everyone goes through bouts of being down or feeling flat. We've all had seasons of short-term struggle – financially, physically, emotionally. Most of us can endure short term disruptions to our schedule/life.
- There is such a thing as adjustment disorder – this is when one fails to recover from a major life transition after 6 months.
- Covid 19 – check in on yourself or your family.
- For people who have prolonged symptoms of lingering sickness, emotional turmoil, financial hardship, it is much harder to recover or find hope in this situation, especially if one is unable to engage in their usual occupation.
- These things affect our mental health.
- Mental health is on a spectrum. At one end we have down/flat days, but we're able to pick ourselves up and keep going....

- On the other end, there are significant psychological disorders, somewhere in the middle there's a variety of considerable mental health challenges that may require professional support.
- Professional support may include psychological or psychiatric intervention – or both.
- Statistics tell us that one in four Australians will experience depression/anxiety in their life.
- Suicide is the highest cause of death in young men, and another high statistic for suicide is men over 65. A pandemic that may not get the publicity of COVIC 19, but it is still deadly.
- Mental health is not anything to be ashamed of or something to hide, but rather, an issue that needs to be identified and handled with great grace and gentleness, understanding, and most importantly, with great hope and support!
- Because at some stage everyone, will be feeling down, and everyone will need support.
- Local GP; Beyond Blue website directs you to a questionnaire; Head Space for under 25's; Black Dog Institute for Men; Mental Health help line; Lifeline; 000 Ambulance → hope and support is available!
- I want to share a story with you today about hope and support.
- This story comes to us from Exodus 17 – the Israelites were in the wilderness, they had run out of water, God instructed Moses to strike the rock with his staff and water flowed. Now we come to a battle scene:

"Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. ⁹ Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some men for us and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." ¹⁰ So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. ¹¹ Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. ¹² But Moses' hands grew weary; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; so his hands were steady until the sun set. ¹³ And Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the sword." (Exodus 17:8-13)

- This story is in no way about mental health, no where does it say that Moses was suffering from depression or anxiety, but it is a story about the need for support.
- I chose to talk about this passage today, because while it may hold much greater and deeper meaning regarding, the role of leadership and prayer, today I want to view it from the angle that everyone needs support, and anyone can be a supporter!

- We know from this passage that the people of God were under attack from the Amalekites.
- The Amalekites had descended from one of Esau's grandsons (Gen. 36:12) and had settled in the part of Sinai that the Israelites now occupied.
- They were known as the most warlike of the nations that lived there. They evidently confronted Israel in battle because they felt that Israel was a threat to their security.
- Moses commanded Joshua to gather an army to fight them.
- Moses went to the top of the hill that he might see the battle from there.
- He took Aaron his brother, and Hur, believed to be Miriam's husband (brother-in-law) with him to support him.
- While there, Moses grasped the staff with both his hands and held it up above his head.
- Moses lifted his hands, to symbolize the power of Yahweh upon the fighting men of Israel.
- We know that while the battle was unfolding *'Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed.'* (Ex. 17:11)
- **The significance of this is that Israel's strength lay only in a continuous appeal to the Lord's power and a continuous remembrance of what He had already done for them.**
- Moses knew their strength was in God, and not their own ability or power, and yet he grew weary in what he was called to do.
- The battle before them could have taken days or even weeks, and so his arms became weak and his body became tired. What lay before him seemed too hard to accomplish.
- Even though Moses knew his victory was in God's power, he still needed the people closest to him to provide help and support.

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- Folks, having someone journey with you offering hope and support does not mean you are losing your faith, or you have failed as a disciple of Jesus.

- Suffering from depression or anxiety is not a reflection of ones' faith, or lack of faith. Someone can still pray and hold firmly to the work of Jesus while struggling with mental health challenges it simply is a physiological change that requires support.
- I wonder if you've ever felt like the day ahead of you is too hard to manage, even getting out of bed too difficult to do.
- It's not a sign of weakness, or failure or laziness or apathy, it could be a sign of depression, and if left unattended, could become detrimental to one's health.
- If a great man of God, a great leader, a great father, a great prophet and priest like Moses needed help and support, then so will we!
- Everybody goes through seasons of weariness in their body, soul or their spirit, and part of God's healing may in fact come from those who are around you.
- Those who know you and love you would be willing to help and support you, if you are able to invite them on the journey with you.
- Moses invited Aaron and Hur to be with him, and maybe he knew he would be needing their support to keep going.
- If you're feeling like Moses, a bit tired and heavy laden with the struggles of life, DO NOT TAKE THE JOURNEY ALONE!
- There are people who will help you and support you.
- If you receive the notice sheet, there are numbers included in there that you could contact to access support.
- If you are watching and you don't receive our notice sheet, there is a post on our social media pages that contains phone numbers for support; or a 'contact us' box on our website, please do not take this journey alone.
- You were not created to be alone. No one was created to be alone! God created you in His image to be in relationship with Him and with others, let those around you pull up a seat and take your weary hands for a season. Let them be like Aaron and Hur and offer you hope and support.
- Or maybe, you are doing okay at the moment, maybe you are feeling on top of things; this might be an opportunity for you to be an Aaron or Hur to someone else.
- If so, I invite you to prayerfully consider how/when to ask your family, friends, neighbours, spouse, self, R U OK?

- Ask the Holy Spirit to bring someone to mind that you can contact and ask the question, 'R U OK?' or 'How ya goin?'
- Arron and Hur sat beside Moses and held his hands up so that the power of God could manifest in and through Moses to the Israelite army.
- You might simply be a listening ear, gently, carefully encouraging further support if that's necessary.
- Or you might be able to take them out for a cuppa, invite them over for a meal...
- And always, tread gently, with grace and understanding, and always hold them in prayer before God.
- You are supporting a much loved and valued and cherished child of God – treat them so 😊

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“O Praise The Name (Anastasis) “

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